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A Program Evaluation of The Impact of COVID-19 on Teacher Mobility, Attrition, and Retention

Carla Foord

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A Program Evaluation of The Impact of COVID-19 on Teacher Mobility, Attrition, and Retention

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March 4, 2022
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A Program Evaluation of
The Impact of COVID-19 on Teacher Mobility, Attrition, and Retention

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of
Doctor of Education

National Louis University
March 2022

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Abstract

Teacher mobility, turnover, and attrition have been continuous issues in public education and have only grown with the introduction of COVID-19 into our society. The purpose of this study was to determine how COVID-19 had impacted these issues and to find solutions for retaining teachers in the profession. The context of this study was to determine factors that educators, teachers, administrators, and parents from across the United States believed impacted teacher attrition and to get input from them on what changes were needed to keep teachers in the profession. My study shows via quantitative and qualitative data that teacher attrition was an issue before COVID-19, and with the addition of eLearning and health concerns due to COVID-19, became even a greater issue. My study on teacher attrition aligned with that of current research and suggested that administrator support, more support for new teachers in the profession, and policy changes were just some of the recommendations from stakeholders that would help solve the issue of teacher attrition.

Preface

Serving in education for over 20 years as a teacher, dean, instructional specialist, administrator, and director of education, I have seen many teachers leave the profession. I am actually a statistic of teacher attrition. After teaching for five years, I decided to quit the profession after having my third child because the cost of childcare was too high compared to my salary as a teacher. I later returned to the field of education because I missed having a classroom and working with students every day.

The original choice of topic for my study was focused on just teacher attrition; however, with the start of the pandemic, I wanted to see if COVID-19 would have an impact on the topic, so I incorporated the pandemic into my study. Little did I know at the time, that COVID-19 would be such a critical aspect of my study. Since there was already a large number of studies on teacher attrition, I wanted to be able to add something new to the body of research. Throughout my study, the challenges of COVID-19 changed daily. It will take further research and more time in the future to see the overall impact of COVID-19 on teacher attrition and the educational field overall.

In my study, I surveyed teachers and interviewed teachers, administrators, and parents to gather data on my topic. The overarching questions that drove my program evaluation were: “What factors are affecting teacher turnover, mobility, and attrition, and what impact has COVID-19 had on those factors?” and “What changes need to be made to retain teachers?” Conducting this research helped me gain knowledge on how to use various types of evaluations and to appreciate the process of research design.

Throughout this study, I learned that school leaders play a key role in retaining teachers. Another leadership lesson I learned is that I need to be an adaptive, resonant

leader. Adaptive, resonant leaders give their teachers a voice, they support their teachers and build a culture in which teachers want to stay. These leadership practices learned from my research study have prepared me to be an even more effective school leader, and I feel better equipped to support teachers and build a collaborative culture where teachers feel valued and heard.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad, Richard James Foord, because his words have echoed through my head my entire life and have been my inspiration, “When you grow up, you are going to be a doctor.” Well... Dad, it finally happened. Thank you for your encouragement and belief in me. To the memory of my mom in heaven, although she is not here with me today, I know she is celebrating and smiling down on me.

I also want to dedicate this to my wife, Rachael, for putting up with the long days and nights of me being glued to my computer and for being my second pair of eyes. Your love and support throughout this journey have meant the world to me. Thank you!

Last, but not least, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my five children: Blake, Allison, Brandon, Adrian, and Abby. When people ask why I decided to go down the doctoral path, the main reason that comes to mind is to set an example for my children. I want each of you to know that you can do anything you set your mind to, no matter how old you are. It is never too late! Spend each day learning new things, and always believe in yourselves.

Acknowledgments

There are many people to acknowledge and thank for their support throughout my doctoral journey. As noted in my dedication, my dad was the reason I aspired to be a doctor. He has believed in me since childhood. I would not have been able to start this process without the support of my wife, Rachael. She has been a constant anchor and support with the day-to-day activities that had to go on, even though I was busy working on my paper or attending classes. I also want to thank my children, Blake, Allison, Brandon, Adrian, and Abby. They have had to sacrifice family time, but they were very understanding and still encouraged me throughout this journey.

I cannot even begin to express how much the support of my doctoral chair, Dr. Carla Sparks, has meant to me. She has not only served as my doctoral chair, but she has also been a mentor, friend, and great support. She encouraged me to pursue my doctorate in the first place, and I will always be grateful to her for that. I aspire to be a great leader like her someday.

I also want to thank, Dr. Lorrie Butler. Her feedback and expertise, along with Dr. Carla Sparks', have been invaluable. They both have spent many hours reviewing and revising my work. I appreciate their commitment to helping me grow as a writer, seeing the potential in me, and supporting my professional growth.

Besides my National Louis University professors, I would like to thank the members of my cohort who have been on this journey with me since day one – Andrew, Hyacinth, Lisa, Maha, Ranita, Ranya, and Trish. I have learned so much from each one of them, and I feel like we have grown professionally together.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues from near and far who have provided input to my study, support, and direction as I bounced ideas off them. Their collaboration contributed to the success of the completion of my study. I feel blessed to have such a great network of friends, family, and colleagues who have been there for me these last three years. My doctoral journey would not have been possible without each one of these exceptional people.

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Chapter One: Introduction

I started my dissertation journey at the beginning of 2020. I wanted to focus my topic on teacher attrition. Around February 2020, worldwide panic hit. The grocery store shelves began to empty out, and it looked like a scene from a post-apocalyptic movie. The world was entering into a worldwide pandemic caused by COVID-19. Little did I know at the time how this would impact everyone's daily lives and especially the field of education. As my dissertation progressed, I knew I wanted to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on teacher attrition.

The context of my study focused on teachers and educators in the United States. Attitudes and beliefs about the profession of teaching have changed over the last few decades. The teaching profession is less respected, and teachers are overwhelmed with all of the daily functions of the position: data collection, grading, lesson planning, and classroom management to name a few. No wonder many teachers have left the field to seek an alternative path. Bruno (2018) stated, "Teachers are seeing their own experience be devalued by policymakers and other officials with little experience in the educational field, and it's not improving the education of their students" (p. 2).

Researchers have studied issues surrounding teacher attrition, mobility, and retention many times in the past. I hoped to shed new light on the subject with my research. With all of the studies done in this field, retaining teachers still remains an issue. Donley and States (2019) found the national rate of teacher turnover has been hovering around 16% in recent decades. This has led to a shortage, especially in hard-to-staff schools, and an overall negative impact on students and schools. "Problems with teacher turnover contribute significantly to teacher shortages and result in the inequitable distribution of effective and qualified teachers across schools" (Donley & States, 2019, p. 1).

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

The program of study I evaluated was the impact of COVID-19 on teacher mobility, attrition, and retention. I chose this topic because it was applicable to my own life. The beginning of my teaching career was very difficult. I started out in a low-performing, Title 1 school. I was overwhelmed with little support, and I felt like my college preparatory program did not nearly prepare me for the real world of teaching. I left teaching during my fifth year after the birth of my third son to become a stay-at-home mom. My experience aligned with what Thompson (2018) said, “Up to 20% of certified pedagogues of both public and private schools begin to change their minds about devoting their lives to teaching by the fifth year of their career” (p. 1).

The purpose of my evaluation was to determine why teachers left the field early and to determine how COVID-19 had impacted those decisions. I also wanted to find solutions for change. Through my research, I hoped to give teachers a voice. I wanted to hear what they had to say about these issues and to put into place an action plan with possible policy changes to solve some of the problems revolving around these issues. Teacher attrition has had serious consequences including a lack of qualified teachers, which negatively impacts student achievement, economic costs due to recruiting, training, and filling vacancies, and damaging the reputation of the teaching field overall (Garcia & Weiss, 2019b).

The COVID-19 pandemic put a new spin on my research. As panic spread due to the fear of contagion and the unknown effects of COVID-19, schools began to close. Students and teachers changed teaching and learning modalities from brick-and-mortar traditional learning to eLearning. This was a challenge because teachers and students had to adapt to this new kind of teaching and learning. Teachers had little to no training in eLearning and some had children of

their own at home who needed help with this new digital platform. Additional stress hit for both teachers and students with the decision to go back to school in the fall of 2020 or to continue eLearning. Teachers were faced with fear for their safety and that of their families, teaching face-to-face with social distancing and safety precautions in place or teaching concurrently, face-to-face with eLearning. I wanted to evaluate how these new developments added to the previous issues of teacher attrition.

Rationale

I selected the study of teacher attrition, mobility, and retention because of my connection to the topic. I felt as though I could give input and value to the study since I left the field of education and later returned. My purpose was to bring about positive change. Teachers left for reasons they felt were significant. This was a crisis because teacher turnover has been costly to school districts and detrimental to student achievement and school improvement (Podolsky et al., 2016).

I chose this program to evaluate because of seeing teachers leave and, as an administrator, I had difficulties finding highly qualified teachers to fill vacancies. Many of the applicants applying for teaching positions were teachers who had previously vacated due to mobility and had little experience. Some of the teaching candidates did not have the required certification needed for the position. My colleagues in Title 1 schools had an even more difficult task filling their open positions. The teacher turnover rate was 50% greater in Title 1 schools than non-Title 1 schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Identifying the reasons this was happening played a critical part in my research to ensure students in the future would receive the best education available to them.

The goal of my program evaluation was to impact stakeholders including teachers, parents, administrators, the school district, and the community at large. Educators were preparing the next generation of leaders. If the educators could not produce highly qualified teachers to teach our youth, then our educational system had failed. The effects of teacher turnover were definitively tied to student achievement, it was costly, damaged teacher morale, and created a negative perception of the career itself. “A better understanding of why teachers enter and leave the profession, and what might encourage them to stay or return, is critical to improving the educational opportunities for all students, especially those attending the most disadvantaged schools” (Podolsky et al., 20016, p. v). COVID-19 added stressors for teachers including safety, social distancing, quarantining classes, and eLearning that impacted this topic of study. “Teachers are facing new demands and showing high levels of stress with the new instructional requirements and the anxieties due to the current state of education and the pandemic” (Pressley, 2021, p. 327).

Goals

The intended goals of this program evaluation were to determine the major factors impacting teacher mobility and attrition and to determine if COVID-19 had impacted these issues. There were various research studies on this subject already; however, I wanted to take this evaluation a step further to discover what changes needed to be made to retain teachers through and after the pandemic.

These goals were related to student learning because research showed that students have higher academic achievement when they like their teachers and vice versa. Less job strain affects teacher turnover and improves teacher mental health (Husain et al., 2016).

That early neuroscience breakthrough reminded us that a key job of a school is to give students new things to love – an exciting field of study, new friends. It reminded us that what teachers really teach is themselves – their contagious passion for their subjects and students. It reminded us that children learn from people they love, and that love in this context means willing the good of another and offering active care for the whole person.

(Brooks, 2019)

Schools need teachers who are positive and enjoy coming to work. Teachers who are stressed, not supported, and thinking about leaving are not positively impacting students. Teachers directly impact student learning. “Teachers have long been identified as the number one in-school factor influencing student outcomes. Conversely, teacher turnover is correlated with lower student outcomes and contributes to school cultures where churn and instability prevent positive change from taking room” (Esdal, 2019, p. 1).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in my dissertation. Here are the definitions for clarification purposes.

Teacher Attrition – Teachers who quit the field of education altogether

(Garcia & Weiss, 2019c)

Teacher Turnover – Teachers leaving their position to another position or school (Garcia

& Weiss, 2019c)

Teacher Mobility – Transferring from one school to another or leaving the profession entirely (Steinberg et al., 2018)

Movers – Teachers who move from one school to another (Vekeman et al., 2017)

Leavers – Teachers who leave the teaching field altogether (Vekeman et al., 2017)

Stayers – Teachers remaining at the same school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016)

Teacher Retention – Teachers returning to the profession each year (Lochmiller et al., 2016)

Brick and Mortar Instruction – in-person schooling (Kingsbury, 2021)

Bimodal Instruction – a blended learning model, involving a face-to-face or ‘co-present’ element, and a computer-mediated element (Bryan & Volchenkova, 2016)

Concurrent/Blended Model of Teaching - partially in-person and partially online (Kingsbury, 2021)

Hybrid Learning- a mixture of delivery methods including online instruction in combination with other methods such as face-to-face or technology-based instruction (Klimova & Kacetl, 2015, p. 478)

Research Questions

The two overarching questions that drove my evaluation research are listed below:

1. What factors are affecting teacher turnover, mobility and attrition, and what impact has COVID-19 had on those factors?
2. What changes need to be made to retain teachers?

The related questions that I will explore are:

1. In what ways has teacher attrition increased due to the pandemic?
2. What factors would create an environment where teachers want to stay?
3. What supports can be put in place to make teaching more appealing?
4. What new knowledge, training, and policies are needed to support and retain teachers?

Conclusion

Teacher mobility, turnover, and attrition is a real problem and needs to be addressed. COVID-19 presented more challenges in the field of education. Through this research, I aimed to find ways to address the issues with the goal of retaining teachers in the field of education. The main focus of the literature reviewed in the following chapter was teacher mobility, turnover, and attrition in addition to a brief focus on COVID 19.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

As I began to research this topic, history was being made. In 2020, the world took a devastating turn with the introduction of COVID-19 into our world, creating a world pandemic. Teacher mobility and attrition were already issues impacting schools nationally as well as internationally before this new unknown hit. This virus left teachers scared and the number of educators leaving the field increased. In this review of the literature, I included research on the major issues that revolved around teacher mobility and attrition before and after COVID-19.

In the pre-COVID world, research established two related and important points with significance for post-COVID schooling. First, schools where teachers feel heard and have influence in decision-making are places more likely to retain teachers. And second, schools with high teacher turnover have lower student achievement – and this is true across student populations. (Bartlett, 2021, p. 3)

My research explored both of these points, focusing on ways to retain teachers in the field of education.

Major topics I included in this research were reasons for teacher attrition and mobility, how stress and relationships impacted these decisions, how teacher mobility and attrition impacted the teaching field, and how COVID-19 affected this area of study. This research also included recommendations by researchers on preventing these issues. Research for this review was taken from scholarly articles related to the topic as well as research-based texts from my studies, and data from the U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

I researched my topic by searching educational databases such as EBSCOhost, ERIC, and Google. Most of the research presented was from 2015 to 2021 except for a few texts from

distinguished authors in the educational field. I searched for articles listing statistics, reasons for, implications, personal experiences, and solutions for teacher attrition and mobility before and after COVID-19.

What are teacher mobility, attrition, and retention?

My research included the terms, mobility, attrition, and retention frequently. The first term attrition was defined by Vekeman et al. (2017) who stated that attrition refers to “leaving the teaching profession” (p. 412). The term mobility was defined as teachers exiting from their schools to go to another school or destination, also referred to as teacher turnover (Steinberg et al., 2018, p. 1). Retention was defined as “retaining teachers in the same school from year to year” (Lochmiller et al., 2016, p. 1). Other terms associated with this research topic were stayers, movers, and leavers. An article from the National Center for Education Statistics defined these terms as, “teachers who remain teaching at the same school from year to year (“stayers”)...teachers who move from one school to another school (“movers”)...teachers who leave the profession between one year and the next (“leavers”) (Luekens et al., 2004, p. 1).

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 was an airborne infectious disease that made news in December 2019. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “‘CO’ stands for ‘corona,’ ‘VI’ for ‘virus,’ and ‘D’ for disease. The virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, is a coronavirus” (2021, p. 1) The initial roots of the virus were traced to the South China Seafood Market in Wuhan, a Hubei Province and thought to have originated from a bat (Lake, 2020, p. 124). COVID-19 was also known as a Coronavirus, which was in the family of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) (Lake, 2020, p. 124). Lake (2020), stated, “the most common

symptoms being reported are fever, cough, or chest tightness, and dyspnea” (p. 124). Most cases are mild, but some lead to other complications and sometimes death.

The number of cases in the United States continued to climb. As of September 18, 2021, there were 41,754,903 cases and 668,442 deaths in the United States, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2021a). These statistics were changing daily. In March 2020, many schools moved to online instruction for the safety of educators and students. As the 2020-2021 school year approached, educators debated how the growing number of cases and deaths would affect school openings. Teachers were not prepared for the changes they faced including “significant changes to teachers’ working conditions, for example, uncertainty and changing schooling formats, a new focus on remote learning, and new protocols for health and safety, as well as significant learning loss and the social and emotional needs of students” (Lachlan et al., 2020, p. 1).

In the 2020-2021 school year, schools across the United States began the school year with the option for students to participate in brick-and-mortar instruction, a hybrid model of instruction, or eLearning. This meant that teachers had the challenge of teaching face-to-face with safety protocols in place, concurrently with online students (also known as bimodal instruction), or a hybrid model with students attending schools on alternative days. One teacher stated in her Blog, “Bimodal instruction is like texting while driving. No one can do both effectively at the same time” (Smith, 2021, p. 3).

The number of cases of teacher attrition and early retirement increased because of the decision to open schools. Teachers feared for their safety and the lives of their family members and were not ready to tackle both brick and mortar and remote instruction. Garcia and Weiss (2020) listed reasons teachers were leaving related to COVID-19. They included unsafe working

environments, lack of supports, stress associated with remote instruction and burnout. These reasons included senior teachers near retirement as well as teachers new to the field. “The combination of losing colleagues to COVID-19 and the intense personal stresses and demands the pandemic is exacting on virtually all teachers will likely drive out still more” (Garcia & Weiss, 2020 p. 2).

How is the Teacher Shortage Impacting the Field?

The teacher shortage was impacting the education field in a negative way. Garcia and Weiss (2019b) stated, “The teacher shortage constitutes a crisis because of its negative effects on students, teachers, and the education at large” (p. 1). They also stated, “This crisis calls for urgent, comprehensive, and sustainable policy solutions” (Garcia & Weiss, 2019b). A report from the National Center of Education Statistics (2016), stated that “8 percent of public-school teachers ... left the profession between 2011–12 and 2012–13” (p. 1).

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019), reported that:

Since national data have been available, U.S. teacher attrition rates have ranged from 5.1% in 1992 to 8.4% in 2008, a difference of 3.3 percentage points.

However, in a workforce of 3.8 million, this seemingly small amount adds about 125,000 to the annual demand for teachers. (p. 3)

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) said that it cost approximately \$20,000 to replace teachers moving from urban districts. Replacing teachers took away funding from students and damaged the reputation of the teaching profession itself. “Teachers perceive themselves and their students as fungible costs of production, cogs in a bureaucratic machine. To them, nothing less than the education profession is at risk” (Bruno, 2018, p. 2).

There were four major factors that have been driving shortages in the field identified by Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas (2019):

1. Decline in teacher preparation enrollments
2. An effort to return to pre-recession course offerings and class sizes resulting in lower pupil-teacher ratios
3. Increasing student enrollment
4. High teacher attrition (p. 23)

Of all of these, teacher attrition had the biggest impact on supply and demand, and improving this even slightly could have positive implications for the field (Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019). “If the annual attrition rate could be reduced from the current projection of 8% to 6% ... hiring needs would decrease by at least 60,000 teachers annually” (Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019, p. 25). Teacher turnover matters and led to shortages in the field. This resulted in “schools often responding by hiring inexperienced or unqualified teachers, increasing class sizes, or cutting class offering, all of which impact student learning” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p.1).

Reasons for Teacher Mobility and Attrition

There are numerous reasons for teacher mobility and attrition cited in textbooks, articles, blogs, and professional journals. With the outbreak of COVID-19, teacher mobility and attrition became a bigger issue. Before COVID-19, reasons for turnover included teacher pay, retirement, workplace conditions, desire for a better career, stress, and lack of administrative support. With the addition of COVID-19, my professional observations indicated that teachers were afraid to continue in the field due to the fear of contracting the virus and the overall changes in education including e-learning. One professor shared her experiences of teaching during the pandemic. She

stated, “COVID hit the world like a tidal wave that washed me back into the classroom with worries about my health and that of my family and students” (Kugelmann, 2021, p. 1).

Mack et al. (2019) stated, “Conflict and stress with the job reduces commitment and increases attrition” (pp. 2-3). Stressors can include overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, heavy workloads, infringement on personal time, lack of belonging, and overall emotional exhaustion (Mack et al., 2019). In his study, Nguyen (2020) discovered that teachers new to the field and special education teachers are more at risk for leaving the profession early. He also noted that lack of administrative support and absence of a union can be causes of attrition.

How Relationships, Stress, and Early Career Impact Teacher Mobility and Attrition

Relationships, stress, and being new to the teaching profession have been cited as factors for teacher attrition. Although there was little research on how relationships affect attrition, this was still stated as a reason in many studies. Nguyen and Springer (2019) stated, “The nascent evidence, however, suggests relational demography, particularly parity between principal-teacher, may reduce turnover” (p. 4). The school leader had a huge impact on teachers staying or leaving the school or the profession altogether. “When leaders foster a school culture that supports emotional resourcefulness and transparency, cognitive capital increases and individuals are more able to receive, interpret, and apply feedback to improve professional practice” (Roussin & Zimmerman, 2014, p. 38). Marzano et al. (2005) said that “relationships might be the bedrock of the principal’s efforts to establish a purposeful community” (p. 103).

Relationships, stress, and early career factors were interrelated. New teachers often struggled. “Learning to belong and contribute to a profession can be a difficult journey” (Edwards & Nuttall, 2014, p. 1). Research showed that it was important for new teachers to develop positive relationships with their students. “Students’ engagement can be seen as a central

factor in explaining the association between the affective quality of teacher-student relationships and students' academic achievement" (Roorda et al., 2017, p.254). Brooks (2019) stated, "In good times and bad times, good teachers and good students co-regulate each other" (p. 1). In a qualitative study by Harfitt (2015), one teacher stated she returned to the field of education after briefly leaving because she missed her students (p. 28). These positive teacher-student relationships were reasons teachers chose to go to work every day.

Stress was another factor impacting teacher turnover. In a study by Husain et al. (2016), levels of stress, anxiety, and depression were studied in teachers. "It was proved that depression, anxiety and stress increase turnover intentions among teachers. Job strain, in other words, if accompanied by depression, anxiety or stress puts more effects on teachers to think of job change" (p. 52). Another study listed factors causing teacher stress:

These include managing student misbehavior, providing support to needy and/or unmotivated students, feeling that their workload is overwhelming, feeling a lack of control over decisions that affect them and their students, having little time to relax due to the need to take a great deal of work home, and feeling constant pressure to be accountable for student outcomes. (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 1011)

Teachers new to the field of education were more vulnerable to stress. According to the United States Department of Education (2021), "more than 50% of teachers leave the profession in the first five years." Mayer (2019) listed some reasons for this high attrition rate for new teachers that include high workload, work pressures, government policies, lack of support from leadership, the increasingly regulated nature of teacher's work and the narrowing of curriculum that prevents teachers from making informed teaching decisions.

Ways to Retain Teachers

Many studies listed suggestions for improving teacher retention. Through my program evaluation, I hoped to add to this list. One of the key factors in retaining teachers was administrative support. In a report from The Wallace Foundation (2013), Darling-Hammond stated, “Administrative leadership and support is one of the most critical elements because everything the teacher does is framed by the way the leadership operates.” According to her, administrative leadership and support allow teachers to achieve the most important intrinsic motivator, “success with kids” (p. 18).

Podolsky et al. (2016) listed major challenges that influenced teachers’ decisions to stay or go. They included:

1. Salaries and other compensation.
2. Preparation and costs to entry.
3. Hiring and personnel management.
4. Induction and support for new teachers.
5. Working conditions, including school leadership, professional collaboration and shared decision-making, accountability systems, and resources for teaching and learning. (p. 11)

The authors recommended policy changes to address these issues as solutions to retain teachers in the field of education. Some of these policy changes included: increasing teacher salaries, offering loan forgiveness, providing compensation incentives, strengthening hiring practices, developing teacher residencies, and investing in high-quality induction programs (pp. viii-ix).

Conclusion

Teacher mobility, turnover, and attrition were issues in education that needed to be addressed. Several factors impacted these issues including stress, relationships, pay, work

environment, the stage of one's career, and COVID-19. In this paper, I wanted to work on finding a solution to solving these issues and to determine if COVID-19 had made an impact on teachers' decisions to leave or stay. Will et al. (2020) said that "it will be years before there are federal data that give a clear picture of whether teacher attrition rose or fell nationwide during this unprecedented school year" (p. 2). My goal was that this paper will shed some light on teacher attrition before and after COVID-19 and add to the body of research to positively impact the field of education.

Chapter Three: Methodology

My program evaluation was based on the critical theory paradigm, using a mixed-methods design of qualitative and quantitative research. Patton (2008) said that “both qualitative and quantitative data can contribute to all aspects of evaluation inquiries” (p. 438). My action research included surveying teachers and conducting interviews to learn more about my topic.

Research Design Overview

The purpose of my study was to determine why teachers left the field early and to determine how COVID-19 had impacted those decisions. I also wanted to determine why teachers were transferring schools or leaving the profession altogether and to find ways to retain teachers in the field of education. Teacher attrition has had serious consequences including a lack of qualified teachers, which negatively impacts student achievement, economic costs due to recruiting, training new teachers and filling vacancies, and damaging the reputation of the teaching field overall (Garcia & Weiss 2019b, p.3). The goal of my program evaluation was to impact stakeholders including teachers, parents, administrators, the school district, and the community at large.

Through my program evaluation, I gathered input from educators across the United States. Patton (2008) stated, “Program evaluation is undertaken to inform decisions, clarify options, identify improvements, and provide information about programs and policies within contextual boundaries of time, place, values, and politics” (p. 40). To start this process, I used a collection of quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed-methods design. I administered a survey to educators via social media and interviewed teachers, administrators, and parents. I believed that using this methodology would help answer my research questions because as Patton said, “By focusing on and negotiating data collection alternatives in an atmosphere of respect and

tolerance, the participants can come together around a commitment to an empirical perspective, that is bringing data to bear on important issues” (2008, p. 465). Teacher attrition and retention are important issues, and I used the data from my interviews and surveys to analyze underlying causes and to determine solutions needed for change.

Participants

I targeted three stakeholder groups for my study. The key participants were teachers (educators), administrators, and parents. I opened my survey to all educators, and I interviewed teachers, administrators, and parents. I recruited teachers, administrators, and parents for interviews through the use of social media.

To recruit participants for my study, I created a Facebook post (see Appendix A) to give a brief description of the overall purpose and goals of my research. I asked for participants who had left the field of education or thought about leaving because of COVID-19, teachers who had moved from one school to another, or teachers who left the teaching field altogether. Through the social media post, I also invited teachers, administrators, and parents who were interested in sharing more information about this topic to participate in a brief interview. Overall, 30 participants responded to the survey, and I identified four teachers, two administrators, and two parents to participate in interviews.

Data Gathering Techniques

I implemented a mixed-methods design by collecting quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from the opened ended questions on the surveys and semi-structured interviews. I created a post on Facebook to recruit participants. I attached the survey to the Facebook post. Respondents notified me of their participation through comments or private messages.

Surveys

I created a survey consisting of 14 questions on Microsoft Forms (see Appendix B). Part of the survey questions was based on a Likert Scale and the other part was open-ended. I posted the survey on Facebook along with the informed consent. Since the survey was posted on social media, it was open to educators across the United States. Thirty educators responded to the survey.

Interviews

I asked for volunteers on my initial Facebook post to find participants for my interviews. I conducted interviews on Zoom and face-to-face, and they lasted between 15 to 20 minutes each. I interviewed four teachers (see Appendix C) to determine their views on teacher attrition, to assess the impact of COVID-19, and to ask for suggestions on ways to retain teachers. I interviewed two administrators (see Appendix D) to determine how teacher attrition and COVID-19 had impacted their schools and to ask for recommendations on improving teacher retention. I interviewed two parents (see Appendix E) to determine if teacher attrition and mobility with the addition of COVID-19 had impacted their children in any way.

Data Analysis Techniques

I used the data from my surveys that were populated on Microsoft Forms. Each Likert Scale response was broken down into percentages. For the open-ended questions, I looked for themes and recorded how many teachers responded with similar answers.

For the semi-structured interviews, I analyzed participant responses for common themes. To do this, I coded the text of the interviews with different colors and looked for ideas that expressed similar thoughts. I put each of these themes in different categories and listed similar responses under each one. I created a chart of these themes for each set of interviews, teachers,

administrators, and parents (see Appendix F). I reported my data in aggregate, and I did not use data analysis software to interpret any part of my program evaluation.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting any research for my program evaluation, I submitted an application to the National Louis University Institutional Review Board and received approval for the study. Participation in my research was voluntary only. There were no anticipated risks for participants in this program evaluation beyond that of everyday life. Participants did not have to answer any questions that may have made them feel uncomfortable.

Before agreeing to complete the survey or participate in an interview, I provided an Informed Consent Form for each participant to sign. In the Facebook initial post (see Appendix A), I outlined the goals and purposes of the surveys and interviews. I explained the responses of the survey and interview participants would be kept confidential. I also explained that the identities of the survey participants would be anonymous, and the identities of the interviewed participants would be kept confidential.

Limitations

One of the main limitations of this study was the sample size of participants for both the survey and interviews. I had representatives from eight states for my survey; however, 19 out of the 30 participants were from Florida. I would like to have had more representation from other states and heard from more participants to see if the rate of teacher attrition and the impacts from it were the same throughout the United States.

Another limitation was that candidates who volunteered to participate in interviews were all from Florida, and the two parents who participate also happened to be educators. Florida had

been hit strongly with COVID-19 cases and both circumstances may have brought some bias to my study.

Conclusion

I used a mixed-methods design of quantitative and qualitative data taken from my survey and interviews for my program evaluation. I analyzed the data and interpreted it to determine what the underlying factors of teacher mobility, attrition, and retention were and how COVID-19 had an impact. I used the data from this study to create an action plan aimed at retaining teachers in the field of education.

Chapter Four: Results

The findings from my surveys and interviews provided me with answers to my questions surrounding teacher mobility, attrition, and retention. I also gained insight into how COVID-19 had affected these issues. I analyzed my closed and open-ended questions on my teacher surveys, and searched for themes from my teacher, administrator, and parent surveys. I reported the data from interviews in aggregated form.

Findings

My findings came from both teacher surveys and teacher, administrator, and parent interviews. The teacher survey had 14 questions comprised of Likert Scale and open-ended questions. The teacher and administrator interviews were each composed of five questions, and the parent interviews had four questions.

The first two teacher survey questions were about demographics, in which state the teachers were teaching or had taught, and for how long. In the next section of the survey, I asked questions about whether teacher preparation programs prepared teachers for the teaching field, if they had left the teaching field and for what reasons, and whether they returned to the field of education after leaving. In the next section of the survey, I asked questions related to COVID-19. In the last section, I asked questions regarding keeping teachers in the teaching field and asked about policy changes, salary, and reasons teachers would leave education. The teacher survey responses were based on a Likert Scale using the terms agree, strongly agree, disagree, and strongly disagree, as well as an open-ended question. I conducted the interviews on Zoom as well as in my office with the doors closed for privacy.

Surveys

I created my survey (see Appendix B) using Microsoft Forms and uploaded it to Facebook for responses. I created an initial post on Facebook (see Appendix A) to explain what my dissertation was about and to find candidates who matched my study. Thirty educators responded to my survey. The first two questions were related to demographics, and I asked in which state the teachers currently worked, and how long they had been in the field. The majority of my responses, 19, came from Florida educators. I had one response from California, two from New Jersey, two from Arkansas, one from Missouri, one from Oklahoma, one from Wisconsin, and two from New York. In the second question, I asked about the number of years teachers had worked in the field. Responses varied from three to 41 years of experience with 23% of teachers having worked less than 10 years, 57% having taught between 10 and 20 years, and 20% having worked from 20 to 41 years.

In the next section of my survey, I asked teachers about leaving the field, and if they thought their teacher preparation program prepared them for the real world of teaching. Responses were in Likert Scale format (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree), and my questions were really statements or prompts. In the third prompt, I stated, “I left the teaching field for another field.” Out of 30 participants, 58.6% strongly disagreed, 20.7% disagreed, 17.2% agreed, and 3.4% strongly agreed with this statement. Statement 4 said, “My college preparation program prepared me for my educational journey.” Among the responses, 6.7% strongly disagreed, 23.3% disagreed, 56.7% agreed, and 13.3% strongly agreed with this statement.

Statement 5 said, “I have thought about leaving the teaching field for another career or to stay home.” Of all the responses, 16.7% strongly disagreed, 3.3% disagreed, 43.3% agreed, and

36.7% strongly agreed. Statement 6 said, “I have left the teaching field but later in my teaching career returned.” Out of the 30 participants, 53.3% strongly disagreed, 33.3% disagreed, 10% agreed, and 3.3% strongly agreed with this statement. Question 7 was a follow-up question to Statement 6 and asked those who responded with “agree” or “strongly agree” to list reasons they returned. Seven out of the 30 participants responded with, “missed the classroom/students,” “moved states,” and “could not find another job” as reasons.

In items 8, 9, and 14, I addressed COVID-19 and its impact on teachers’ decisions to stay or leave education. Statement 8 said, “COVID-19 has impacted my decision to remain in or leave the teaching field.” Among the respondents, 16.7% strongly disagreed, 36.7% disagreed, 40% agreed, and 6.7% strongly agreed with this statement. Statement 9 said, “I left teaching because of COVID-19.” In response, 65.5% of respondents strongly disagreed, 34.5% disagreed, and 0% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Statement 14 was an open-ended prompt, and it stated, “List ways COVID-19 has impacted your decision to stay or leave the field of education.” Out of the 30 participants, 24 responded to this item on the survey. One respondent stated that COVID-19 did not impact their decision to stay or leave. Two respondents stated that they stayed because they could not leave their students and two others stayed because they needed the money. Themes in the remaining 19 responses were reasons teachers wanted to leave during COVID-19. These included, “health,” “double workload,” “barriers and restrictions making teaching more complicated,” “no consistency, lack of guidelines and protocols,” “safety risks involved,” “COVID-19 cases being brushed under the rug,” “state testing requirements,” and “I didn’t sign up for this.”

In the last part of my survey, I focused on reasons in general teachers wanted to leave the field of education and what changes would make them want to stay in the teaching field.

Statement 10 said, “I would remain in or return to the teaching field if policy changes were put in place to make it better for educators.” Out of the participants’ responses, 6.9% strongly disagreed, 17.2% disagreed, 34.5% agreed and 41.4% strongly agreed with this statement.

Question 11 was an open-ended question, and I asked respondents to “List what policy changes or other changes that would make you want to stay in education.” Out of the 30 survey participants, 23 answered this question. One respondent did not have any suggestions. One respondent was retired and did not wish to return to teaching. Themes among the remaining 21 respondents included, “more time for planning,” “maximum cap size for students – too many students,” “more support from administration,” “higher salaries,” “certification requirements that affect longevity in the profession,” “all teachers vaccinated,” “fair evaluations,” and “respect and trust for teachers – less micromanaging.”

Question 12 was also an open-ended question, and I asked respondents to, “List reasons that have made you think about leaving or made you leave the field of education.” Out of the 30 participants, 26 answered this question. The most common themes included pay, politics, stress, workload, long hours, teacher burnout, student behavior, and raising my own child. Other responses included age (close to retirement), unions, pressure from administrators and parents, lack of opportunities for career advancement, administrator support, and requirements from district leadership. Also noted was “lack of freedom to teach what you want,” “too much weight put on standardized testing,” and “Since I taught an elective, the importance of my content was continually pushed aside.” Related to COVID-19, respondents stated, “vaccines” and “mask mandates.” Statement 13 said, “Salary has impacted my reasons to stay or leave the field of education.” Out of the 30 responses, 3.3% strongly disagreed, 16.7% disagreed, 60% agreed, and 20% strongly agreed with this statement.

Interviews

In addition to gathering data from surveys, I also chose to interview teachers, administrators, and parents. In the following sections, their responses have been recorded. Due to COVID-19, some interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Teacher Interviews. I interviewed four teachers for this study. I asked each interviewee five questions (see Appendix C). The first question was related to demographics, and I asked, “How long have you been in the educational field?” Teacher 1 responded 16 years, Teacher 2 (35 years), Teacher 3 (14 years), and Teacher 4, (10 years). In Question 2, I asked, “Have you ever thought about leaving the field? Why or Why not?” Teacher 1 responded, “Yes, mostly for health reasons. I am looking for something less demanding. I do feel burnout as well.” Teacher 2 responded,

Yes. I think that more and more is expected of teachers, and there is a lot of pressure in the job today. You have to be available 24/7, and you could work around the clock and not get done all that you want to get done. Also, technology has become a big part of the classroom, and steps have not been taken to properly train how to use it.

Teacher 3 responded,

Yes, I was overwhelmed by the amount of work and limited amount of prep time to complete it. I was working twelve hours plus a day to create my lessons and then had to add on parent emails, special education meetings, and other various tasks. I was also tutoring several times a week to make ends meet and going to grad school to try to ensure a pay raise to survive.

Teacher 4 responded,

Yes. I have thought about leaving the profession over the last five years. There is a lot of extra expectations to work at home, paperwork, meetings, etc. There are not enough hours in the day to do this in our contracted time. The pay does not match the expectations. I am burnt out from the amount of work, stress, and expectations with little to no help from administration.

In the third question, I asked, “Has COVID-19 impacted your decision to stay or leave the teaching field? Why or why not?” Teacher 1 responded, “Somewhat, the extra workload due to COVID-19, quarantines, online teaching, etc.” Teacher 2 said,

At the beginning of COVID-19, I had a hard time teaching online because I was not trained to do it. It made it extremely stressful, and I think that the children missed out. At this time, I thought about leaving the field. It was not how I wanted to teach, and I had a fear we might be expected to teach online after COVID-19 was over. Now that I have gained some knowledge and have had to teach online and in class, I have learned a lot, and I am more comfortable with it.

Teacher 3 stated, “No, because I need the money and am not in a place where I feel I can secure another job (what I am trained for) and keep good benefits for my family.” Teacher 4 responded,

Yes, COVID-19 has made me think even more about my job. I was expected to teach two modalities last year. The year before, I was expected to teach completely remotely and change my classroom over from face-to-face to an all-online platform. It was a lot of work with no increase in pay. I was essentially two teachers last year with double the workload and high expectations with testing scores and accountability to close the learning gap.

In Question 4 of the teacher interview, I asked, “Why do you think teachers want to move schools or leave the teaching profession altogether?” Teacher 1 responded, “I believe burnout from large class sizes, behavior problems, and guidance counselors being used for testing, so they don’t have time to help students emotionally. Also, buying own supplies.” Teacher 2 said, “It is a lot of work without a lot of compensation. The job is becoming bigger, and more is expected without more pay and without recognition for the work that is being done on a daily basis.” Teacher 3 stated,

Yes, because teachers are underappreciated and underpaid. It’s a highly stressful job in which there’s little prep time and always more being asked of you. We are also the punching bags for everything that goes wrong. If a doctor misdiagnoses, it’s okay. If we mess up or don’t give enough, we are lazy, no good, and the parents know better. There’s limited trust.

Teacher 4 responded,

I have spoken to a lot of teachers regarding this issue. It is a common problem in the profession. We do not get paid nearly enough for the amount of work that is expected. It is also very difficult to plan and do other tasks that are expected when we are with students most of the day. There is not enough time to do other things, such as graphing intervention data, lesson planning, grading, keeping up with our classroom, professional development, and meetings (which often occur during our planning time). A lot of teachers feel the stress of the amount of work and expectations and do not feel supported. We also do not like having to use our personal time to complete the workload. Teachers have to deal with worse behavior every year with limited support.

In Question 5, I asked, “What would it take to retain teachers in the field of education?” Teacher 1 responded, “More money and resources for classrooms, smaller class sizes, and more mental health support for students.” Teacher 2 said, “There needs to be more instruction in technology and how to utilize it in the classroom and better pay.” Teacher 3 replied, Society needs to change some to value teachers, but mainly, teacher education needs to change. Teachers need more preparation to deal with parents and behaviors and running a classroom. They also need more prep time and more support from schools and administration during the school year.

Teacher 4 responded,

If I were babysitting, I would make in the 6-figure range for the number of kids I have in my classroom. I would need a lot more time to do the other tasks expected with less face-to-face with the kids or have more support with graphing data and meetings. I would also need a lot more money. There is not enough help, time, or money, and the expectations placed on teachers are too high.

Administrator Interviews. I interviewed two administrators for this study. I asked each administrator five questions (see Appendix D). The first question was related to demographics, and I asked, “How long have you been in the educational field? (As a teacher/As an administrator?)” The first administrator stated, “16 years teaching and 15 years as an administrator.” The second one stated, “Seven years as a teacher and six years as a dean.” In the second question, I asked, “How has teacher mobility, attrition impacted you and the school overall?” Administrator 1 said,

Certain teachers are hard to hold onto such as math, science, and ESE teachers. Staff shortages are difficult, but I make arrangements with substitute teachers. It is

difficult though with lack of budget and substitute teachers to choose from. I used my personal network or put ads on job sites to help. I also partnered with local colleges. These students bring additional life to the campus.

Administrator 2 said,

Although my school has a low turnover, the majority of our teachers are between 50 and 60 years old, who have been teaching for 30 plus years and have remained at our school for over 20 years. This impedes student performance because teachers have become complacent. It is my opinion that our teachers are primarily planning for retirement and looking forward to their final days in education, disrupting school collaboration and collegial relationships among faculty.

In Question 3 I asked, “How has COVID-19 impacted this topic?” Administrator 1 responded,

COVID-19 changed the playing field altogether. Teachers now want to work from home instead of face-to-face. Several teachers in my age group (50 plus) retired, stepped out of education to look for something else. So much was added to the day such as accountability and the whole question of fidelity with at-home student work. There was little structure and guidance moving from online back to face-to-face. Schools had to change safety protocols such as sanitizing, social distancing, masks, and clear screens. With the addition of the new Delta variant, things will continue to be tight during the 2021-2022 school year. Teachers have been scared to come back.

Administrator 2 responded,

COVID-19 was undoubtedly an added burden on overtaxed teachers and overwhelmed administrators. This led to teachers becoming even more ineffective since they were already reluctant to learning new things and utilizing different resources due to the longevity of their careers. They believed they knew enough and were not open to learning more.

In Question 4 I inquired, “How can you as an administrator make a difference in this area?” Administrator 1 stated,

The administration can make or break a school by leading by example, being positive. I show that I am not above doing anything – kids first, “learning for everyone, whatever it takes.” I include all stakeholders. The school culture is like a parent university. I set up a schedule two days a week for workshops on certain topics utilizing technology. Teachers are given opportunities to lead. I, myself, lead from the front and back.

The second administrator stated, “As a leadership team member, I will continue to offer and support opportunities to build teachers’ skills for this new terrain.”

In Question 5 I asked, “What strategies have you put in place for teacher recruitment, training, and retention?” Administrator 1 responded,

I have partnered with colleges to find new teachers. For retention, I use warm fuzzies and do a book study with my staff to get to know them. I give teachers the gift of time, support them academically, and support them in their needs. I frontload teacher evaluations and review the rubric with them, so they know what to expect. I function as a supportive role other than I gotcha.

The second administrator said,

I am an avid believer that using a seniority-based approach to determine layoffs is not the best approach. It has led to my school losing out on a lot of experienced and effective teachers. Therefore, since my school is not in a position to recruit teachers, I have emphasized the recruitment of teaching assistants, substitute teachers, and paraprofessionals into the profession with incentives.

Parent Interviews. I interviewed two parents for this study. Both happened to be educators. I asked each of them four questions. In the first question, I asked, “Has teacher mobility or attrition affected you or your child?” The first parent responded no. The second parent responded yes and added,

My child had a teacher who was quarantined last year. We also had to deal with multiple substitute teachers because of maternity leave. She also left the profession after the year was up, which is why she took even more unpaid days off. This left my child with a lot of behaviors in her classroom, and she came home upset daily. There was no stability or support for the class while the teacher was out.

In the second question on the parent survey, I asked, “Did COVID-19 play an impact?” The first parent responded, no. The second parent responded, “Yes, the teacher decided to leave the profession and had to be quarantined. There were more restrictions placed in classrooms, and masks made it more uncomfortable for my child.”

The third question I asked parents was, “Why do you think it is important to retain teachers?” Parent 1 responded, “Students will do better if teachers are retained and have time to

be successful in their teaching material and classroom management. Turnover is hard on students and staff.”

Parent 2 said,

The parents need qualified teachers who care and are invested in their students. If they do not have support and feel respected, they burn out and leave the profession. If we have respected, well paid and well-supported teachers, they pour more love and heart into teaching and the students thrive.

In Question 4 I asked, “What changes do you think are needed to prevent this from happening?” Parent 1 responded, “Teachers need smaller class sizes, more money for classroom supplies, and more resources for struggling students (emotionally, behaviorally, and academically).” Parent 2 said,

The teachers need to be paid a lot more. There needs to be more time for planning and help for them to actually have time to help each child’s needs. There are too many kids in the classroom and not enough support. The teachers are not miracle workers, but the expectations on them are that they are [miracle workers]. They need smaller classes, more time to plan, and more time with small groups of children.

The Four C’s – Context, Culture, Condition, and Competencies

In reviewing my data, I used the systematic approach incorporating the 4Cs – context, culture, conditions, and competencies (Wagner et al., 2006) to identify and analyze the areas that needed change related to teacher attrition now and during the pandemic in school districts across the United States. I created an “As-Is” diagram to help me describe the findings from my data (see Appendix G). This change will require

what Wagner et al. (2006) call a “shift in thinking, and the need to understand the interrelationships among various components of the work” (p. 97). A task this big will take systems change with all stakeholders working together addressing each of the areas of context, culture, conditions, and competencies. “Another dimension to systems thinking is that a system runs on its own momentum and all its parts work together to keep it going. The interactions of these parts naturally create some kind of product or result (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 106).

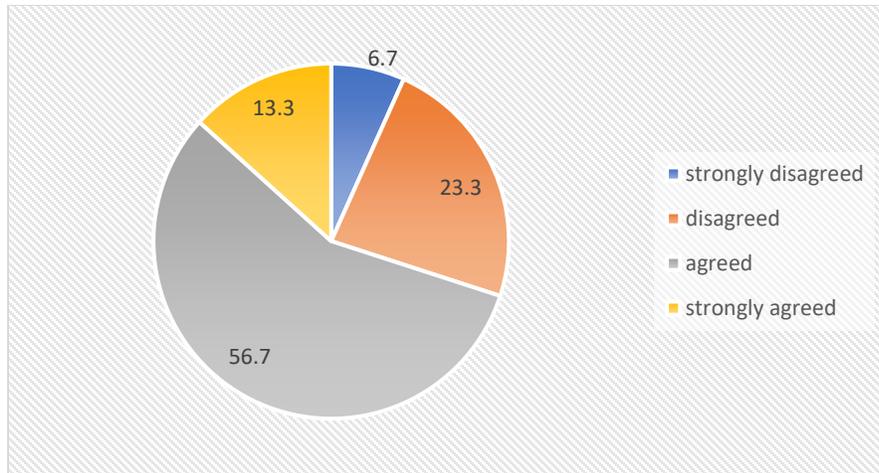
Context

Context refers to larger organizational systems and the skill demands put on individuals to succeed in order to change. These include global, state, community, and local districts’ aspirations and needs (Wagner, et al., 2006). The overarching research question in my study related to context was, “What factors are affecting teacher turnover, mobility, and attrition, and what impact has COVID-19 had on those factors?” On my “As is” 4 Cs chart (see Appendix G), I identified several elements that are examples of context. These are the worldwide pandemic due to COVID-19, teacher health, teacher shortages, high teacher turnover (especially with new teachers), fewer candidates for teacher preparation programs, and teacher preparation programs not preparing educators for the real world.

Before COVID-19, teacher health was an issue due to the stress of teaching which caused teachers to want to leave the profession. Mack et al. (2019) discovered that “both stress and mental quality of life impact the intention to leave the teaching profession” (p. 10). During my teacher interviews, all four teachers responded that they felt stress, burnout, or were overwhelmed and that these conditions had made them consider leaving teaching. With teachers working during a pandemic, stress and concerns about teacher health have only grown.

“Teachers are facing new demands and showing high levels of stress with the new instructional requirements and the anxieties due to the current state of education and the pandemic” (Pressley, 2021, p. 327).

Teacher shortages due to teacher turnover and fewer candidates entering teacher preparation programs are other factors under context. Sutchter et al. (2019) stated, “Nearly every state is reporting shortages in certain subjects, and most are resorting to hiring teachers who are not fully certified for their teaching assignments” (p. 5). District leaders and administrators have had to recruit teachers from alternative certification programs since there have been fewer college students enrolling in teacher certification programs. “There was a 28 percent decline in the number of students completing preparation programs...” (Partelow, 2019, p. 2). Out of the 30 participants in my study, 20.6% of teachers had left the field of education, and 70% thought their college preparation program prepared them for the real world of teaching as illustrated in Figure 1. This contradicted what I found in current research. Edwards and Nuttall (2014) stated, “The experience of reality shock for beginning teachers can be profound, influencing feelings of belonging to the profession, capacity to teach effectively, and levels of teacher attrition” (p. 1). This finding was a surprise to me since the research I have reviewed says that new teachers have a higher rate of attrition than experienced teachers. In hindsight, I should have asked a follow-up question asking the respondents what the reasons for their responses were.

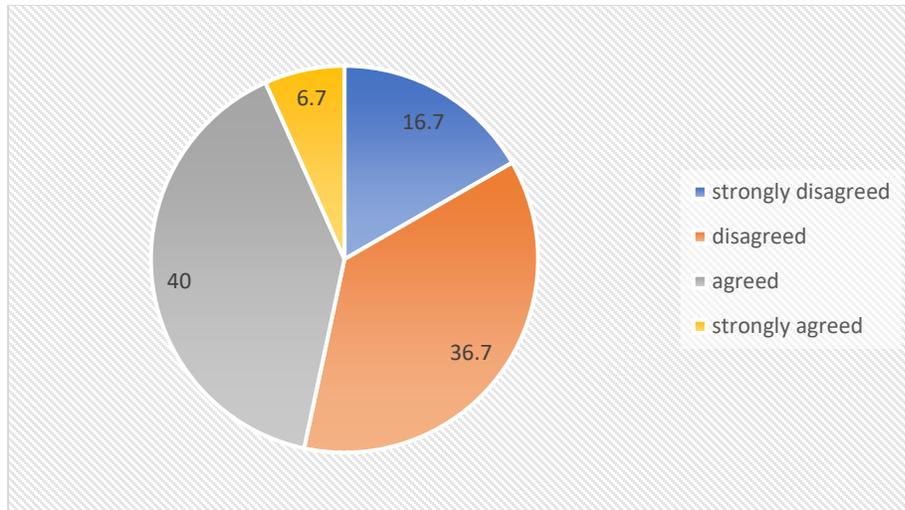
Figure 1*Quality of College Preparation Program for Teachers*

Note. n=30

A context-related research question in my program evaluation was, “In what ways has teacher attrition increased due to the pandemic?” In my survey, 46.7% of participants stated that COVID-19 had impacted teachers’ decisions to stay or leave the field as illustrated in Figure 2. None of the 30 participants in my study actually left teaching because of COVID-19. In a recent research study of 75 teachers, Bartlett (2021) found that 20% left or considered leaving due to COVID-19, in contrast to the pre-COVID 8% annual teacher-attrition rate. “And it matters even more that those leaving are experienced teachers, with none having fewer than five years’ experience and half with 10-plus years in teaching” (Bartlett, 2021, p. 3). My study showed a 26.7% higher rate than Bartlett’s study.

Figure 2.

Impact of COVID-19 on Teachers' Decisions to Stay or Leave



Note. n=30

Culture

In order for an organization to change and grow, it must improve its cultural proficiency. “A culturally proficient environment acknowledges and responds to both individual and group differences” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 27). Wagner et al. (2006) defined culture as, “the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system” (p. 102). In my program evaluation, the research question that addressed culture was, “What factors would create an environment where teachers want to stay?” I identified several elements of culture that needed to be addressed and recorded them on my “As Is” 4 Cs chart (see Appendix G). These included isolation due to the profession itself and isolation due to new procedures put in place because of COVID-19, such as social distancing and quarantining, lack of respect for teachers, teachers’ voices not being heard, and expectations put on teachers.

In the open-ended responses to the questions on my survey, teachers stated that some reasons they wanted to leave the profession were unfair evaluations, little respect for the

profession, and lack of administrator support. These themes were also present in my one-on-one interviews. According to my research, teachers felt like they had many expectations put on them and that they had to find time outside of the workday to attend to them. They also felt like their voices were not being heard. With COVID-19 in play, they felt isolated. Collaboration and team meetings moved to online platforms. Some teachers had family members sick or had to be quarantined themselves. Before COVID-19, creating a culturally proficient school environment was a struggle. Now, compounded with COVID-19, change-leaders faced an even more daunting task in identifying and overcoming the barriers that stood in their way to developing a culturally proficient school. “Failure to recognize or acknowledge Barriers to Cultural Proficiency runs the risk of educators having a deficit worldview function as the default vision for a school or district” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p.113).

Conditions

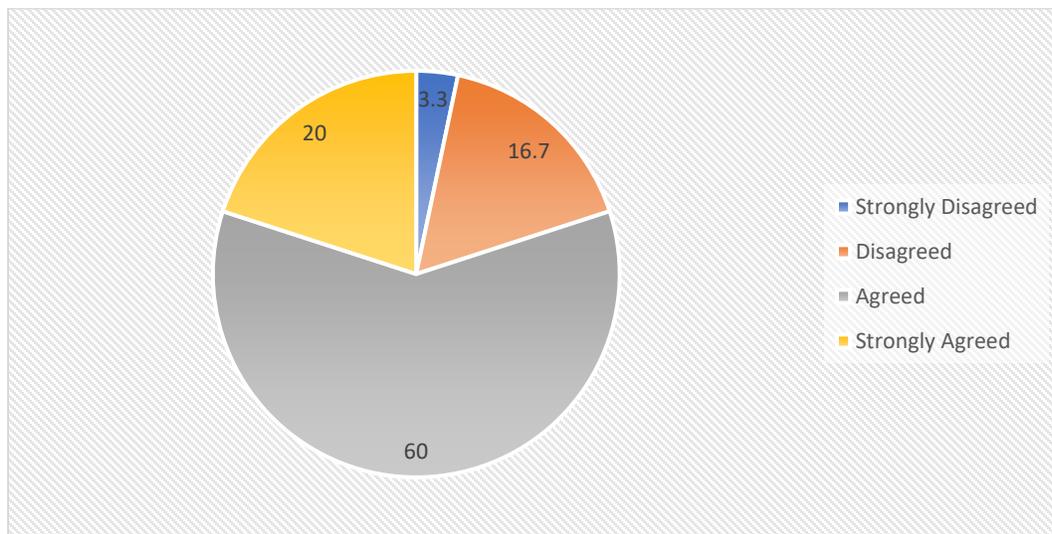
Some of the characteristics I found to reflect culture could also be described as conditions. Wagner et al. (2006) defined conditions “as the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources” (p.101). In my program evaluation, the research question related to conditions was, “What changes need to be made to retain teachers?” Closely related, was one of my secondary research questions, “What supports can be put in place to make teaching more appealing?” From my research, I identified several factors for conditions and placed them on my “As Is” 4 Cs chart (see Appendix G). These conditions included teacher salaries, eLearning or bimodal instruction, inexperienced teachers, lack of new teacher applicants, student behavior issues, and little administrator support. I included “too many expectations for teachers” under the culture category; however, it fits this category as well, especially with new expectations related to teaching during a pandemic.

Conditions are visible arrangements such as time, space, and money; whereas culture refers to the invisible views held collectively throughout a system (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 102).

In my study, 80% of teachers stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that salary would impact their decision to stay or leave the education profession. All four teachers I interviewed for my study stated in their responses that salary had impacted their decision to stay or leave the profession. Three out of the four teachers interviewed said that increasing salary was a key factor for retaining teachers. This finding is supported in research by Roza (2010) who found that “the vast majority of teachers prefer salary increases over many other reforms often proposed as ways to keep teachers...” (p. 58)

Figure 3

Importance of Salary



Note. n=30

Before COVID-19, teaching was identified as a stressful career. “Depression, anxiety, and stress increase turnover intentions among teachers” (Husain et al., 2016, p. 52). In March 2020, many schools began shutting down due to the global pandemic. Teachers had to switch

modalities of teaching from face-to-face to online learning with little to no instruction on various online platforms.

In many cases, teachers were given mere days or even hours to convert face-to-face classes to online teaching via synchronous and/or asynchronous methods, often in spite of challenges concerning the availability of necessary digital devices, prior training in online techniques, and/or effective online learning support platforms. (MacIntyre et al., 2020, p. 2)

This condition of rapid change added additional anxiety for teachers in an already stressful career. In my research, Teacher 2 described in her interview, “At the beginning of COVID-19, I had a hard time teaching online because I was not trained to do it. It made it extremely stressful, and I think that the children missed out.”

Another condition I found in my research was inexperienced teachers entering the teaching field. Edwards and Nuttall (2014) stated that, “Awareness of the struggle faced by beginning teachers is essential to understand high rates of attrition by beginning teachers” (p. 1). It is also important to note that many new teachers enter the field with an alternative certification. The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) stated that “Of the 3.8 million public school teachers working in school year 2015–16, approximately 676,000 (18%) had entered teaching through an alternative route to certification program” (p. 1). Teachers with alternative certification are not exposed to the same experiences as teachers from traditional programs. Since they enter the alternative certification program with a degree already, the curricula are condensed. Finding ways to support all new teachers in the education field is critical.

Even though states have created alternative teaching certification pathways, there has still been a lack of applicants in the teacher pool. Fewer and fewer candidates are entering the teaching field. “Since 2010, total enrollment nationwide in teacher preparation programs has declined by more than one-third...” (Partelow, 2019, p. 1).

Student behavior issues and administrator support go hand-in-hand. Student behavior and lack of administrator support were both themes identified in responses to my surveys and interviews as reasons teachers thought about leaving the profession. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) stated,

The workplace condition most predictive of teacher turnover was a perceived lack of administrative support, a construct that measures how teachers rate an administrator’s ability to encourage and acknowledge staff, communicate a clear vision and generally run a school well. When teachers strongly disagree that their administration is supportive, they are more than twice as likely to move schools or leave teaching than when they strongly agree that their administration is supportive. (p. 15)

To improve student behavior issues, teachers need support. This support is not only needed for classroom behavior.

Teachers identified in my study said that they had too many expectations put on them and not enough time. Administrator 1 stated in my interview, “Give teachers the gift of time” and “support them with their needs.” Administrators could protect teachers’ valuable planning time by communicating more via email and by not planning meetings during this period. Teachers could be compensated for work such as meetings and trainings completed outside of the

traditional workday. Administrators supporting teachers by showing them that their time is valuable would help teachers feel respected and give them a reason to stay in the profession.

Competencies

The last of the 4 Cs is competencies. Wagner et al. (2006) defined competencies as “the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning” (p. 99). The research question related to competencies in my study was, “What new knowledge, training, and policies are needed to support and retain teachers?” I identified several competencies that need to be explored in my surveys and interviews and placed them on my “As Is” 4 Cs chart (see Appendix G). They were new teachers, lack of experience, mentors needed for new teachers, little time for collaboration/team planning, teachers feel overwhelmed, skills needed to teach online, and more professional development needed overall. These findings helped answer my research question.

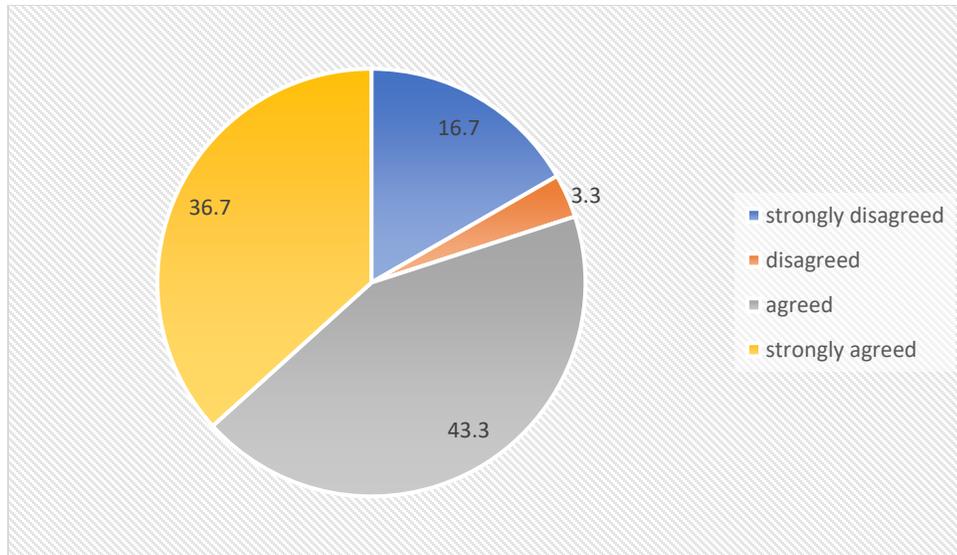
In my surveys and interviews, teachers stated that they needed more time for professional development and time to improve their overall teaching craft. With the addition of Covid-19, stressors placed on teachers only grew. Teachers were expected to move from face-to-face to online instruction with little to no professional development in the new online platforms. This added additional stress for both beginning teachers as well as experienced teachers. “The rapid conversion to online teaching, the blurred lines between work and home coupled with the omnipresent concern for the health of family and oneself, has produced high levels of stress” (MacIntyre et al., 2020, p. 11).

From my study, I also found that teachers needed more time for collaboration and team planning and more time in general for tasks such as lesson planning and progress monitoring. They felt overwhelmed with the stressors of the position. All four teachers I interviewed stated that they were overwhelmed, burned out, and needed more time in the day to do all that was

expected of them. Teachers felt they needed more time for professional development, especially training in online teaching that became necessary during the pandemic. “Competencies are most effectively built when professional development is focused, job-embedded, continuous, constructed, and collaborative” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 99).

Interpretation

After reviewing the data from my study, I determined that overall, teachers were struggling due to stress and the multiple expectations put on them daily. The COVID-19 pandemic had only added more stress with the addition of health risks and fear of the unknown. The effects of COVID-19 were changing daily, and it was not known how it would impact teacher attrition overall in the long run. Based on my research, 80% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, “I have thought about leaving the teaching field for another career or to stay home.” These data are illustrated in Figure 4. These results indicated the teachers were actively thinking about leaving the field. This number was much larger than the predicted rate of attrition noted by Sutchter et al. (2016) who said, “By 2020, an estimated 300,000 new teachers will be needed per year, and by 2025, that number will increase to 316,000 annually” (p. 1). These findings by Sutchter et al. were significant because out of the 30 teachers surveyed in my study 80% were thinking about leaving the profession, and the survey was conducted during the middle of a pandemic. Based on the results in my survey, the implications for attrition could be increased all over the United States. Only time and more research will tell.

Figure 4*Participants' Thoughts about Attrition*

Note. n=30

When I asked teachers reasons they thought about leaving, some responded with pay, politics, stress, workload, student behavior, pressure from the administration, not feeling valued, and health concerns. Some of these findings were the same as those found in research conducted before the pandemic and some factors were due to the country experiencing a pandemic. In the spring of 2020, teachers were forced to move to a new modality of teaching, online virtual instruction, with little training as the world began shutting down. Virtual instruction was new to many teachers and students. As the 2020-2021 school year approached, teachers faced the new stressor of returning to face-to-face instruction. This was a new unknown, and many teachers feared for their own lives. The numbers of COVID-19 related deaths only continued to grow into the 2021-2022 school year. “As of Jan. 5, 2021, at least 1,238 active and retired K-12 educators and personnel have died of COVID-19” (Maxwell, 2022, p. 1). Teachers had to follow new safety protocols: sanitizing, desk shields, masks, and social distancing. Since the effects of

COVID-19 were changing daily, only time would reveal the culminating and long-lasting impact that COVID-19 had on students and teachers overall.

Judgments

The first part of my overarching research question was, “What factors are affecting teacher turnover, mobility, and attrition?” The data were clear and revealed that the factors impacting teacher turnover, mobility, and attrition were lack of time, pay, lack of administrator support, student behavior, stress/expectations put on teachers, limited trust, and class size. The second part of my overarching research question was, “What impact has COVID-19 had on those factors?” The answer I found was additional stress due to health concerns, implementing new safety practices such as social distancing, masks, sanitizing, teaching from home or bimodal instruction with little training or support, and more responsibility without additional pay.

My second overarching research question stated, “What changes need to be made to retain teachers?” Responses included increased pay, policy changes put in place to support educators, more time and support, and more respect for educators. Related to COVID-19, responses included students and staff vaccinations and mask mandates.

My research included four related research questions,

1. In what ways has teacher attrition increased due to the pandemic?
2. What factors would create an environment where teachers want to stay?
3. What supports can be put in place to make teaching more appealing?
4. What new knowledge, training, and policies are needed to support and retain teachers?

To answer Question 1, I found that 46.7% of teachers had left or had thought of leaving due to the pandemic. This result was significant since the pandemic was still ongoing, and

educational leaders could see an increase in teachers leaving the field if changes were not made to make them feel safe.

In Question 2 I asked, “What factors would create an environment where teachers want to stay?” Responses included increased pay, support from administrators, policy changes, more time to plan, smaller class sizes and more safety protocols put in place for COVID-19. These responses also aligned with Question 3, “What supports can be put in place to make teaching more appealing?” Teachers stated that they wanted support from administrators, more resources, and they wanted to feel safe at work.

In Question 4 I asked, “What new knowledge, training, and policies are needed to support and retain teachers?” Teachers stated that they needed more training for online or bimodal instruction, less micromanaging, and trust from their administrators. Teachers wanted policy changes that include more pay, more time, and protection from COVID-19.

My findings were not positive because they showed that teacher attrition was increasing or will be increasing because of the effects of COVID-19. In my study, 80% of teachers said that they had thought about leaving or had left the teaching field. If this number is indicative of teachers in education on a larger scale, finding teachers to fill classrooms nationwide will become an even more critical issue that has to be addressed on a larger scale by legislators, national and state educational leaders, and school districts across America.

Recommendations

In my research, teachers stated what they wanted and needed to remain in the field of education. The question is, how can this be achieved? Many researchers have addressed this topic, and come up with solutions for change; however, it is still an issue.

Given the effect teachers have on student achievement, the potential for teachers to reduce the achievement gap, and the high rate of teacher attrition, a great deal of research has been conducted on teacher recruitment and retention.

Unfortunately, this body of research, while substantial, falls short of answering key practical questions needed to transform research into policy. (Gunther, 2019, p. 3)

The COVID-19 pandemic added problems, and because the pandemic was ongoing at the time of this study, there was no way to determine the overall impact the pandemic will have on teacher attrition over time.

Due to the safety concerns for teachers, students, and staff in the educational system, the first area that should be addressed and changed is safety protocols during COVID-19. There were many procedures in place such as social distancing, mask mandates, desk shields, sanitizing, and temperature checks. The question is, were all of these procedures being done consistently? My recommendation is for districts to have protocols and checklists to follow each day to make sure schools are adhering to the safety practices. District personnel should perform frequent checks and visits to individual sites to see if the protocols are in place.

With the developments of vaccines for COVID-19, debates had arisen over whether or not to require all staff and students to be vaccinated. This had become a political issue. Teachers in my research recommended mandated vaccines as well as mask mandates. These would add another layer of protection for all students and staff.

Besides COVID-19, the main reasons teachers wanted to leave the profession were due to salary, lack of administrative support, large class sizes, and student behavior. To address these needs, school district leaders need to analyze their budgets and find ways to address the salary

issue. Teachers stated that they work on their own time and that is not acknowledged. Increasing teacher pay would also show more respect for the field and entice more applicants for teacher preparation programs.

My last recommendation is for administrators to “hear their teachers’ voices.” Since I have served in an administrative role, I know about the frustrations and overwhelming jobs administrators have. Still, teachers need to feel supported. This could start with adjusting class size, supporting teachers with student behavior issues, joining teachers during their weekly planning, and meeting with teachers one-on-one to learn about their needs. Administrators need training and support on how to build relationships. This could be done with other administrators in collaborative biweekly or monthly meetings.

Conclusion

In my study, I found that teachers were struggling and that their struggles had only increased during the pandemic. There have been multiple studies in the area of teacher attrition; however, with the addition of Covid-19, this issue has been growing and needs to be addressed. The responses to my “As Is” chart are outlined in my “To Be” chart in the next chapter and address each of the 4Cs – context, culture, conditions, and competencies (Wagner et al., 2006).

Chapter Five: To-Be Framework

From the research in my program evaluation, I discovered teachers were leaving or thinking about leaving the teaching field due to daily stress and lack of support. This had increased due to added stressors and health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. I found teachers would consider remaining in the teaching field if they were provided with higher salaries, smaller class sizes, more time for planning, increased safety protocols for COVID-19, and policy changes to support educators. My change leadership plan will include teachers, administrators, parents, and community stakeholders working together to find solutions to address these issues and to help retain teachers in the educational field.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

My vision for the future related to this program evaluation is outlined in my “To Be” 4 Cs chart (see Appendix H). The chart is an analysis of the context, conditions, competencies, and cultural changes needed to meet my vision of a future for education where COVID-19 will no longer be a threat to educators and students, teacher attrition will be decreased, additional funds will be available to invest in student achievement, and teachers will choose to remain in the teaching field.

Future Context

Historically, teacher attrition has been an issue for many years. Since the 1970s and early 1980s, research has shown teacher attrition to be a problem (Croasmun et al., 1999, p. 2). However, Behrstock-Sherratt (2016) dated teacher supply and demand issues going back to the 1930s. She stated,

Despite a saturation of research about why teachers leave the profession and the policy interventions that might convince them to stay, remarkably little research

details the nature of teacher shortages—that is, how teacher shortages have been measured and framed over time, and how policy leaders have addressed them and to what effect. What we do know is that teacher shortages have been of great policy concern for decades, perhaps centuries, but clear-cut data depicting the problem have been hard to come by. (p. 1)

My change leadership plan will include policies that need to be put into place to address teacher attrition based on the data collected in my program evaluation.

Social factors affecting teacher attrition found in my research were lack of respect for the teaching profession overall, less candidates entering the field of education, and the health concerns related to COVID-19. In an ideal future context, there will be more support for preservice teachers. School districts will partner with universities and create a college-to-school district pathway, offering financial incentives and mental health support for new teachers entering the field. State and national leaders will create policies to provide financial incentives and scholarships for college students and new teachers. For the first five years of teaching, state and national leaders will reward teachers through these scholarships by either a choice of payments towards their college loans or a financial incentive after each successful year of teaching (with a positive teacher evaluation rated effective or above). After completing five successful years of teaching, teachers' college debt will be erased, or teachers without college debt will receive a financial incentive. Most teachers and students will be vaccinated, and COVID-19 will no longer be a threat to teachers or students. These incentives will address the teacher shortage, help school districts recover from the financial losses due to teacher attrition, add to the respect of the profession, and attract more candidates to the field of education.

Future Culture

Changing the culture of an organization is not easy. In my “To Be” reality, school culture will not be an issue. District personnel and administrators will work together to create a culture where teachers want to stay. To create this environment, all stakeholders will work together to create a shared vision and develop an action plan to achieve this vision. “Our typical way of creating a future is by specifying the vision and the goals and then defining a blueprint to achieve them” (Block, 2018, p. 80). The vision will be based on shared values and beliefs and will include the voices of the teachers represented.

In my ideal future culture, shared beliefs will include respecting teachers, less micromanaging of their daily tasks, and time to create a culture of collaboration. For accountability purposes, teachers will have a voice in how their practices are evaluated. Frequent communication between administrators and teachers will help build trust and relationships. Administrators will value the input of their teachers and include them in decisions impacting them. Providing time for teachers to collaborate will help ease their stress, help them feel less isolated, and help them feel valued. These supportive behaviors from administrators will lead to meaningful change. “Culture is reflected in the behavior, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals and groups. The single greatest impediment to meaningful change is the gap between what leaders say that they value and what leaders actually value” (Reeves, 2009, p. 37). Creating a culture of meaningful collaboration and of shared beliefs will require administrators to lead by example, and this will be evident in my “To Be” reality.

Administrators will not only change the culture by supporting their teachers. They will show cultural competence in the way they develop and implement new programs and

curricula and how they support the school with instructional practices. The culturally proficient leader will apply cultural competence by choosing and developing new programs and curricula that consider all stakeholders and cultures and are equitable to all students. Instructional practices of teachers will be evaluated fairly and with respect.

Culturally competent educators incorporate culturally appropriate behavior in performance appraisals; advocate for change in policies, practice, and procedures throughout the school and community; and speak on issues about persons with disabilities, Gay men, Lesbians, and other underrepresented groups when no members of these groups are visibly present. (Lindsey et al., 2019. p. 139)

These characteristics mentioned in Lindsey's statement will be seen in all district leaders in my ideal future leadership plan.

Future Conditions

Ideal conditions for my leadership plan will start with an overall increase in pay for teachers across all states. Another condition will be more applicants applying for teaching positions. New teachers will be assigned a teacher buddy/mentor to provide support for the first three years of teaching. Administrators will meet regularly with new teachers to provide supports where needed.

Teachers commonly said it would help if their school or district provided additional time to plan or catch up, reduced class sizes, waived some expectations or required tasks during periods of particularly high stress, or reduced the number or required meetings. (Will, 2021, p. 4)

Administrators will also help by providing support for seasoned teachers and with student behavioral issues in the classroom. More time will be allocated to provide teachers with the

necessary training and support needed to implement new instructional models such as eLearning platforms, new curriculum programs, and policies being put into place. There will also be follow-up support to see if teachers need additional support implementing the changes.

Internal factors impacting future conditions identified in my research were the need for new teacher mentors and administrator support, especially regarding behavior issues in the classroom. Research has demonstrated that providing a new teacher with a mentor will increase their success and improve attrition rates. “Experience with mentoring in the classroom has demonstrated that this type of new teacher support can promote quality in the new teacher’s instruction and also motivation to make teaching a life-long career” (Solis, 2004, p. 2). In my study, the need for support, especially with discipline, came up frequently. If administrators provide more assistance with student discipline, it will not only help teachers feel supported but will also increase student achievement as “... management of schoolwide discipline issues indirectly affects student achievement...” (Glanz, 2006, p.90).

External factors include pay and time for professional development. In my study 78.8% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that salary impacted their decision to stay or leave the field of education. According to Freedberg (2019), teachers’ wages have not grown overall in the United States since 1994. He stated that “In 2018 the average teacher’s weekly wage was \$1,182. That is 32.7% less than the weekly wage earned by other comparable college graduates. That’s double the 16.4% wage disadvantaged teachers experienced in 1996” (p. 3). These statistics should be a wake-up call. In my ideal future, this condition will be addressed by teachers being paid a competitive wage.

Time for professional development is another external condition. The MetLife Survey of American Teachers (MetLife, 2013) stated that 63% of teachers believe that time for professional

development has decreased over the last twelve months. In my ideal future, teachers will have time carved out for not only professional development, but also time for tasks such as lesson planning, grading, collaborative planning, and other tasks that consume teachers' time. Teachers will be compensated for professional development and tasks completed outside of the traditional workday.

Future Competencies

To address competencies in my vision for the future, teacher attrition will decrease, freeing up funds to invest in student achievement, and all stakeholders will be aware of the competencies needed to retain teachers. In my study, I identified several competencies needed for teacher retention including support, training, mentors for new teachers, and time for teachers to collaborate and to participate in professional development. Lastly, policies will be put into place to provide teachers financial incentives for increasing their knowledge and skills.

Professional development will be aligned with teachers' needs with follow-up training and support provided while the new learning is being implemented. New teachers will be provided more additional support. In my research, I found that teachers needed more support in the first few years of teaching. "Awareness of the struggles faced by beginning teachers is essential to understand high rates of attrition by beginning teachers" (Edwards & Nuttall, 2014, p. 1). Attrition is also greatest among early career teachers (Harfitt, 2015, p. 22). New teachers will be assigned a mentor for their first three years of teaching. Edwards and Nuttall (2014) found in their review that new teachers could benefit from a mentor to help them adjust to the "shock factor" they frequently experience.

Administrators will play an important role in building the competencies needed to retain teachers. Therefore, in my future competencies, superintendents will hire district leaders and

school-based administrators who respect teachers' time, provide them support when needed, and help them with their professional development needs. "Instructional capacity is about leaders carrying out efforts to ensure that effective teachers stay at their schools" (Murphy, 2016, p. 53). Murphy (2016) laid out several practices needed to build instructional capacity and stated that leaders should focus on staffing, time, material resources, and support. In my future competencies, people selected to lead schools will understand and implement Murphy's practices to build instructional capacity and retain teachers.

Conclusion

Through this program evaluation, I discovered several issues impacting teacher attrition, mobility, and retention. Some of the issues were related to COVID-19 such as safety protocols, health concerns, and stress from the pandemic. Other issues identified include the need for increased salaries, more administrative support, smaller class sizes, and more time for planning and collaboration. My change leadership plan will address the issues and provide policy suggestions to retain teachers in the field of education.

Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions

Addressing teacher attrition, mobility, and retention issues is critical. As described in my research, teachers were leaving or thinking about leaving the profession. According to the challenges listed on my “As Is” 4 Cs chart (see Appendix G), teacher attrition was growing, causing high costs for districts and a negative impact on student achievement. To solve the issues surrounding teacher attrition outlined in my “As Is” chart, I created a vision of success plan to address the challenges in my “To Be” chart (see Appendix H). To create a realistic action plan to address the conditions leading to teacher attrition, I must first start with analyzing the reasons teachers are struggling and feel like they need to leave the profession, followed by a research-based strategy and leadership action plan to help retain teachers nation-wide.

Strategies and Actions

I created a research-based action plan and outlined it in chart form (see Appendix I). This plan is based on Kotter’s (2012) eight-step process of creating major change. I chose to use Kotter’s change model because it is simple to understand and is used by many organizations (Airiodion & Crolley, 2021).

Step 1

The first thing I will do in leading change is to create a sense of urgency. Kotter (2012) stated, “Establishing a sense of urgency is crucial to gaining needed cooperation” (p. 38). Since teacher attrition is not only a local issue, I will publish my research on teacher attrition in peer-reviewed journals and online forums and share how teacher attrition is growing and becoming a critical issue with district, state, and national education leaders (state and national departments of education). To help spread this research and to help district, state, and national educational

leaders understand the urgent need for change, I will create a guiding coalition to lead this initiative.

Step 2

The second step in my plan, based on Kotter (2012), is to create a guiding coalition. The guiding coalition will be created of various stakeholders including district, state, national educational leaders, and teachers recruited from districts across the nation that are also struggling with retaining teachers. This coalition will be necessary to fulfill the action steps to create organizational change. “Because major change is so difficult to accomplish, a powerful force is required to sustain the process” (Kotter, 2012, p.53). It is important that this group of leaders has the leadership skills necessary to recruit support for this cause. Collins (2005) stated, “True leadership only exists if people follow when they have the freedom not to” (p. 13). The guiding coalition will have to work to find individuals who want to help and will be invested and passionate themselves about finding ways to help students, teachers, and schools by retaining teachers in the field of education.

Step 3

The first action of the guiding coalition in creating organizational change will be to develop a vision and mission and strategies for creating change (Kotter, 2012). The vision statement will be put in writing and will address the mission of the coalition, to implement changes to retain teachers in the field of education. Issues that will need to be addressed as identified in my research related to the culture, conditions, competencies, and contexts of my future vision plan include teacher pay, lack of new teachers entering the field of education, administrative support, COVID-19 impacts, professional development, and ways to increase the overall integrity of the profession. Creating a common mission will guide the coalition and help

direct the change effort (Kotter, 2012). “Mission influences the instructional program and the learning climate, which in turn shape the behaviors of teachers and students” (Murphy, 2016, p. 28).

Step 4

The fourth step in my plan will be communicating the change vision. Kotter (2012) said this should include the guiding coalition modeling the behaviors and expectations set out in the vision and mission using all means necessary to constantly communicate the vision, mission, and strategies. Listed below are the steps the guiding coalition will need to address as outlined in my strategies and action chart (see Appendix I):

- The guiding coalition will publish research found in peer-reviewed journals and online forums, identifying the need for change in order to retain teachers.
- The guiding coalition will create proposed policy changes needed to retain teachers in the field of education that address salary, administrative support, classroom behaviors, COVID-19 impacts, professional development, and ways to increase respect for the profession.
- The guiding coalition will meet with district, state, and national educational leaders to share recommendations based on this research.
- The guiding coalition will meet with colleges to create a college to career pipeline that provides new teachers with additional support and mentors for their first three years of teaching as well as financial incentives for completing the first five years successfully.

Step 5

Kotter's (2012) fifth step for creating organizational change is empowering employees for broad-based action. In this step, I will work alongside the guiding coalition to identify and remove barriers for stakeholders and to encourage the guiding coalition to take risks in developing their action plan. Empowering an organization to want to create change can be difficult if faced with opposition. Wanting to change is often difficult for many individuals and can be a barrier to creating change. Reeves (2009) stated, "Change leads to loss – not just any loss, but a devastating and personal loss" (p. 9). Reeves also said that change leaders must balance the sense of urgency with a thoughtful approach to implementing change.

Kotter (2012) said four barriers often need to be addressed: structures, skill, systems, and supervisors. The guiding coalition will have to work together to ensure that district, state, and national structures and systems are in place to create positive change, and that the educational leaders and supervisors have the necessary skills to lead change. The first steps in addressing barriers will be to empower stakeholders and leaders in the guiding coalition and to create a written plan to overcome these barriers. District and state leaders will assign leadership roles and provide professional recognition for leaders' part by including them as authors of the published research and providing other career building incentives.

The leaders involved in implementing and managing this long-term change will need to be adaptive leaders. "Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 14). Solving the issues surrounding teacher attrition and finding solutions for change will take time. Heifetz et al. (2009) described what is needed for adaptive leadership to begin and to create new norms. They are:

- Adaptive leadership is specifically about change that enables the capacity to thrive.
- Successful adaptive changes build on the past rather than jettison it.
- Organizational adaptation occurs through experimentation.
- Adaptation relies on diversity.
- New adaptations significantly displace, reregulate, and rearrange some old DNA.
- Adaptation takes time. (pp. 14-16)

All leaders on the guiding coalition will need to understand that this change will not happen overnight and that it will be an ongoing process with many trials and errors.

Stakeholders will work together to put in place new initiatives and policy suggestions to present to local, state, and national boards of education. Changes needed to retain teachers are not just a local issue. These changes need to be addressed in multiple districts across the United States. Suggestions for change will include policy changes regarding teacher salaries and incentives, the college to career pipeline, training leaders on how to support teachers, COVID-19 impacts, and creating a better image for the teaching career overall. These policies will be discussed at length in Chapter 7. Working up to these policies and change initiatives, the guiding coalition will have to maintain the stakeholders' momentum and sense of urgency by creating short-term wins.

Step 6

In the sixth step of my change plan, a timeline will be created by the guiding coalition to implement the action plan and to set measurable goals. As progress is made according to the timeline, the team will take time to celebrate short-term wins by meeting monthly to celebrate their accomplishments. The guiding coalition will share the importance of celebrating short-term

wins with district, state, and national educational representatives so that this practice can filter down to individual schools and help teachers feel success.

Kotter (2012) said that there are three characteristics of a short-term win. The characteristics are that wins have to be visible, unambiguous, and clearly related to the change effort. A short-term win will be celebrated when leaders track teacher retention data across district or state and the data indicate the number of teachers remaining in the field has increased from the previous data collection. By celebrating these visible wins, district and state leaders will help keep the momentum going to sustain long-range change.

Step 7

The seventh step in Kotter's (2012) change plan is consolidating gains and producing more change. Change takes time and, after a while, the sense of urgency can decrease. That is why this step is important for adaptive leaders. To address the challenges related to change, the guiding coalition will have to continue to work with all stakeholders and not let the momentum die down. To produce even further change, the guiding coalition must create an adaptive culture. "Fostering an adaptive culture will enable your organization or community to meet an ongoing series of adaptive challenges into the future, a future that is almost guaranteed in our day to keep pitching new challenges toward us" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 165). This new adaptive culture will reinvigorate the team's purpose, so that they can focus on implementing the change vision and initiatives which include, recruiting stakeholders with similar needs, training leaders, and creating policy changes to retain teachers in the field of education.

Step 8

The last step, step eight, of Kotter's (2012) change plan, is anchoring new approaches in the culture. The guiding coalition must have a plan to sustain change and make it stick. Change

should be evident in the new culture, and it should be obvious that the community shares the same values and beliefs and supports the vision of the organization.

Regardless of level or location, culture is important because it can powerfully influence human behavior, because it can be difficult to change, and because its near invisibility makes it hard to address directly. Generally, shared values, which are less apparent but more deeply ingrained in the culture, are more difficult to change than norms of behavior. (Kotter, 2012, pp. 156-157)

In my change plan, the culture includes all stakeholders in the educational field as well as community partners who support education. They will all play an important part in changing the reputation of the teaching profession, making it as equally appealing as other professions such as physicians, engineers, or lawyers. This step will also lead to other changes such as increased teacher pay and more support for teachers. The way the community accepts this change will determine the effectiveness of the change plan's strategies and actions.

To change the culture of all stakeholders and to address the issues concerning teachers not feeling respected as professionals, community partners can work together to create a "Support Teachers in the Classroom" campaign. The guiding coalition will work with governing agencies to create public service announcements and a campaign created to honor our teachers. The guiding coalition will work with community members to create this campaign and to build relationships with other stakeholders who could also participate in creating this culture change.

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Strategies and Actions

To evaluate the effectiveness of my change plan regarding culture, the guiding coalition will meet frequently with local, state, and national education leaders to see how the campaign is impacting their areas. Frequent surveys will be sent out to multiple stakeholder groups including

teachers, parents, district leaders, and community members, to gather data on the effectiveness of the campaign. Community forums will be held so that stakeholders can give input on the campaign, and all data collected from the forums and surveys will be collected and shared with the public via news articles and social media to show how the campaign can align with individual district visions and goals as well as supporting teachers by increasing their salaries.

Involving Community Partners in Decision Making

Community stakeholders working together are needed to create the change needed to retain teachers. Block (2018) said that communities are too divided and are separated into silos. He stated,

One aspect of our fragmentation is the gaps between sectors of our cities and neighborhoods; business, schools, social service organizations, churches, and government operate mostly in their own worlds. Each piece is working hard on its own purpose, but parallel effort added together does not make a community.

(Block, 2018, p. 2)

Continually including all stakeholders in the decision-making process by holding community forums, sending out surveys, and voting on new policies to create changes that support teachers is what is needed to ignite and sustain change in the community.

Through the process of holding community forums and meeting with multiple stakeholders to conduct surveys, the guiding coalition will develop effective relationships with many leaders at the local, state, and national levels. Proper planning by the guiding coalition and including community partners in the decision-making process are key in making this positive cultural change in education effective and more importantly, making the change stick. Boyatzis & McKee (2005) stated, "...effective teams and powerful, positive organizational cultures do not

happen by accident. It takes time, effort, planning, and even a strategy to create and sustain the healthy working relationships and norms that foster effectiveness” (p. 20).

Conclusion

As stated in my literature review, researchers have studied the issues causing teacher attrition for years and have discussed them in many scholarly articles. Teacher attrition, mobility, and retention are still ongoing and growing issues. It will take multiple stakeholder groups across the United States working together, using a change model such as Kotter’s, to find solutions to motivate teachers to stay in the field of education. These changes begin with changing the culture and beliefs about teaching as a profession and creating policies to support the context, culture, conditions, and competencies (Wagner et al., 2006) outlined in my 4 Cs Vision of Success.

Chapter Seven: Implications and Policy Recommendations

To address the issues found in my program evaluation, I am proposing a new policy to local, state, and national boards of education to require a higher median salary for teachers that closely relates to other respected professions with similar degrees in their local communities. The guiding coalition will complete research and provide estimates of the dollar amount to individual states based on the cost of living for that state. In addition, my policy recommendation outlines safety procedures put in place to protect teachers against threats such as COVID-19, a plan to train administrators on supporting teachers' needs – especially with behavior issues, improved incentives for new teachers in the college to career pipeline, and the release of a public service announcement campaign to help build trust and respect for the teaching profession. These steps address the needs identified in my program evaluation by providing teachers incentives, respect, and support they need to want to stay in the field of education.

Policy Statement

The policy I am recommending increases teacher retention and attracts candidates to the field of education. My policy requires teachers to receive a higher salary comparable to other respected professions; new teachers receive compensation for successfully completing their first five years of teaching with a financial incentive or college loan forgiveness, and teachers receive compensation for time spent outside of the classroom on educational duties. New programs are implemented in all school districts to provide social and emotional support for teachers and students to deal with stressors such as COVID-19. To help with behavior issues, the curriculum undergoes changes to be more interactive and engaging to meet the needs of students in this time and age. This policy requires all stakeholders in the policymaking arena to work together on a

local, state, and national level to implement these changes needed to retain teachers in the field of education.

I recommend this policy based on my program evaluation results and organizational change plan suggestions as a solution for retaining teachers. This policy will be effective in reducing teacher attrition because it addresses changes in education that need to be made on a large scale to address the reasons behind teacher attrition such as teacher workload, low pay, lack of support, and behavior issues in the classroom. This policy relates to my program evaluation because, if put in place, teachers will feel more supported in the classroom and as professionals overall. The policy also relates to student learning. Teacher attrition impedes student learning and deters student learning (Garcia & Weiss, 2020, p. 2). The teacher shortage is a crisis and if policy changes are not made, the issues involving teacher attrition could continue to grow. “The shortage... reduces teachers’ effectiveness, consumes economic resources that could be better deployed elsewhere, and makes it more difficult to build a solid reputation for teaching and thus to professionalize it, which further contributes to perpetuating the shortage” (Garcia & Weiss, 2020, pp. 3-4).

Analysis of Needs

In the following subsections, I consider my policy through six different lenses. Through these six distinct disciplinary areas, I analyze my policy recommendations to provide a fuller understanding of how my policy proposal affects all stakeholders involved. The six lenses through which I analyze my policy are educational, economic, social, political, and legal. My goal is to help stakeholders have a broader understanding of how my policy impacts teachers’ decisions to remain in the classroom by providing them the respectful income and support that they need in the classroom.

Educational Analysis

Schools need teachers in classrooms to provide daily instruction. My research found that many teachers are leaving or thinking about leaving the classroom, and teacher attrition is growing.

More than a quarter of teachers said job-related stress leads them to think often about quitting, and 16 percent said they dread going to work every day, according to the *EdWeek* survey. While many of them won't ultimately leave their jobs, that level of burnout will still have implications for student success and the long-term health of the profession. Already, fewer young people are studying to become teachers than a decade ago, and many teachers say they wouldn't want their own children to follow in their footsteps. (Will, 2021, p. 5)

If the problem of teacher attrition is not addressed, this will become a crisis impacting future generations, and there will not be enough teachers to teach future generations.

Teacher attrition can be traced back to the 1930s (Behrstock-Sherratt, 2016), but it still remains an issue. To help fix this problem, schools have to change. The world is changing, but the overall way children are being taught has not. "The new world of work requires a new way of doing school. A business-as-usual model based on efficiency, repetition, and knowledge acquisition will only prepare students for a world that no longer exists" (Sheninger, 2021, p. 7). In my professional experience, this can lead to boredom and classroom behavior issues which, as stated in my research, is a reason for teacher attrition.

My policy recommends a new curriculum that is more relatable, interactive, and engaging for the new generation, a generation that is used to instantaneous feedback. Sheninger (2021) said that education needs to be disrupted and a new culture developed where thinking and

learning inspire students as well as prepares them for the future. This will impact student learning, engage students so they are not choosing to misbehave and make teaching fun again overall. “Education is ripe for disruptive change leading to innovative practices that improve learning outcomes for all students” (Sheninger, 2021, p.7).

Economic Analysis

As the cost of living rises annually, the overall rate of teacher salaries has not. Overall, teacher salaries have not significantly increased in two decades (Freedberg, 2019). The economic impact of increasing teacher salaries to be comparable to that of other respected professions benefits the teaching profession by making it more respected and more attractive as a career choice for college students. If this issue is not addressed, many teachers will look for higher-paying jobs to survive, and there will be fewer and fewer teachers entering the field of education.

On top of increased salaries, teachers should be compensated for time spent on teacher responsibilities outside of the classroom. The research from my surveys and interviews showed that teachers feel they do not have enough time in the day to complete all the required tasks of educators – lesson planning, data collection and graphing, grading, professional development, and parent meetings. In my professional opinion, if teachers were paid for these activities in addition to their regular salary, they would feel more respected and more likely to stay in the profession.

Social Analysis

The social impacts of my policy proposal include building respect for the teaching profession, providing teachers social-emotional support to deal with the impacts of COVID-19, and providing teachers support with classroom behavior issues. Addressing these issues will help develop a culture in which teachers feel supported and less stressed. “Research shows that when

teachers are stressed out, the quality of their instruction, classroom management, and relationships with students suffer” (Will, 2021, p. 3).

The school-based administrator has a key role related to the social impacts of my policy. Administrators need to create a school climate in which teachers feel respected and supported. Due to the impact of COVID-19, teachers and students need support with social-emotional needs. Administrators need to provide training to teachers and staff on how to deal with these new uncharted waters as well as develop and implement new curricula that address and model social-emotional relationships and student classroom behavior. To address social needs due to the pandemic, teachers need to be given a voice to help them feel empowered, respected, and heard so that they can help make critical day-to-day decisions that impact them in the classroom. “To make teaching sustainable long-term, administrators must empower teachers by giving them a seat at the table and incorporating their input into new initiatives” (Will, 2021, p. 4).

Political Analysis

On a daily basis, I see articles, blogs, and reports that focus on teacher dissatisfaction or teachers leaving or talking about leaving the field of education. Teacher attrition has been an issue for decades but based on my research and other current studies it is becoming an even more critical issue. One teacher stated in a report from *EducationWeek*:

Government needs to get serious about education. We’re in a stage where this is a national emergency. Teachers are leaving in droves and there’s no one in the pipeline to replace them. I think the government needs to put forth a clear-cut investment in education. (Schwartz, 2019, p. 3)

To come up with a solution to address teacher attrition, there needs to be support from the local, state, and national government.

A political impact of my policy statement includes where local, state, and national educational leaders can find money to fund increased salaries for teachers, college to career pipeline financial incentives, and new programs to support social-emotional needs as well as curriculum changes needed due to the pandemic. “In 2020 and 2021, Congress passed three stimulus bills that provided nearly \$279 billion as relief aid for education through the Education Stabilization Fund” (NCSL, 2022, p.1). Portions of the COVID-19 relief funds were designated for personal protective equipment, sanitizing schools, keeping schools open, and addressing learning loss due to the pandemic; however, the manner in which the rest of the funds will be spent is up to local districts. The guiding coalition can meet with district leaders to review how implementing these policy recommendations will also solve the teacher attrition problems that are growing due to COVID-19.

Legal Analysis

Local, state, and national leaders must consider the legal implications of my policy proposal which impacts teacher salaries by providing increased salaries that are competitive with other professions. My policy also requires implementing a college-to-teacher incentive pipeline by providing financial rewards to teachers upon their first five years of teaching. State statutes have to be put in place to monitor these actions and to see that funds are distributed fairly.

Teacher pay needs to be fair and more equally distributed across districts and states. “Policymakers and legislators who are serious about reducing teacher attrition (and, therefore, the teacher shortage) can start by equalizing funding (and, therefore, teacher salaries) across school districts within the same state, while simultaneously improving teacher work conditions” (Hanks et al., 2020, p. 32). Improving work conditions will reduce attrition overall and increase support for new teachers entering the field.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

All stakeholders have a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that all students receive an equal and quality education. This cannot happen without teachers. Teacher absenteeism due to the COVID-19 pandemic, quarantines, and overall teacher stress impacts student achievement. “The more days a teacher is out of the classroom, the lower their students tend to score on standardized tests” (Finlayson, 2009, p. 3). In my professional opinion, district and school-based leaders can help improve teacher absenteeism by respecting teachers’ professionalism. Teachers are more motivated to come to work if they feel supported by administrators, are less micromanaged, and feel like their personal time is protected.

The moral and ethical impact of my policy statement addresses fair teacher pay that is comparable to other respected salaries, paying teachers for duties that require time outside of the school day, and providing teachers with mental and emotional support to deal with the everyday stressors of the profession as well as the new strains added from the pandemic.

Since policymakers and legislators have, to date, not summoned the political will to pay teachers a salary that would make teaching (with all of the personal, psychological, and organizational headaches that come with it) competitive with other professions such as medicine, law, and business (and they appear unlikely to do so anytime soon), tossing teachers the occasional metaphorical “peanuts” in the form of a few hundred or thousand dollars every few years will not be sufficient to solve the teacher shortage. (Hanks et al., 2020, p. 32)

My research shows that teachers do not believe that they are being paid fairly for all the work they do on a daily basis or that their salaries command respect like other professions.

Teachers also need supports put in place to help them deal with the stress of the pandemic and their overall job-related stress. Teachers need to feel well overall and be present daily to be effective, giving their best to their students. Students are being impacted by teacher attrition. They deserve to have someone who wants and feels like being present to teach them every day. This is a moral and ethical issue that must be addressed in order to save the future of education.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

My policy to increase teacher pay, provide social/emotional and classroom behavior support to teachers, and implement a new curriculum to meet the needs of today's students helps retain teachers and also improves the overall respect for the profession. This policy will affect individual schools and improve staff relationships by improving the culture of schools. Training school-based leaders to provide this support is key. Reeves (2009) said that for cultural change to be lasting there are four imperatives:

1. Leaders must define what will not change.
2. Organizational culture will change with leadership actions.
3. Use the right change tools for your system.
4. Change in culture requires relentless personal attention and “scut work” by the leader.

(pp. 38-39)

In my professional experience, I see that teachers and staff are more willing to participate in school meetings, events, committees, and other staff development opportunities if they feel their voice is being heard and that they are supported by their administrators.

My policy helps to build community relationships by restoring respect to the teaching profession. This is done by increasing teacher salaries to be comparable to other respected professions.

Lawyers and judges find that their views and judgments are respected and that their profession is accorded a great deal of prestige. Yet many teachers find their judgment is ignored when it comes to making decisions on the priorities, practices, tools, and other features of daily classroom work. (Garcia & Weiss, 2020, p. 9)

In addition to increasing teacher salaries, the public service announcement campaign also gives teachers a voice by helping them feel empowered, respected, and heard so that they can help make critical day-to-day decisions that impact them in the classroom. The campaign also helps them feel respected by community members and helps them build relationships with the community by giving them an opportunity to be heard and to share their stories.

Other stakeholders to consider in implementing my policy are local, state, and legislative leaders and citizens voting on issues regulating teacher salaries, my public service campaign, and COVID-19 funds allocated to support teachers socially and emotionally. To pay teachers fairly, data will have to be collected and decisions made on what is a fair, respectable salary comparable to other respected professions. The guiding coalition will have to work with local, state, and national leaders to create a public service announcement campaign designed to build respect for the teaching profession. Programs to support teachers socially and emotionally will have to be implemented in individual schools. School-based and district leaders will have to work with local, state, and national leaders to create a program to support teachers post COVID.

Conclusion

The issue of teachers leaving the field of education at a rapid rate can be slowed down by implementing my policy. The new policy provides increased salaries to teachers that are comparable to other respected professions, more respect for the profession through a public

service campaign, and social-emotional support to help teachers with their daily stress as well as additional stress from the pandemic. Local, state, and national leaders along with the community at large are able to see the educational, economic, social, political, legal, moral, and ethical impact my policy could have on teacher attrition and improving teacher retention rates overall.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The program of study I evaluated included the factors affecting teacher turnover, mobility, and attrition and the impact of COVID-19 on teacher mobility, attrition, and retention. My program evaluation addresses the issues of teacher attrition before and after the pandemic. This program evaluation enables local, state, and national leaders to realize that teacher attrition is a national crisis impacting student achievement and needs to be addressed by incorporating my change leadership plan and other findings from my research.

Discussion

The purpose of my study was to determine why teachers left the teaching field early and to determine how COVID-19 impacted those decisions. I also wanted to find ways to retain teachers in the field of education. Teachers changing schools or leaving the teaching field altogether were issues that determined the theme of my study.

To find solutions to improve teacher attrition, I started by evaluating the responses from teachers, administrators, and parents to my survey and interview questions. I then used the data to create an organizational change plan to help retain teachers. This process addressed the purpose of my study by providing the data I needed to create an action plan to implement nationwide to improve teacher attrition rates.

Through my study, I learned that teachers are stressed and overwhelmed by their daily duties, lack time to perform them, and deal with issues related to COVID-19. I learned that 80% of teachers who participated in my study had thought about leaving the field to stay home or to pursue another career. I discovered other themes and key findings, outlined in Appendix F, that include:

- Teachers feel that they are underpaid related to other professions

- Teachers feel little support from administrators
- Teachers want smaller class sizes
- Teachers need the gift of time
- COVID-19 has caused additional stress with masks, social distancing, and quarantines
- Teachers feel their profession is not respected
- Classroom behavior issues have increased
- Changing the culture of a school is difficult

I addressed the goals of my program evaluation, determining reasons teachers want to leave the teaching profession and finding ways to retain teachers, by creating an organizational change plan to address teacher attrition. My program evaluation is related to student learning because teacher attrition negatively impacts student achievement. “Research shows that high teacher turnover rates in school negatively impact student achievement for all the students in a school, not just those in a new teacher’s classroom” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 3). To improve student achievement and retain teachers in the field of education, I recommend local, state, and national leaders implement the steps outlined in my change leadership plan and consider my policy suggestions.

My organizational change plan addresses issues raised by my program evaluation of low teacher pay, lack of new teachers entering the field, administrative support, professional development, COVID-19 impacts, and ways to increase the overall integrity of the profession by creating a guiding coalition to lead the change process. Key components of my change leadership plan focus on creating a college to career pipeline giving new teachers incentives for successfully completing the first five years of teaching, school systems hiring and training

school-based and district leaders to be supportive, adaptive leaders, and states and school districts implementing my policy recommendations.

My policy addresses issues raised in my program evaluation and organizational change plan by creating solutions for retaining teachers in the field of education. The new policy provides higher salaries to teachers comparable to other respected professions, incentives for new teachers for completing the first five years of teaching successfully social-emotional support for teachers, and new curricula to meet the needs of our constantly changing society. I recommend this specific policy because it responds directly to the teacher needs found in my research. If teachers feel recognized by being seen in the same positive light as doctors or lawyers, receive increased respectable wages, and have more support at school, they are more likely to stay in their current positions.

Leadership Lessons

One leadership lesson I have learned throughout this process is to lead by example. Through my research, I found some teachers leave their current school or the profession overall due to a lack of administrator support. Through my research, I learned that I want to be what Boyatzis & McKee (2005) call a resonant leader.

Resonant leaders manage their emotions well and read individuals and groups accurately. They consciously attune to people, focus them on a common cause, build a sense of community, and create a climate that enables people to tap into passion, energy, and a desire to move together in a positive direction. (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 22)

In my current position as a director of education, I have grown as a leader throughout this doctoral journey. I am more aware of the struggles my teachers face in the classroom

daily, and I provide support by listening, giving them breaks when needed, and ensuring safety protocols are put in place to protect them from COVID-19.

Throughout my doctoral journey, I have learned the importance of keeping up with current research in education, and I have enjoyed reading scholarly articles, journals, blogs, and texts on my topic. Through the timeframe of writing my dissertation, the effects of COVID-19 and the virus itself have changed rapidly. Writing this paper has made me want to delve even more into the topic and to conduct further research on the impacts of COVID-19 on our educational system.

I will use the information and knowledge generated through my study going forward as a leader by advocating for teachers, sharing my research, and doing even further research on the topic. As a leader, I will meet frequently one-on-one with my teachers to see if their needs are being met. I will hold community forums and build relationships with multiple stakeholders to improve the culture of my school and district. Teacher attrition issues can be reduced. Implementing my organizational leadership plan and recommended policy suggestions will help teachers feel valued as a professional and give them a voice. They want to be heard and want action on what they are saying.

Conclusion

As my research comes to an end, COVID-19 still remains a threat to educators. As of December 17, 2021, there have been over 50 million cases of COVID-19 and over 800,000 deaths in the United States since the start of the pandemic (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021b). Teacher attrition is growing, and COVID-19 has only added more strains for teachers. It is time for local, state, and national leaders to wake up and pay attention to this

critical shortage. “The impending teacher shortage is the most critical education issue we will face in the next decade” (Price, 2021, p. 1)

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Appendices

Appendix A: Social Media: Initial Post

Appendix B: Survey Questions for Teachers

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Teachers

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Administrators

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Appendix F: Interview Codes and Responses:

Teachers, Administrators, and Parents

Appendix G: “As Is” 4 Cs Analysis

Appendix H: “To Be” 4 Cs Framework

Appendix I: Action Plan: Strategies and Action Chart

Appendix A

Initial Social Media Post

Attention educators, administrators and parents... I am a doctoral candidate from National Louis University, and I need your help. If you are interested in having your voice represented and to make a positive impact in education, please respond.

The topic of my dissertation study is, *A Program Evaluation of The Impact of COVID-19 on Teacher Mobility, Attrition, and Retention*. I am interested in hearing from teachers who have left the field of education or thought about leaving because of COVID-19, teachers who taught in the field of education, left, and later returned to education, and teachers who have moved from one school to another. My goal is to determine reasons for teacher mobility and attrition and with your help, find ways to support educators and combat this issue.

A required consent letter for your participation is attached, along with the survey link. Please email responses to cfox7@my.nl.edu. Survey Monkey responses will automatically be sent to me.

Besides using survey data to look at the issues of teacher attrition and mobility and the impact of COVID-19, I would like to interview teachers, parents and administrators. Interviews will be approximately thirty minutes. Due to COVID-19, a Zoom interview can be arranged. A consent letter is required for interviews as well. If you would like to read the consent letter before agreeing to participate, I will email you a copy. Please send your request to cfox7@my.nl.edu.

Please note that all information from surveys and interviews is completely confidential. All data will be reported in an aggregated format and no identities will be revealed. If you have questions, please email me.

I am very excited about this topic! With your help, we can make a difference. Please consider participating.

Appendix B
Survey Questions for Teachers

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please provide feedback ...

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

Please provide written responses to questions 1, 5 (if applicable), 9 and 10

1. What state are you currently teaching in or previously taught in if you have left the field of education?
2. How many years have you been teaching or taught in the education field?
3. I have left the teaching career for another field.
4. My college preparation program prepared me for my educational journey.
5. I have thought about leaving the teaching field for another career or to stay home.
6. I have left the teaching field but later in my career returned.
7. If so, list the reason(s) you returned. _____
8. COVID-19 has impacted my decision to stay or leave the teaching field.
9. I left teaching because of COVID-19.
10. I would remain in or return to the teaching field if policy changes were put in place to make it better for educators.
11. List what policy changes or other changes that would make you want to stay in education?

12. List reasons that have made you think about leaving or made you leave the field of education.
13. Salary has impacted my reasons to stay or leave the field of education.
14. List ways COVID-19 had impacted your decision to stay or leave the field of education.

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. How long have you been in the educational field?
2. Have you ever thought about leaving the field? Why or Why not?
3. Has COVID-19 impacted your decision to stay or leave the teaching field? Why or Why not?
4. Why do you think teachers want to move schools or leave the teaching profession altogether?
5. What would it take to retain teachers in the field of education?

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Administrators

1. How long have you been in the educational field? (As a teacher/As an administrator?)
2. How has teacher mobility, attrition impacted you and the school overall?
3. How has COVID-19 impacted this topic?
4. How can you as an administrator make a difference in this area?
5. What strategies have you put in place for teacher recruitment, training and retention?

Appendix E

Interview Questions for Parents

1. Has teacher mobility or attrition affected you or your child?
2. Did COVID-19 play an impact?
3. Why do you think it is important to retain teachers?
4. What changes do you think are needed to prevent this from happening?

Appendix F

Interview Codes and Responses:

Teachers, Administrators, and Parents

Teacher Interview Codes

Time	COVID-19 Issues	Reasons Teachers Leave	Recommendations
“not enough of it during the day”	“teachers need more instruction in technology”	“underpaid”	“smaller class sizes”
“little preparation time”	“social distancing, masks, sanitizing everything”	“stress/burnout/health concerns”	“better pay”
“lesson planning takes too long”	“safety concerns”	“more expectations put on teachers”	“more support from administration”
“extra meetings required”	“no increase in pay with more work”	“classroom behaviors”	“more time”
“have to work at home on own time”	“testing accountability/learning gap increase”	“limited trust”	“respect the teaching profession”

Teacher Interview Responses

How long have you been in the educational field?	Responses were 16, 35, 14, and ten years, averaging 18.75 years.
Have you ever thought about leaving the field? Why or Why not?	100% of the respondents answered yes. Reasons included, teacher burnout, too many expectations put on teachers, classroom behavior issues, limited time, and pay.
Has COVID-19 impacted your decision to stay or leave the teaching field? Why our why not?	Teacher 1 responded somewhat due the extra workload including online teaching and quarantines. Teacher 2 said yes due to stress and teaching online. Teacher 3 said due to needing a steady income. Teacher 4 said yes because of the extra hours required with online learning, high expectations and accountability for closing the learning gap.
Why do you think teachers want to move schools or leave the teaching profession altogether?	Responses included teacher burnout, large class sizes, behavior problems, limited resources, underpaid, stress, underappreciated, limited trust, and not enough time for lesson planning, graphing, or extra meetings.

What would it take to retain teachers in the field of education?	Response included more money, more resources, instruction in technology, administrative support with behavior, more prep time, and more respect for the teaching profession.
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Administrator Interview Codes

Financial Issues	Administrative Morale	Teacher Recruitment	COVID-19 Issues	How Administrators can Help
“lack of school budget”	“administrators feel overwhelmed”	“difficult to find math, science, and ESE teachers”	“COVID-19 changed the playing field altogether”	“lead by example”
“money for substitutes”	“teachers have become complacent”	“find teachers by recruiting from local colleges”	“teachers want to work from home”	“kids first”
“salaries”	“difficult to change school culture”	“recruit substitutes”	“little structure headed into the new school year”	“include all stakeholders”

“multiple senior teachers”	“teachers are overtaxed and not as open to learn new things”	“provide incentives”	“frequent teacher and student absences new to sickness and quarantine.”	“give teachers opportunities to lead, support, and gift of time”
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Administrator Interview Responses

How long have you been in the educational field?	As a teacher – Responses were 16 and 7, averaging a total of 11.5 years. As an administrator – Responses were 15 and 6, averaging a total of 10.5 years.
How has teacher mobility, attrition impacted you and the school overall?	Administrator 1’s response included, staff shortages, lack of budget, difficulty finding substitutes. Administrator 2 said that teachers are nearing retirement and becoming complacent and preventing new teachers from being hired.
How has COVID-19 impacted this topic?	Responses included, changing the field altogether, teachers want to work from home or retire, accountability and fidelity issues, little structure returning to school during a

	<p>pandemic, safety protocols, teachers are scared, added burden, and overtaxed teachers.</p>
<p>How can you as an administrator make a difference in this area?</p>	<p>Administrator one stated, lead by example, be positive, put kids first, school culture should include a parent university, teachers are given opportunities to lead, and lead from the front and back. Administrator two said, offer support to teachers and help them build skills for this new terrain.</p>
<p>What strategies have you put in place for teacher recruitment, training, and retention?</p>	<p>Responses included, partner with colleges, use warm fuzzies to retain teachers, build relationships, give the gift of time, support their needs, frontload evaluations, recruit teaching assistants or substitute teachers, and use incentives.</p>

Parent Interview Codes

Attrition Impact on Child	Student Success When	COVID-19 Impacts	Teacher Needs/Recommendations
“no stability”	“teachers are retained”	“teacher decided to leave the profession”	“better pay”
“multiple substitute teachers-no support for them”	“teachers are successful”	“more restrictions in place”	“support and respect”
“classroom management issues”	“teachers develop their teaching strategies”	“teacher quarantined”	“smaller classrooms”
“child coming home upset daily	“... stability”	“more work for the teacher”	“more time to plan”

Parent Interview Responses

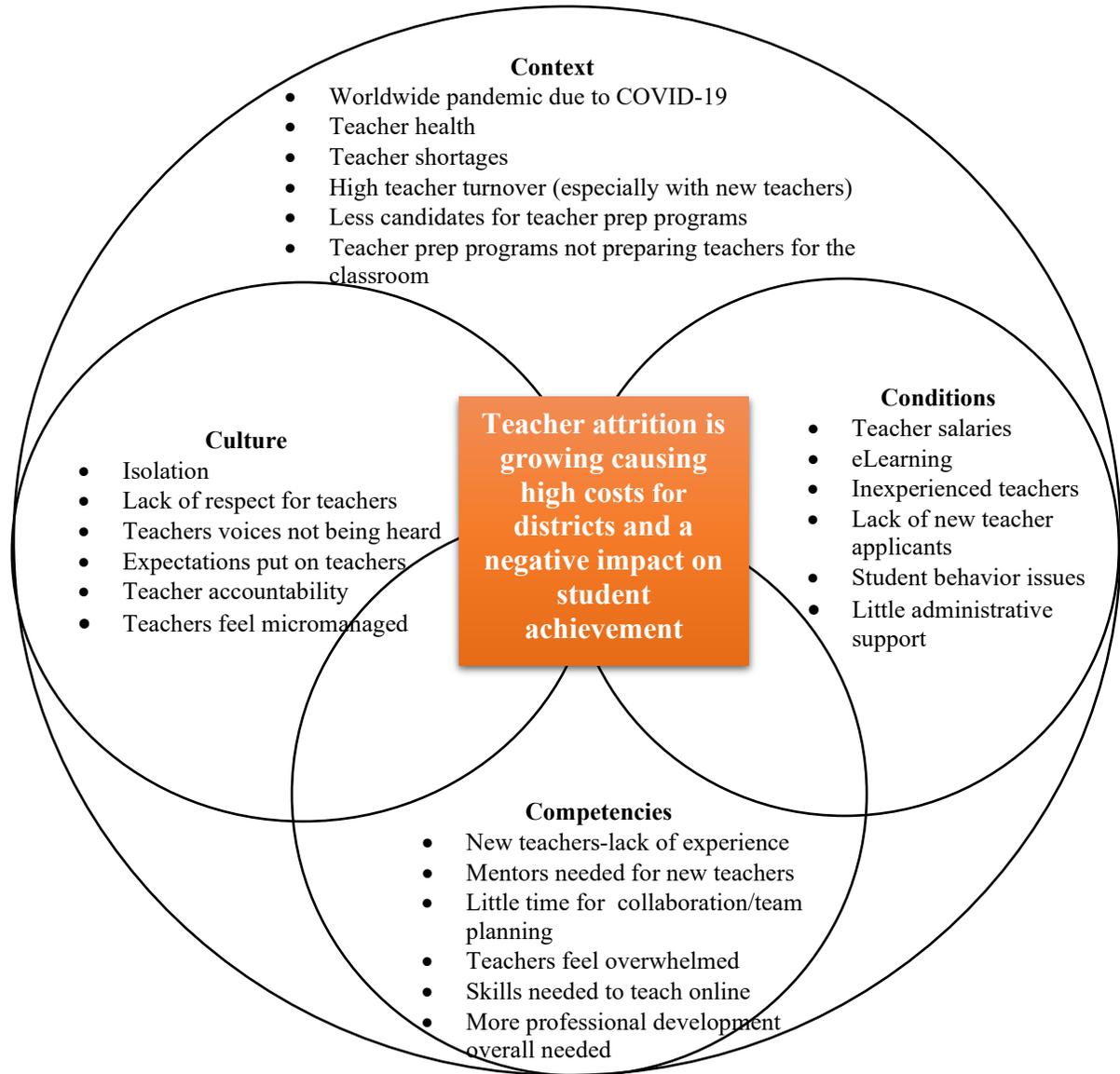
Has teacher mobility or attrition affected you or your child?	One parent participant responded no, and the other parent participant responded yes. The parent who responded yes added that her daughter had multiple subs throughout the year. The teacher went on maternity leave, was quarantined, and then decided to leave
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	<p>the profession. Her daughter was upset about this and complained daily. There was no stability or support while the teacher was out.</p>
<p>Did COVID-19 play an impact?</p>	<p>One parent participant responded no, and the other parent participant responded yes. The parent who responded yes added more restrictions were put in place in classrooms, teacher's jobs were harder, and teachers and classmates had to be quarantined.</p>
<p>Why do you think it is important to retain teachers?</p>	<p>Parent 1: Students need qualified teachers who care and are invested in their students. They need to feel support and respected. They burn out and leave the profession. Teachers need more pay and loving teachers so the students can thrive. Parent 2: Students do better when teachers are retained and have time to develop their classroom management and teaching skills. Turnover is hard on students and staff.</p>

<p>What changes do you think are needed to prevent this from happening?</p>	<p>Parent 1: Teachers need to be paid more. They need more time for planning. There are too many kids in the classroom and not enough support. There are too many expectations on them. Parent 2: Teachers need smaller class size, more money, more supplies and resources for struggling students.</p>
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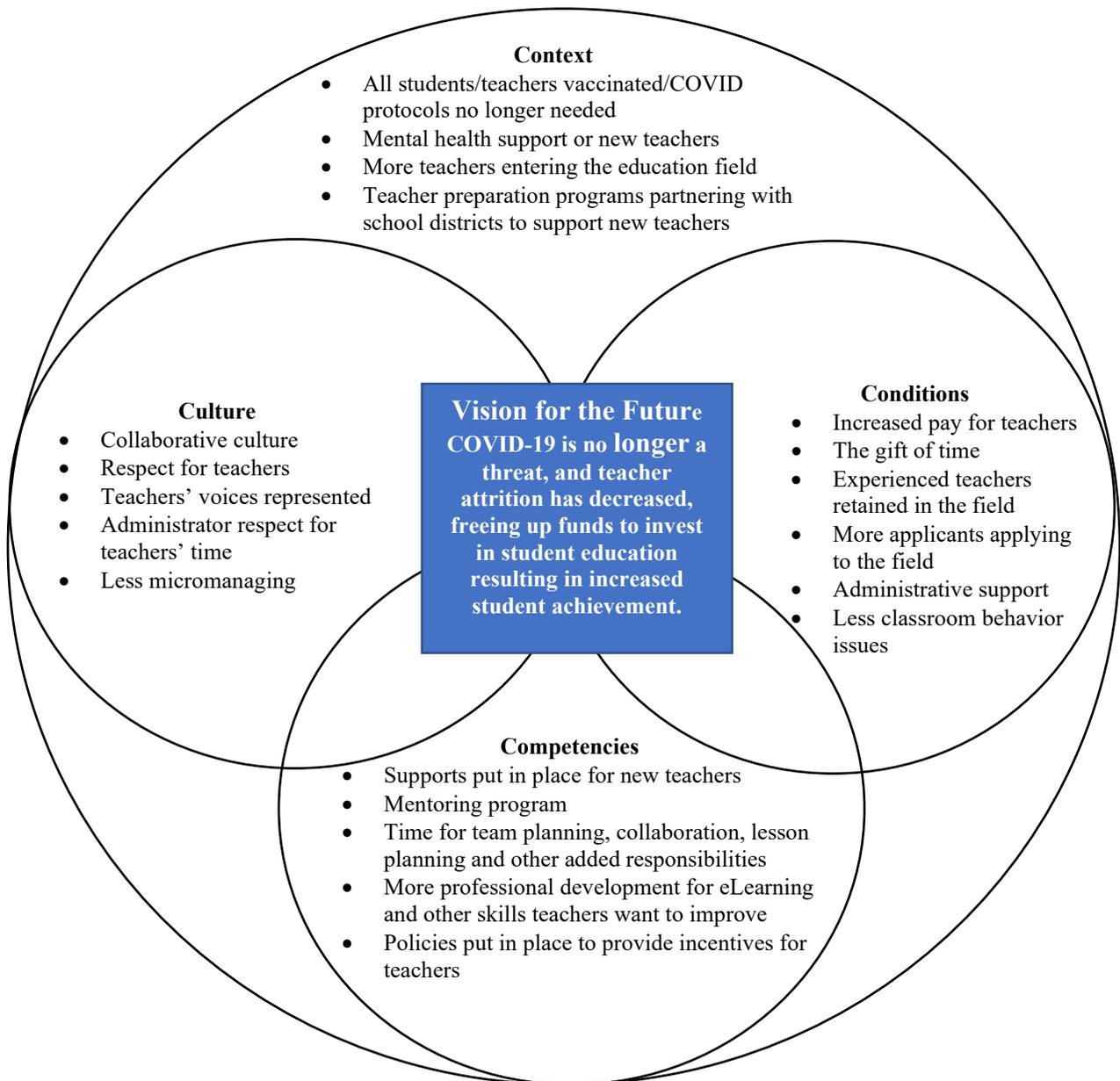
Appendix G

“As Is” 4 C’s Analysis



Appendix H

“To Be” 4 C’s Framework



Appendix I

Action Plan: Strategies and Action Chart

Strategies	Actions
Establishing a Sense of Urgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish my research on teacher attrition, and share how teacher attrition is growing and becoming a critical issue with district, state and national education leaders (state and national departments of education)
Creating a Guiding Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a guiding coalition of multiple community stakeholders to focus on making changes necessary to retain teachers in the field of education.
Developing a Vision and a Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding coalition will create a vision statement in writing that addresses the mission of the coalition, implementing changes to retain teachers in the field of education.
Communicating the Change Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding coalition will publish research found identifying the need for change in order to retain teachers. • The guiding coalition will suggest policy changes needed to retain teachers in the field of education that address salary, administrative support, classroom behaviors, COVID-19 impacts, professional development and ways to increase respect for the profession. • The guiding coalition will meet with district, state, and national leaders to share recommendations based on this research. • The guiding coalition will meet with colleges to create a college to career pipeline that supports new teachers with additional support and mentors for their first three years of teaching as well as financial incentives for completing the first five years successfully.
Empowering Employees for Broad-Based Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding coalition will identify barriers to change. • They will empower stakeholders by assigning leadership roles and providing

	<p>them professional recognition through published research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders will create a written plan to overcome barriers. • Stakeholders will work together to put in place new initiatives/policy suggestions to present to local, state, and national boards of education.
Generating Short-Term Wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding coalition will create a timeline for implementing the action plan. Each month the team will meet to celebrate its accomplishments. • The guiding coalition will share the importance of celebrating short-term wins and helping their teachers feel success in their meetings with district, state, and national educational representatives. • Data will be tracked for each district/state participating in the change process. Districts/states will report the number of teachers leaving the profession or changing schools each month.
Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding coalition will have to continue to work with all stakeholders and not let the momentum die down. • The guiding coalition must create an adaptive culture.
Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding coalition will create a “Support Teachers in the Classroom” campaign, and work with community members to build relationships with other stakeholders who could also participate in creating culture change. • The guiding coalition will hold community forums, send out surveys and vote on new policies to create changes that support teachers. • The guiding coalition will continuously monitor the culture of the community and meet periodically to make sure the policy changes stick.