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An Analysis of Early Career Educator Experiences and the Impact of Teacher Recruitment Initiatives, Induction Programs, and Retention Efforts in One School District

John Liddon Pope
National Louis University

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An Analysis of Early Career Educator Experiences and the Impact of Teacher
Recruitment Initiatives, Induction Programs, and Retention Efforts in One School District

John Liddon Pope

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:


Chair, Dissertation Committee


Director, Doctoral Program


Member, Dissertation Committee


Dean, National College of Education


Dean's Representative

March 24, 2022
Date Approved

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Recruitment Initiatives, Induction Programs, and Retention Efforts in One School District

John Liddon Pope

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

National College of Education

National Louis University

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ABSTRACT

The K-12 public education system faces a teacher shortage dilemma of unprecedented proportions. At the onset of a school year, out-of-field teachers, underqualified teachers, or long-term substitutes often fill instructional vacancies, causing many students to begin the school year with uncertainty. Recruiting, training, and retaining highly qualified teachers is critical to student success. The purpose of this study was to analyze early career educator experiences and the impact of teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in one school district, explore common practices in recruitment, induction, and retention in other school districts, and develop strategies and actions to mitigate the teacher shortage. The context of this inquiry was a mid-sized public school district in the United States. The methodology included surveys and interviews with district personnel, current early career educators, and former early career educators who left the profession in their first three years of teaching. My study included qualitative data that measured the efficacy of support systems in place for current and former early career educators, as well as the contributing factors that caused the former early career educators to leave the profession. I used these data to propose solutions to increase the efficacy of teacher support initiatives and keep quality teachers in the classroom.

PREFACE

I have worn many hats during my time in the education profession. When reflecting on my experiences, I often think about how this was almost not the case. My first experience working in education was as a substitute teacher, a job that nearly dissuaded me entirely from pursuing anything further in the field. I recall one particularly memorable day during which I was serving as a substitute teacher in a second-grade classroom. My back to the class, I continued to write various parts of the lesson on the dry-erase board. The clangs and thuds behind me, which began as the light pitter-patter of youthful footsteps, quickly grew to a roaring crescendo, drowning out the squeak of the marker. I dared not look over my shoulder. When I finally mustered the courage, I turned around to face the reality behind me.

The scene was total anarchy. Children running, flailing their arms, and climbing on desks. Chairs were airborne, whizzing by in the background. A few students were giving the walls a fresh coat of paint courtesy of Crayola, and one student stared fixedly at the fire alarm, deeply contemplating his next move. Amid the chaos, I felt a gentle tug at my shirtsleeve. Looking down, I discovered a small girl had emerged, unscathed, from the pile of her raucous classmates. She peered up at me, concern in her eyes.

“Mr. Pope,” she said. “You may want to consider doing something, because you are losing control of this classroom. I can help you, if you would like me to.”

She was not wrong. I chuckled as I surveyed the room, and in a moment of clarity, everything in the room stood still. I was hit with the realization that I had no future as a teacher. I was not supposed to be there. I decided in that moment to quit my substitute job, hang up my educator hat, and put the idea behind me. In the meantime,

however, I had to find some way to make it through the rest of that day in that classroom.

I looked back down at the girl and smiled. “What do you have in mind?”

Four years passed. I was working as an industrial supply salesman, barely scraping by in my bachelor’s degree program. I still believed I had no inkling of what I wanted to do with my life, but I could not shake this resurging interest in being a teacher. The idea would gently tap me on the shoulder, and I would brush it off and carry on. One day, I ran into one of my favorite teachers from high school, and as I walked away after our conversation, that gentle tap on my shoulder became a swift slap in the face. That evening, I went home and decided to dust off my old educator hat, hopeful that this time it would fit a little better.

Since that day, I have worn the hat of a high school English teacher, an instructional coach, a dean of discipline, an assistant principal of discipline, an assistant principal of instruction, and an assistant principal of curriculum. Of my many responsibilities in these roles, the one that has been the most rewarding to me has been my work mentoring and supporting new teachers. I have such a connection with new teachers because I remember that day so vividly. I remember standing in that classroom, isolated, alone, and disheartened. Now, years later, I am grateful that I had the opportunity to dust off my old hat and try it on again. I have experienced how truly rewarding the education profession is. I hope to use my experiences to serve new teachers, acting as a bridge for them to cross from uncertainty to triumph. I was wrong that day in that second-grade classroom – I was exactly where I needed to be. That moment led me to this moment, which is right where I am meant to be now. I just needed a little tug on my shirtsleeve to help point me in the right direction.

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this study to those who endeavor to enrich the lives of students and fortify the teaching profession. May you find what you seek, benefit from it, and use it in the service of others.

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Chapter One: Introduction

What a difference a teacher makes. Serving as a bridge between childhood and adulthood, teachers are committed to students' mental health, social well-being, and academic achievement. Teachers are there for students through their formative and developmental years, building their capacity for success and providing guidance and direction each step of the way. Perhaps even more impactful than the lessons they teach is the way they make students feel, leaving a lasting impression for years to come.

A teacher's profound impact on a student's life is what makes their absence even more noticeable. Stakeholders in the K-12 public education system face a teacher shortage dilemma of unprecedented proportions. As veteran teachers retire, there are few teacher candidates in line to replace them. At the onset of a school year, out-of-field teachers, underqualified teachers, or long-term substitutes often fill instructional vacancies, causing many students to begin the school year with uncertainty. Quality teachers cultivate students into effective citizens and productive members of society. Without them, the future of the next generation is in jeopardy.

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

The purpose of this study was to analyze the context, conditions, competencies, and culture (Wagner et al., 2006) surrounding the experiences of new teachers in their first three years in the profession, and to understand how these experiences contributed to teacher demission. Demission is the act of resigning from an office or position (Oxford University Press, 2022). Demission differs from attrition, which is the departure of employees from an organization as a result of resignation, termination, retirement, or death (Oxford University Press, 2022) because it pertains solely to employee resignation.

I focused on demission in this study because I sought to look beyond termination, retirement, and death to understand why early career educators were quitting the profession of their own volition.

According to Patton (2008), “Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and results of programs to make judgments about the program, improve or further develop program effectiveness, inform decisions about future programming, and/or increase understanding” (p. 56). It is commonly understood among educators that the teacher has the single greatest impact on student learning and achievement. If student success is indeed the top priority of all members of the education profession, then it may be important for district- and school-based leaders to make keeping quality teachers in the classroom the next priority on the list. To ensure efforts to recruit, train, and retain quality classroom teachers are constantly adapting to the evolving needs of new teachers, school leaders should conduct frequent and ongoing self-assessments of programs and practices.

The education profession is, in my experience, a complex system with many moving parts. According to Wagner (2006), “A system is a perceived whole whose elements ‘hang together’ because they continually affect each other over time and operate toward a common purpose” (p. 97). Each interrelated element influences another part of the system, which means it is imperative to be mindful of the whole system when working to enact change on various parts (Wagner, 2006, p. 97). Through this lens, I sought to identify causal elements of teacher demission and recommend changes to the context, conditions, competencies, and culture of those elements to enhance teacher experiences, improve teacher retention, and increase student learning.

Rationale

When I was a first-year teacher, I participated in a new teacher induction program with a group of approximately 30 new teachers. Of those 30 teachers, six of us formed a close-knit group. Of our group of six, three of us had completed a degree in the education major with formal training and classroom internships, while the other three, including me, entered the profession with no education background at all. I remember, as students clambered into my classroom on the first day of school, how stunned I felt that I was in a room full of students – on my own – when just a few short weeks prior I had been an industrial supplies salesman. I had always been intrigued by the idea of being a teacher, and my aspiration had suddenly become reality. As I worked through my incredulity, the bell rang, the door closed, and it was just them and me.

Now, years later, I am on the other side of the classroom door. In my role as a school-based administrator, I work frequently with school and district leaders to provide new teachers with the coaching and support they need to grow their craft and become effective classroom teachers. Still, despite my efforts and the efforts of other school leaders, new teachers seldom make it through the first three years in the classroom. Of the six people in my new teacher group from my first year, only two of us remain in the profession today. I attribute my success and resilience to the support and coaching I received from my school leaders. I often wonder what the others experienced in their first few years that caused them to leave, and I intend to discover ways to improve those experiences to encourage future new teachers to stay. As I watch the classroom door close on a new teacher's first day, I want that new teacher to know that I have not forgotten what it is like to be in that room, and, should they need it, help is always right

on the other side of the door.

Before researching effective methods for teacher recruitment, induction, and retention, I endeavored to gain a deeper understanding of the state of the teaching profession, specifically regarding teacher shortages. Researchers in the United States estimated that approximately 2.7 million new teachers were needed to fill the teacher shortage between 1998 and 2009, with an additional 200,000 each subsequent year (Swanson, 2011, p. 119). As these needs increased each year, along with increased student enrollments, it became even more challenging to find qualified teachers to fill vacancies. To combat the lack of eligible teacher candidates, state department of education leaders lowered professional standards for educators to combat the lack of eligible teacher candidates, paving the way for alternative routes to educator certification. This allowed underqualified teachers to enter the profession, leading to compromised student learning and performance (Swanson, 2011, p. 119).

Teachers entering the field via alternate certification routes, without an education background, are not prepared for the realities of the classroom. According to Swanson's (2011) study, the rate of demission for out-of-field teachers averaged 60% in their first two years of teaching (p. 120). In my professional experience working with early career educators, most of them came from career fields outside of education. In my most recent school-based new teacher cohort for which I am responsible, five out of eight teachers came from other career fields such as business, banking, or sales. In that group of new teachers, 62.5% had no education background whatsoever, and each of them brought their own ideas and concepts of what teaching is supposed to be. These teachers had developed most of their preconceived notions of teaching from their own experiences as

students, and they quickly realized that being a teacher was not quite what they had envisioned.

Before establishing goals for this study, I needed to find out how pervasive this problem had become in the district under study. At the start of the 2019-2020 school year, there were 72 vacant teaching positions across the district. By the end of September, 30 vacancies remained. With 25-30 students comprising the average class size, this equated to between 750 and 900 students without a certified teacher for over six weeks of instructional time. Many of those 72 vacancies were filled during the first six weeks of school by out-of-field teachers, underqualified teachers, or long-term substitutes. In December 2021, over two years later, the district under study had 83 vacant teaching positions, indicating that the context, conditions, competencies, and culture of the teaching profession had not shown signs of improvement.

Goals

My ultimate goal for this study was to mitigate the teacher shortage by learning how to keep teachers supported, happy, and thriving in the classroom. To accomplish this, I analyzed new teacher experiences in an effort to understand the impact of teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts on their formative years in the profession. I organized the plan for this study into three specific goals:

- Goal 1: Analyze current and former early career educator experiences in one school district and understand the effects of those experiences.
- Goal 2: Analyze teacher recruitment, induction, and retention practices in one school district and the impact of these practices on early career educators.
- Goal 3: Offer data-driven, actionable suggestions to fortify new teacher support

practices and increase teacher retention in the district under study.

I devised these goals in accordance with Patton's (2008) assertion, "Evaluation is social research applied to answering policy-oriented questions" (p. 56). I conducted social research by exploring new teacher experiences, and I sought answers to policy-oriented questions when analyzing teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in the district under study.

Definition of Terms

Some of the terms I used in subsequent chapters are specific to the district under study or otherwise potentially unknown or seldom encountered. I defined terms that I deemed outside the realm of common understanding in today's educational community.

- **Content Area Specialist (CAS):** In the district under study, the CAS is the school-based instructional coach.
- **Coordinator:** In the district under study, the Coordinator is a position held by district-based support personnel who oversee one or more areas of school support pertaining to the department to which they are assigned.
- **Department of Professional Leadership and Learning:** In the district under study, the Department of Professional Leadership and Learning is a branch of Curriculum and Instruction responsible for all aspects of professional development, including new teacher induction.
- **Department of Talent Development:** In the district under study, the Department of Talent Development is a branch of Human Resources responsible for all aspects of teacher recruitment.
- **Director:** In the district under study, Director is a position held by district-based

leadership personnel who oversee one or more departments at the district level.

- **Early Career Educator:** In the district under study, a new teacher in their first three years in the profession is designated an early career educator.
- **Inclusion Support Facilitator:** In the district under study, the inclusion support facilitator is a school-based itinerant teacher of students in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program, often called Special Education, who visits designated classrooms to provide additional support services to students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (citation withheld to protect confidentiality).
- **Instructional Talent Developer (ITD):** In the district under study, Instructional Talent Developer (ITD) is the title held by a teacher serving as a school-based mentor to a new teacher.
- **Lead Instructional Talent Developer (Lead ITD):** In the district under study, Lead Instructional Talent Developer (Lead ITD) is the position held by a teacher or instructional coach serving as the school-based coordinator and facilitator of all ITD mentor responsibilities. This role is often filled by the Content Area Specialist (CAS).
- **Novice Educator:** In the district under study, a novice educator is an early career educator in their first year in the profession. This term is used to discern between first-year teachers and second- and third-year teachers in the district under study's induction programs.
- **Paraprofessional:** School-based non-instructional support personnel who assist teachers in the classroom in specialized areas (citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Paraprofessionals are often categorized based on the students or

subject areas they support, such as reading, ESE, intervention, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

- **Professional Development Certification Program (PDCP):** In the district under study, the Professional Development Certification Program (PDCP) is a teacher certification program available to district instructional employees as an alternative path to professional certification in lieu of college courses.
- **Professional Development Specialist (PDS):** In the district under study, Professional Development Specialist (PDS) is the former title of the school-based instructional coach. This term is now obsolete and was replaced by Content Area Specialist (CAS), but many teachers in the district under study still commonly refer to the instructional coach by the old title of PDS.
- **Program Specialist:** In the district under study, the Program Specialist is a position held by district-based support personnel who specialize in one or more areas of school support pertaining to the department to which they are assigned.
- **School Advisory Council:** The School Advisory Council (SAC) is a team of people representing various segments of the community: parents, teachers, students, administrators, support staff, business and industry people, and other community members. The purpose of a SAC is to assist in the preparation and evaluation of the results of the school improvement plan and to assist the principal with the annual school budget (citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Research Questions

I used the three aforementioned goals to categorize my research questions, with three research questions per goal.

Goal 1: Analyze current and former early career educator experiences in one school district and understand the effects of those experiences.

1. By what process did current and former early career educators in the district under study enter the education field?
2. What induction and support practices have current and former early career educators experienced in the district under study?
3. How have the experiences of current and former early career educators in the district under study impacted their careers?

Goal 2: Analyze teacher recruitment, induction, and retention practices in one school district and the impact of these practices on early career educators.

1. What are the current recruitment practices in the school district under study?
2. In what ways are new teachers prepared for the classroom in the school district under study?
3. What efforts are in place in the district under study to retain teachers and continue to provide them with support after their initial induction?

Goal 3: Offer data-driven, actionable suggestions to fortify new teacher support practices and increase teacher retention in the district under study.

1. How can school and district leaders in the district under study attract highly-qualified candidates for teaching positions?
2. How can school and district leaders in the district under study provide comprehensive and sustained support to early career educators?
3. How can school and district leaders in the district under study increase retention of early career educators?

Conclusion

Historically, retirement has always been the most prominent cause of teacher attrition (Swanson, 2011, p. 120). However, as the bulk of the baby boomer generation retired at the turn of the century, there were few next-generation teachers in line to replace them. Of those few replacements, 30% to 50% of them often leave during their first five years (Swanson, 2011, p. 120). “Feelings of isolation in the classroom, inadequate classroom management skills, work schedules, and insufficient preparation for dealing with cultural diversity in schools are cited frequently as reasons why teachers leave the profession” (Swanson, 2011, p. 120). This is where my study began. These teachers, the ones leaving in the early years of their careers due to the aforementioned reasons, are precisely the people I studied. I wanted to know what these early career teachers experienced, why they left the profession, and what school and district leaders could do to keep them in the classroom.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Before collecting data within the district under study, I sought to ascertain the current state of the field in the areas of teacher recruitment, induction, and retention. I conducted a review of relevant literature in an effort to learn theories, models, and methods used by other educators. I identified key topics for discussion in this review, including recruitment efforts, training and support methods, and tactics used to keep teachers in the profession. Reviewing the relevant literature enabled me to bring new ideas to the district under study and make informed recommendations to turn theory into action.

At the onset of my research, I searched for scholarly articles, journals, and books pertaining to the topics of my study. Using EBSCO host in the National Louis University library as my primary search engine, I searched for the following terms: teacher recruitment, teacher induction, and teacher retention. These searches yielded peer-reviewed articles for each topic, some of which applied to each topic individually, and others approached the topics collectively. I also utilized texts within the disciplines of school reform and leadership strategies, which contributed to my knowledge of the topics and provided a wider study of the education field. Of the principal sources identified for this study, 24 range in publication date from 2014 to 2020; however, there were a few outliers, including two published in 2013, two in 2012, four in 2011, two in 2009, two in 2008, and two in 2006. For the purpose of this literature review, I categorized relevant sources into three key categories: Teacher recruitment, teacher induction, and teacher retention.

Teacher Recruitment

In the category of teacher recruitment, I identified recurring topics in the literature I reviewed. Recurring topics included recruitment initiatives and strategies, identification and selection of quality candidates, and cultivation of teachers within the community. I conducted further analysis of these topics in the subsequent sections of this category.

Recruitment Initiatives

According to Bland et al. (2014), “Recruitment, placement, and development of high-quality teachers should be the primary focus of district administration” (p. 1). Without an effective marketing strategy and recruitment campaign, teacher vacancies remain unfilled, and students begin the school year without a teacher in their classroom. Recruiting teachers is about much more than the teaching job itself. Teacher candidates want to know the climate and culture of a prospective school and community. School district web pages and recruitment literature should include information pertaining to the district’s vision for teaching and learning, leadership philosophy, core values of the school district and community, and the cost of living and quality of life in the community to entice candidates to choose to become a teacher in that area (Bland et al., 2014, p.2).

Teacher recruitment is not the sole responsibility of leaders in the district office. Although most school districts have a recruitment department or recruiting team, school-based leaders also play an important role in attracting and hiring potential teachers. Rutledge et al. (2008) found that 45.9% of teachers are hired directly by the school principal, 23.2% are hired directly by district personnel, and the rest are hired through a hybrid process in which district personnel oversees the organization of materials and

principals oversee the selection of teachers (p. 10). While district recruitment team members may be the predominant presence at job fairs or other major recruitment initiatives, school-based leaders are at the front lines of recruitment and can help by word of mouth or by asking current teachers to invite friends and family to join the profession. Current employees can sometimes be the most effective cheerleaders for the district recruitment program (Bland et al., 2014, p. 2).

More Than Just a Warm Body

With the current shortage of qualified teacher candidates, administrators are often left with no choice but to hire teachers who may be less-than-ideal but are the only option available at the time. School leaders must fill teacher vacancies prior to the start of the school year, which can force the hand of the hiring administrator as the need to find any eligible candidate begins to take priority over finding the right candidate. Hiring a “warm body” to fill a teacher vacancy can cause added stress on the support system at the school, as many of these candidates lack the background training, content knowledge, or classroom management skills to effectively run a classroom.

According to Young’s (2018) research, this happens quite often, causing summer break to be stressful for hiring administrators attempting to fill their staff rosters. It is crucial for student success not only to fill the vacancy but to fill it with a qualified candidate who will be an effective teacher. There are traits about which a hiring administrator must be cognizant when considering candidates for teaching positions. Years of experience, years of consistent employment at one school, evaluation ratings, educator certifications, and student data are some indicators of a potentially effective teacher (Young, 2018, pp. 18-19). Furthermore, college credits from teaching methods

courses rather than content-area courses tend to yield more effective classroom teachers (Young, 2018, p. 18). Even with these factors in place, a teacher candidate's compatibility with students cannot be predicted until the candidate is face-to-face with students in the classroom. This is why considering a candidate's communication and interpersonal skills during the interview process is so crucial. A teacher candidate's ability to convey ideas can be a good indicator of their ability to effectively communicate with students (Young, 2018, p. 18).

Grow Your Own

One concept gaining traction in recent years is the idea of growing your own educators. In the state of Georgia, for example, leaders at the state department of education have made concerted efforts in the last decade to cultivate educators for each school district from their own citizens. Swanson's (2011) study of Georgia's grow-your-own teacher programs showed many eligible teacher candidates often returned to their home community after college, and Georgia's educational leaders worked to devise more initiatives to cultivate them as educators. One such initiative was identifying potential future educators in high school and inviting them to join a future educator program. The program included incentives such as scholarships to work alongside master teachers in local schools and salary bonuses for program completers who became employed by the district after obtaining their teacher certification (Swanson, 2011, p. 120).

Another concept of the grow-your-own initiative is the idea of identifying community members with certain vocational talents and interests and recruiting them to become teachers of that vocation or content. According to Swanson (2011), "People seek out environments that provide them with the opportunities to use their talents and share

their values and attitudes with others who are similar to them in the ideal” (p. 121). There is a direct relationship between vocational interests and career satisfaction (Swanson, 2011, p. 121). As they worked to grow their own citizens into teachers, school leaders in Georgia approached members of the community who had a passion for certain subjects and content areas and recruited them to share their passion with students.

The grow-your-own recruiting practice is particularly effective in school districts with a college or university located in the same town. Educational leaders in Georgia encouraged potential future educators to remain in the state for their college education. District leaders partnered with local colleges and universities to provide opportunities for future educators to participate in internships and job-shadowing programs in their school district as they progressed through their teacher education courses. Higher education leaders worked with school district leaders to identify potential future educators and “invite these potential teachers to campus to attend pre-service induction conferences, take part in education and content-area specific classes, and meet with preservice educators and faculty as well as admissions personnel” (Swanson, 2011, p. 129). By working collaboratively with the local college or university, school leaders identified and cultivated aspiring teachers from the initial phase of interest all the way through certification and onboarding with their school district.

Teacher Induction

In the category of teacher induction, I identified recurring topics in the literature I reviewed. Recurring topics included the power of the teacher mentor, the realities of the teaching profession, and the concept of teacher resilience. I conducted further analysis of these topics in the subsequent sections of this category.

The Power of the Mentor

A quality mentor is essential to a successful new teacher induction program. According to Callahan (2016), the national average cost of replacing a teacher was approximately \$8,000, and the yearly costs of recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers were \$2.2 billion per year as of 2016 (p. 6). Teacher induction practices can help avoid the recurrence of these costs by increasing teacher retention, and a mentoring component is crucial to effective teacher induction. Callahan (2016) stated, “Mentoring programs advance the professional growth of new teachers, making them more effective in a shorter amount of time, improving student learning, and reducing the attrition rate of new teachers” (p. 7). Mentors serve new teachers through the modeling of effective instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and by helping them navigate the myriad of responsibilities required of new teachers. Callahan (2016) suggested a high-quality mentor can help new teachers build relationships with students, leading to success in their classrooms and, ultimately, job satisfaction.

When considering reasons that new teachers leave the profession, not being able to contribute to the school’s culture, feeling unable to affect student achievement in a positive way, and classroom management issues are all on the table. Behavior management is an area in which new teachers have begged for support and is listed as one of the main reasons for leaving the profession. A strong, well-trained mentor will work with new teachers to develop reflective practices through dialogue about classroom management and pedagogy, emphasizing the importance of building relationships with students and of developing caring values, such as respect, in the classroom. (p. 8)

Callahan (2016) also suggested the mentor can serve as a bridge between the new teacher and the school principal, providing guidance to the new teacher in accordance with the principal's vision, and also sharing successes with the principal, and conveying any areas in which the new teacher may need support.

A teacher mentoring program is only as strong as its mentors. In a study of the impact of new teacher mentorship, Sowell (2017) explored effective practices for supporting new teachers through mentoring by providing insight from the mentors' perspectives. The author asked the mentors to provide three key practices for supporting first-year teachers, which they identified as building relationships with all stakeholders, increasing classroom management, and improving instructional practice (Sowell, 2017, pp. 130-132). Mentors emphasized the importance of building relationships with their mentees. The relationship not only builds confidence in the new teacher and provides them with a trusted confidant, but it also opens lines of communication for productive feedback. "Skilled mentors aided teachers to improve their practices through building strong relationships and developing mutual trust, and as a result, the feedback was well-received" (Sowell, 2017, p. 133). Mentors support new teachers through observation and feedback, so a strong bond of trust and symbiosis is crucial to the mentoring and coaching process.

The mentors in Sowell's (2017) study also expressed a need for support from school leaders and continued professional development not only for the new teachers but for the mentors as well. District- and school-based administrators and coaches should conduct regular needs assessments for mentors and design frequent and ongoing professional development opportunities based on these needs. Mentors have the ability to

increase teacher efficacy and retention by molding new teachers into successful, lifelong educators, but they too need support and mentoring.

The Real World

New teachers often enter the profession only to discover teaching is not what they thought it would be. While this can be the result of real-world experiences conflicting with preconceived notions, it is also possible that teacher preparation and induction programs are not doing an adequate job of preparing teachers for the realities of the job. A myriad of research studies on why teachers leave the profession indicated student behaviors and lack of classroom management as significant factors contributing to teacher demission.

One such study by Flower et al. (2017) proposed that such a high number of teachers leave the profession because certification and induction programs are not adequately preparing them for the realities of the classroom. What they ultimately experience causes immense stress and dissatisfaction with their work environment, prompting many to leave the profession. Flower et al. (2017) found that new teachers often encountered a classroom environment that was not what they expected, specifically regarding student behavior.

Without the knowledge and skill to use strategies to reinforce appropriate behavior and reduce challenging behavior, it is unlikely that student behavior will improve. Of particular note is the incongruity among the types of behavioral management strategies taught through preservice programs... Much of what is taught to educators is in the form of reactive strategies rather than preventive management. Such strategies include what to do after a child interferes or

interrupts instruction, instead of how to set up and maintain classroom expectations and manage time wisely. If our goals as educators are to help our students benefit from instructional effectiveness and increase their achievement potential, our focus must shift to preparing students in ways that will allow us to prevent disruptive behaviors rather than only respond to them. This means that all teachers would benefit from substantial training in increasing appropriate student behaviors as well as reducing challenging student behaviors. (p. 166)

The authors suggested mentorship of new teachers should continue well beyond the initial induction training to ensure new teachers have adequate time to acclimate to the classroom environment and become proficient in classroom management.

Teacher Resilience

A key part of teacher induction is protecting new teachers and maintaining fortitude during challenges and setbacks. Greenfield (2015) aimed to promote the support of new teachers through the relatively new concept of teacher resilience. Greenfield (2015) defined teacher resilience as a teacher's ability to adapt to change despite challenging circumstances (p. 54). For teachers, "Stress is a revolving door" (Greenfield, 2015, p. 52), and is one of the more regularly cited reasons for teachers leaving the profession. Greenfield (2015) conducted a qualitative research study by analyzing teacher morale with a focus on teacher self-assessment of their well-being in their career. A recurring contributing factor to teacher workload and stress was the excessive change, which overwhelms and mentally drains teachers. "Overly stressed teachers are likely to become increasingly less effective as their morale and commitment worsen, and so students' education may also be adversely affected" (Greenfield, 2015, p. 53). The main

finding of the study was that through strong support systems in place, teachers were able to build and maintain positive thoughts, actions, and relationships, which increased adaptability and perseverance (Greenfield, 2015, p. 66).

In further support of the idea that positive thoughts and feelings bolster teacher fortitude, McMullen (2020) stated, “Our brains associate learning with emotion. We categorize information differently depending on how we felt when we learned it. When we feel safe, we are free to process and remember information” (p. 99). In the same way students need a safe and welcoming learning environment, teachers need a safe, welcoming, and nurturing working environment. When relationships with students, colleagues, and mentors are strong, morale is high, and teachers will connect their experiences and learning to positive feelings (McMullen, 2020, p. 99). With the right training, mentorship, and support, teachers become adaptable and resilient to obstacles, maintaining positivity and fortitude as they navigate the early years of their teaching careers.

Teacher Retention

In the category of teacher retention, I identified recurring topics in the literature I reviewed. Recurring topics included the impact of the environment, the impact of student success, the impact of leadership, and teacher incentives. I conducted further analysis of these topics in the subsequent sections of this category.

The Impact of the Environment

Research shows a direct connection between novice teachers’ intent to remain in the profession and the perceived level of professionalism and collegiality in their school. In a study of new teacher retention, Pogodzinski et al. (2013) surveyed novice teachers

from 99 schools to ascertain their perception of professionalism and collaborative efforts. The authors asked the teachers to indicate their intention to remain in the teaching profession. The survey data revealed that novice teachers were more likely to remain teaching at schools exhibiting a positive collegial climate and greater collective responsibility (Pogodzinski et al., 2014, p. 49). Specifically, new teachers were more likely to remain at a school with a collegial climate and a collaborative approach from their peers and leaders.

In a study of teacher burnout, O'Brennan et al. (2017) collected survey data from 3,225 high school instructional staff members in 58 high schools. In the survey, O'Brennan et al. asked participants to indicate their perceptions of the working environment. One of the key findings of the study was that teacher burnout can be attributed significantly to an absence of connectedness between teachers, safety concerns, and a lack of self-efficacy due to a negative learning environment (O'Brennan et al., 2017, p. 172). The findings of this study reinforce the importance of a collaborative environment in which teachers support one another and feel like they have the ability to make a genuine impact on student success.

In an effort to determine the reasons why former teachers are not returning to the classroom, Buchanan (2012) conducted research by interviewing 22 former teachers about their experiences before, during, and after their time in the teaching profession. Using the qualitative data collected, the author then included a comparison of the teachers' ideals and mindsets before they began teaching and after they left the classroom. He found a stark contrast between the two. The teachers surveyed entered the teaching profession with hope and enthusiasm, only to depart embittered and

disappointed. The former teachers cited lack of support from administrators, lack of collegiality, classroom behavior issues, workload, and salary as the primary factors contributing to their departure (Buchanan, 2012, p. 211). Furthermore, all 22 teachers stated they had been so negatively impacted by their experiences that they would not consider returning to teaching.

The Impact of Student Success

Student success has a profound impact on teacher self-worth and morale. Pedota (2015) proposed that student success can support teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. The main finding of the author was that if students were successful in achieving their goals, the teacher's morale would be higher because they would feel pride in their students' accomplishments. Specifically, if students are making learning gains, teachers will know they are on the right track and are doing their job well. If they are doing their job well, they are more likely to be happy with their profession and look forward to work each day. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of them making a career out of teaching. "A classroom based on encouragement can enhance a student's sense of belonging and connection, which will increase academic self-image and success as well as increase teacher self-efficacy and the likelihood of retention" (Pedota, 2015, p. 54). Student success, the primary goal of an educator, can create a domino effect of teacher satisfaction and teacher retention.

The Impact of Leadership

In an exit survey conducted in a study by Craig (2014), departing teachers were asked why they were leaving the profession. Of the teachers surveyed, 46.3% of teachers associated their leaving with not feeling valued in the workplace, 45.2% with not

experiencing support from administrators, and 43.9% with workplace conditions and policies. Other contributing factors, still significant, but not among the teachers' top choices, were job security (10%), professional development opportunities (7.7%), salary (5%), and benefits (2.6%) (Craig, 2014, p. 83). The high percentage of dissatisfaction with support from administrators – nearly half of the surveyed teachers – showed the impact leaders can have on teacher job satisfaction. It is a common assumption that teachers leave because of low salaries. However, there are other factors besides money that keep teachers happily employed at schools, and school leaders play a major part.

According to a study conducted by Shaw and Newton (2014), a strong relationship exists between teacher job satisfaction and the perceived level of servant leadership practiced by the school principal. Shaw and Newton (2014) defined servant leadership as “Leadership that focuses on serving the employee, the customer, and the community. Serving them is priority one. Servant leaders aspire to serve first” (p. 102). A servant leader puts the needs of others before their own and serves with a higher purpose in mind. Of the teachers surveyed in the study, 69% stated they intended to remain at their current school because their principal was a servant leader (Shaw & Newton, 2014, p. 105). By putting the needs of teachers before the needs of themselves, school principals can show their teachers how valued teachers are. Providing support through service is the difference between an effective leader and a manager.

Leadership comes in many forms. A formal leader, such as a principal or other school administrator, has a formal managerial job title and is the designated leader on a school campus. An informal leader may not have a managerial job title or a leadership

designation, but has a positive impact on the environment and has considerable clout and peer respect. In a study conducted by Pucella (2014), the findings showed that informal leadership opportunities contributed to early career educator retention. Distributing leadership roles such as grade-level chairs, department chairs, or committee membership to novice teachers empowered them and gave them a sense of belonging, which led to them remaining in the profession due to higher morale (Pucella, 2014, p. 16). Placing new teachers in leadership roles can also combat veteran teacher apathy, increase collaboration among teachers, and involve new teachers in school decision-making (Pucella, 2014, p. 17). Empowering new teachers through leadership opportunities can build and maintain their confidence and sense of purpose in a school environment.

Incentivizing Teachers

In an article proposing solutions to the issue of teacher retention, Posey (2017) suggested incentives are the key to keeping teachers in the profession. Potential incentives included loan-forgiveness, additional stipends for board-certified teachers who chose to work in high need, low performing schools, and teacher induction programs that protected teachers in the first three years of their career, creating job security as they learned during their critical formative years (Posey, 2017, p. 30). Bland et al. (2014) contributed to this notion as well, suggesting incentives as useful tactics for retaining teachers. While school districts often offer signing bonuses at the time of employment, Bland et al. (2014) suggested a more long-term solution, stating, “The most logical incentive program is a long-term financial package rather than a one-time bonus. Long-term packages include targeted bonuses and higher salaries to retain teachers in hard-to-staff schools and subject areas” (p. 6). Providing long-term opportunities for higher

earnings can encourage teachers to remain in the profession for the duration of their careers.

Salary and benefits are not the only way to keep teachers in the profession. Research supports the idea of incentivizing teachers in other ways besides monetary compensation. In one analysis of teacher career trajectories, Latifoglu (2016) surveyed 41 teachers to determine if they were teaching in their desired or intended field and whether they intended to continue with their present career trajectory. The findings of the study suggested that teacher placement does impact retention because 28 out of the 41 teachers surveyed indicated that they were teaching out of field, did not expect to be teaching out of field, and did not intend to continue with their current teaching assignment (Latifoglu, 2016, p. 65). This suggests an incentive for retaining new teachers could be ensuring they are teaching in a desired field that matches their intended career trajectory.

Conclusion

By conducting a review of the literature, I was able to learn more about the current state of the education field and the impact of the teacher shortage. The research I reviewed painted a picture of the education profession that looks very similar to my professional experience. Major findings in the literature that pertain to my topic included the power of the new teacher mentor, the impact of the school leader, and the value of a collaborative, collegial environment. Teacher demission is prevalent across the country, and unless district and school leaders intervene, it is not likely to subside. Learning from others' research in this literature review helped me narrow my focus and target specific aspects of teacher recruitment, induction, and retention to make a valuable contribution to the body of research on the topic.

Chapter Three: Methodology

After generating my research questions that guided me through this study, I collected data to answer them. In addition to conducting a review of the literature on the topic, I wanted to hear from teachers and district personnel in the district I was studying. I wanted to know what current early career teachers were experiencing in their first three years in the profession, and I wanted to know if it was working. Furthermore, I wanted to find early career teachers who left the teaching profession in their first three years on the job and ask them why they left. I wanted to hear their stories and learn about the support – or lack of support – they received as new teachers, how they felt in their fledgling years, and what led them to the decision to depart. I also wanted to know what practices for teacher recruitment, induction, and retention were currently in place in the district under study, how these practices compared to other districts, and how they contributed to mitigating the teacher shortage by properly training and keeping new teachers.

Research Design Overview

I employed a mixed-method design of data collection to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data through surveys and interviews. While the quantitative data from surveys were valuable and pertinent to this study, my research questions necessitated a more extensive focus on the qualitative data from interviews. My survey and interview questions for this study elicited responses that contained a high degree of consideration of participant thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This was deliberate in my research design. Patton (2008) said, "Qualitative data capture personal meaning and portray the diversity of ways people express themselves" (p. 435). With this in mind, I formulated survey and interview questions that evoked the participants' recollections of experiences

and feelings as a new teacher. This approach yielded results that were less binary – less black and white – and contained a more observable human element. I designed my research around my interest in obtaining firsthand accounts of participants’ experiences with teacher recruitment, induction, and retention, and how these experiences had shaped their careers.

Participants

I targeted three participant groups in this study:

- Current early career educators (teachers in their first three years in the profession), both male and female, ages 21-65.
- Former early career educators (those who left the profession within the last five years before completing three years of teaching), both male and female, ages 21-65.
- District leadership personnel, both male and female, ages 21-65 (this included program specialists, coordinators, and directors in the areas of teacher recruitment, induction, and retention).

My goal was to survey 10 current early career educators, 10 former early career educators, and 10 district personnel involved with recruitment, induction, and retention.

Following the survey, my goal was to interview three current early career educators, three former early career educators, and three district personnel involved with recruitment, induction, and retention.

I selected the participant categories due to their relevance to my research topic. I chose current early career educators because they provided a first-hand account of the current climate and conditions as a new teacher. I chose former early career teachers

because they shared their mentoring and induction experiences as new teachers and pointed to reasons causing their departure from the profession. I selected district leadership personnel because they were directly involved with the facilitation of recruitment initiatives, induction practices, and retention efforts in the school district under study.

Data Gathering Techniques

Following Patton's (2008) assertion that "both qualitative and quantitative data can contribute to all aspects of evaluative inquiries" (p. 438), I implemented a mixed-methods design of data collection, including the use of surveys and semi-structured interviews. I surveyed and interviewed members of each participant group by asking participants to complete an online survey and an interview, either in person or via phone or video conference. I randomly selected early career educators who met the criteria described to be participants. I identified current early career educators through an inquiry with personnel in the district Professional Leadership and Learning department. I used snowball sampling to identify 10 former early career educators, as they no longer worked in the school district and were difficult to locate. I presented all district personnel involved with recruitment, induction, and retention with the opportunity to participate in the survey and interview process. Using these techniques to gather data enabled me to obtain information pertaining to my research questions from three different perspectives in the field.

Surveys

I gathered quantitative data through surveys posing Likert scale type questions, and qualitative data from open-ended short answer survey questions. I produced survey

questions based on my goals and research questions for each participant category and generated online surveys using the Google Forms platform. Once the surveys were generated and ready for circulation, I sent the appropriate survey link to potential participants in each participant group via email. I also included in the email correspondence an explanation of my study, my intended use of the data, and all necessary documentation permitting my data collection. The documents I sent to participants were my IRB approval letter, my district approval letter granting me permission to conduct research in the school district under study, and the informed consent form for the participant to sign. Participants clicked on the link embedded in the email to access the survey. At the end of each survey, a final question prompted participants to indicate their interest and willingness to participate in the next phase of data collection by agreeing to participate in an interview with me. Once I obtained survey results and consent forms from participants, I was able to reach out to individual participants to schedule the interview. See appendices A, C, and E for survey questions for each participant category.

Interviews

I gathered additional qualitative data through interviews. By interviewing participants with both guiding and open-ended questions, I was able to, in the words of Patton (2008), truly “capture what the program experience means to participants in their own words” (p. 434). The interviews were 20-30 minutes in duration and consisted of six questions, which I derived from my research questions, each pertaining to the corresponding participant category. I emailed the interview questions to participants at least 24 hours prior to the interview to provide them with adequate preparation time. I

conducted the interviews either via phone, video conference, or face-to-face, depending on each participant's preference. During each interview, I transcribed all participant responses and read them back to the participant after each question to ensure accuracy. At the conclusion of the interview, I reminded the participant that their responses were anonymous, confidential, and of course, appreciated. See appendices B, D, and F for interview questions for each participant category.

Data Analysis Techniques

Members from each participant group collectively contributed data pertaining to current recruitment, induction, and retention practices in the school district under study. Because I conducted the surveys electronically on the Google Forms platform, I was able to extract quantitative data from participant responses to Likert scale type questions directly from the electronic survey. I exported responses to a spreadsheet, which then enabled me to view, filter, and sort participant responses by category and scale. I generated charts and tables from the data to identify trends and patterns.

Analyzing qualitative data consisted of organizing the open-ended short answer survey question responses and the interview responses based on their corresponding participant group. I scrutinized participant responses and identified major recurring themes. I categorized the recurring themes as either positive or negative. Categorizing recurring themes as positive and negative enabled me to identify trends and patterns in new teachers' experiences and determine if these experiences were contributing to teacher retention or if they were a causative factor in new teacher demission.

I organized qualitative data that I extracted from open-ended short answer survey responses and interview responses with district personnel. Responses from district

personnel provided a different perspective of the research topic than responses from the current and former early career educators. All four of the district personnel I interviewed worked collectively toward a common goal of growing and cultivating new teachers. Each of the four district personnel was responsible for a different facet of teacher recruitment, induction, and retention, and I categorized their survey and interview responses according to their responsibilities. Categories included district recruitment and internship initiatives, professional development and training, district and school-based mentorship, and professional certification and continuing education. I analyzed data from each of these categories to understand the current practices in the district under study and determine if these practices were contributing to teacher retention or were a causative factor in teacher demission.

Ethical Considerations

Maintaining a careful and conscientious approach to this study was paramount to me, and I wanted to convey that to my participants. I obtained informed consent from each participant as I collected data from participant groups. I distributed informed consent forms to participants via email, and participants signed consent forms and returned them to me via email. I emphasized to potential participants that the survey and interview were optional so they did not feel coerced into participation. Participation was voluntary and may have been discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. I kept all identities confidential, including those of the school, district, and individual participants. I attached no identifying information to the data and revealed no participant identities in any way. I collected and reported data anonymously and ensured it bore no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants. Additionally, to ensure confidentiality,

I secured all data in a locked cabinet in my home office. Only I had access to data, and I will destroy all data three years after the conclusion of this study.

When conducting surveys and interviews, I emphasized to participants that the purpose of this study was to analyze and explore, not to critique and condemn. My intentions as the researcher were benevolent and have remained so during and after the study. Participant input was valuable to me, and I truly appreciated their time and attention. Participants in this study benefited themselves and their peers by contributing to efforts to increase the efficacy of teacher support programs and, ultimately, job satisfaction and morale.

Limitations

The most significant limitation of this study was participation. The final sample size of completed participant surveys for this study was four current early career educators, two of whom participated in the interview, two former early career educators, one of whom participated in the interview, and four district personnel, all of whom participated in the interview. My initial goal was to interview three of 10 surveyed participants from each group, but I interviewed one additional participant in the district personnel group whose job pertained to recruitment and induction. When they were presented with the opportunity to participate in an interview, they responded enthusiastically and expressed their interest in sharing their thoughts, so I decided their input would be valuable to my research.

Selecting participants for this study proved to be challenging. There were hurdles and risk factors in each participant group. Current early career educators were the easiest group to identify and contact, as I work with new teachers daily in my role as a school-

based administrator. However, there were risk factors involved with current new teachers. If I had selected teachers at the school where I was an administrator, the participants would have been surveyed and interviewed about their experiences with mentoring and support by the very person who was responsible for providing it to them. In addition to providing them with this support, I also would have been one of their performance evaluators in some cases. To circumvent these limitations and potential ethical roadblocks, I created a boundary when determining which current early career educators to ask to participate in the study. I limited the participant group to new teachers who were not teaching at the school where I served as an administrator. I was acquainted with some of the participants in a professional capacity, but I was not their direct supervisor. This boundary enabled me to maintain professional neutrality, ensured the participants that the study was non-evaluative, and allowed me to collect data without a detrimental impact on my professional relationship with the participants.

Locating and contacting participants in the former early career educator group proved to be the most arduous of the three groups. I used snowball sampling to identify and contact former teachers who left the profession during their first three years of teaching within the last five years. The snowball sampling was more effective than I anticipated, as I was able to procure contact information for six people who met the criteria to be participants in this group. However, only two of the six chose to participate. This was the most significant limitation to my data collection because this participant group possessed the most valuable information pertaining to this study. These people were once new teachers who had left the profession in their first three years, and I wanted to know why. I had to be mindful of their personal lives and feelings, and keep in mind

that they left the profession behind and perhaps they did not wish to revisit it. While the survey and interview responses from the participants in this group may not have been an all-encompassing representation of people who left the teaching profession, the input was relevant enough to garner an understanding of new teacher experiences and formulate recommendations for improvement.

District personnel were the most willing contributors to my data collection. They were eager to discuss their current practices and initiatives to recruit and support new teachers. Information from these participants was abundant because they were involved in all aspects of teacher recruitment, induction, and retention as part of their regular job responsibilities in the school district under study. Limitations with this participant group were minimal; however, I knew I needed to approach this participant group with the highest degree of care and deference. Although my survey and interview questions were not created with malicious intent, I did not want them to be perceived as such. When I approached this participant group, I emphasized that my study was non-evaluative and it was not my intention to critique or condemn their current practices but to learn from them to glean an understanding of what it means to provide effective support and mentorship to a new teacher.

Conclusion

Overall, my methodology yielded results that enabled me to analyze current teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in the school district under study. More importantly, my surveys and interviews provided a channel through which current early career educators, former early career educators, and district personnel could share their experiences and voice their opinions about their own time as a

new teacher or mentor of an early career educator. The resulting data gave me the tools and knowledge needed to offer data-driven, actionable suggestions to fortify new teacher support practices to help increase teacher retention in the district under study.

Chapter Four: Results

I conducted research for this study to understand new teacher experiences and the impact of teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in one school district. In my research, I collected quantitative data in the form of surveys and qualitative data in the form of interviews. I surveyed and interviewed participants in three groups in the district under study: current early career educators in their first three years in the profession, former early career educators who left the profession in their first three years, and district personnel responsible for teacher recruitment, induction, and retention. I reported the findings for each participant group and related the findings to the four arenas of change outlined by Wagner et al. (2006): context, conditions, competencies, and culture. I interpreted the data, made judgments based on my interpretations, and made data-driven recommendations for the district under study.

Findings

I organized my findings in the following order based on the three participant groups: current early career educators, former early career educators, and district personnel responsible for teacher recruitment, induction, and retention. I presented quantitative survey data from each group first, then I presented qualitative interview data. I have relayed the analysis of my findings below.

Current Early Career Educator Data

I created and administered surveys and conducted interviews with the current early career educator participant group. Members of this group were current teachers in their first three years in the classroom. The survey consisted of six prompts and four questions. The first six items on the survey were Likert scale type prompts in which I

asked participants to respond using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. The next three survey items were open-ended short answer questions in which I asked participants to respond to each question based on their own perspectives and experiences. For the final item on the survey, I asked participants to indicate their willingness to participate in the interview portion of my study. In question 10 I asked: Would you be willing to participate in a brief interview (approximately 20 minutes) with the researcher about your experiences as an early career educator? Select Yes or No. If a participant selected Yes, they then indicated their preferred interview method, if applicable (phone, video conference, email, or face-to-face). Question 10 was a central piece of my research methodology, but I did not design it to yield data pertinent to my research questions. To maintain relevance, I omitted responses from question 10 in the findings below. I distributed surveys and collected data electronically via Google Forms. I analyzed the survey results and shared my findings below.

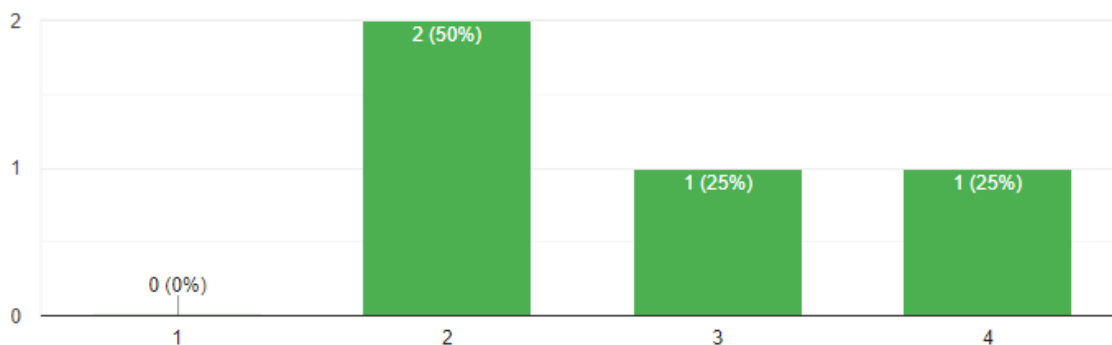
Current Early Career Educator Survey Summary. I received four survey responses from current early career educators. Participants were as follows:

- Participant A: A third-year high school English teacher
- Participant B: A third-year high school US History teacher
- Participant C: A second-year elementary school art teacher
- Participant D: A third-year high school biology teacher

In the first prompt of the current early career educator survey, I stated: I felt informed and supported during the hiring process. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 1). Two teachers (50%) chose disagree, one teacher (25%) chose agree, and one teacher (25%) chose strongly agree. Half of the teachers currently in their first three years of teaching felt informed and supported during the onboarding process, and the other half did not feel informed or supported.

Figure 1

Current Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 1 Responses

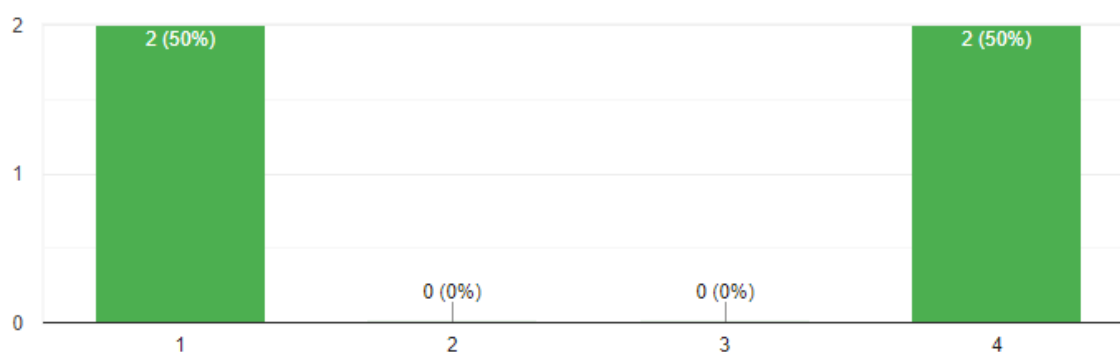


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the second prompt of the current early career educator survey, I stated: The initial orientation training I received upon entering the education field was sufficient, relevant, and timely. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 2). Two teachers (50%) chose strongly disagree, and two teachers (50%) chose strongly agree. Half of the teachers surveyed indicated their initial training was sufficient, the other half indicated it was deficient.

Figure 2

Current Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 2 Responses

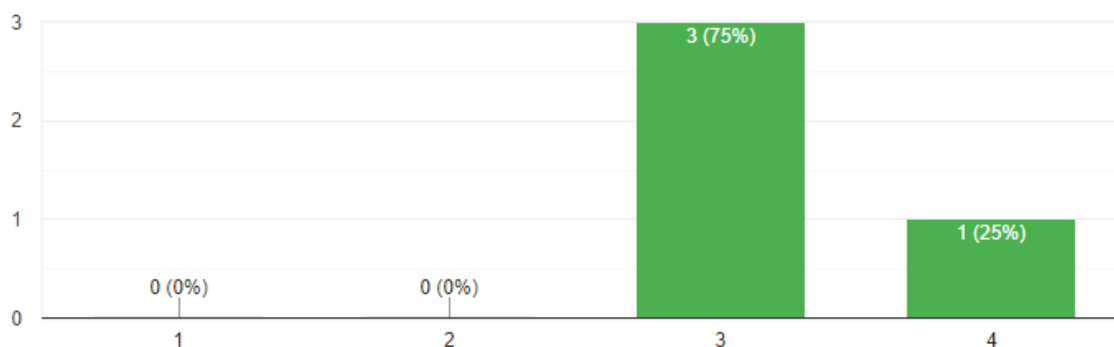


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the third prompt of the current early career educator survey, I stated: The ongoing training and professional development I am receiving as an early career educator is sufficient, relevant, timely, and provides opportunities for professional growth. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 3). Three teachers (75%) chose agree, and one teacher (25%) chose strongly agree. All four teachers surveyed indicated they were satisfied with their ongoing professional development, with one teacher more satisfied than the others.

Figure 3

Current Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 3 Responses

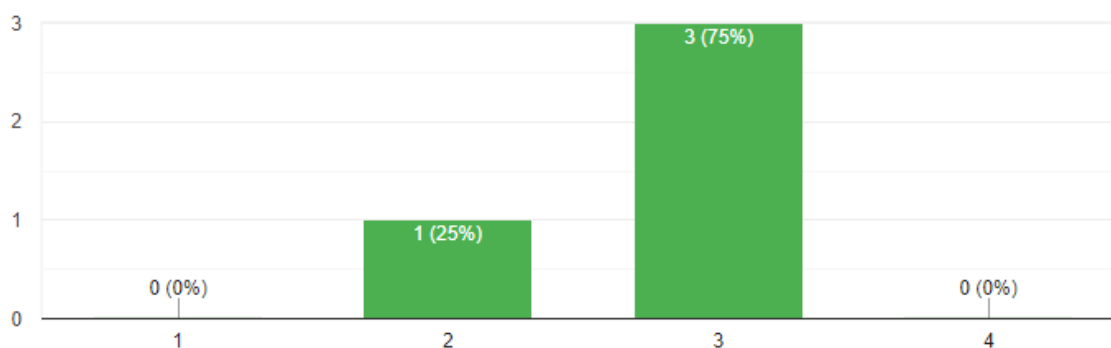


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the fourth prompt of the current early career educator survey, I stated: I feel adequately supported and mentored as an early career educator by my school-based leaders and peers. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 4). One teacher (25%) chose disagree, and the other three teachers (75%) chose agree. One teacher did not feel adequately supported by school-based leaders and peers, while the other three teachers did feel adequately supported.

Figure 4

Current Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 4 Responses

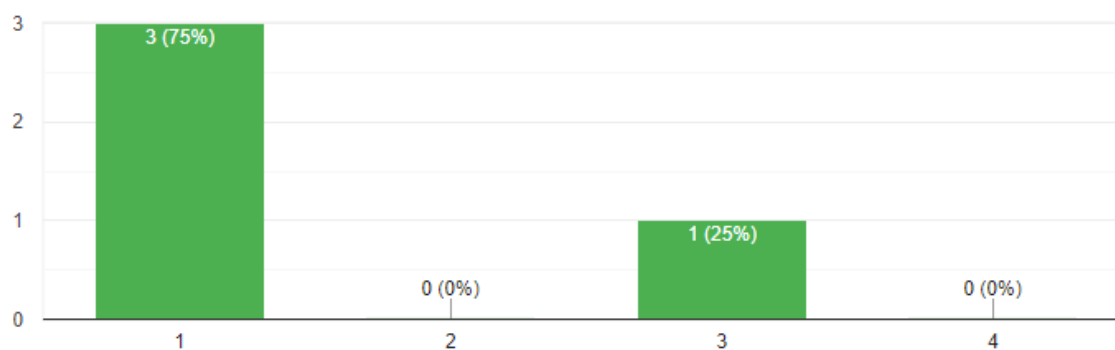


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the fifth prompt of the current early career educator survey, I stated: I feel adequately supported and mentored as an early career educator by leaders in the district office. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 5). Three teachers (75%) chose strongly disagree, and one teacher (25%) chose agree. Although one teacher did feel supported by district leadership, the majority of teachers surveyed did not feel supported by leaders in the district office at all.

Figure 5

Current Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 5 Responses



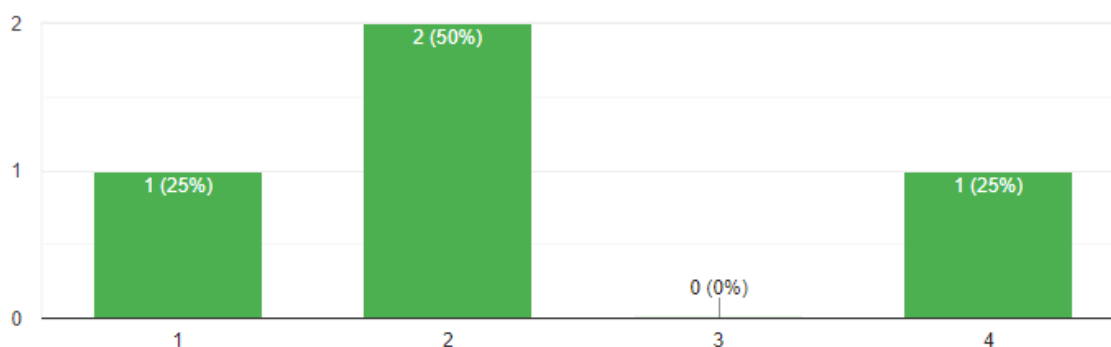
Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the sixth prompt of the current early career educator survey, I stated: Teaching is turning out to be what I expected and what I hoped it would be. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 6). One teacher (25%) chose strongly disagree, two teachers (50%) chose disagree, and one teacher (25%) chose strongly agree.

Although one teacher did feel like teaching was what they had expected and hoped it would be, the majority of teachers felt it was not.

Figure 6

Current Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 6 Responses



Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

For question seven of the current early career educator survey, I asked: What has been most helpful to you as an early career educator? What improvements could be made to the support programs for early career educators? This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were four responses (Figure 7). There were three recurring positive themes: School-based teacher training, school-based support, and

lesson studies/learning walks. There was one recurring negative theme: Teacher workload. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 7

Current Early Career Educator Survey Question 7 Responses

<p style="text-align: center;">Participant A</p>	<p>My first year, we were invited to a 1st year teacher camp. That was super helpful. Our school administrators also did a 3-period observation and suggestion. Although I was really afraid while doing it, it made me super confident. Our administration was very encouraging. I felt that they had my back and they were in my corner. I wish we had this kind of thing for new teachers now. I think it would be very helpful. I also had a mentor who I still go to for advice. But now, there is so much oversight by the district that it isn't as helpful. First year teachers have so much to learn and do their first year, that piling PD, district mandated classes and assignments just seems like too much. I'm not a first-year teacher anymore. I am now a mentor, but teachers just aren't staying. Too much is being asked of all of us.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Participant B</p>	<p>The most helpful thing to me as an early career educator was the training I received over the summer before I started. My school basically did a new teacher academy where school administrators and veteran teachers came to give us 4 days of information to help our teachers be prepared to start in August. This combined with the new teacher program in the county did help me. However, I feel the school-based training was WAY better for what I needed than the county training. The other thing that helped was feeling the support of the people at my school. I knew I could go to numerous people for help whether that was our PDS, veteran teachers, or administrators and they would help me. Our administrators went so far as to spend a 3-hour window with us so they could coach us on what we were doing well and how we could improve. I never felt alone during my first year which I think made it much more manageable.</p>

Participant C	<p>The most helpful has been also what I find to be the most tedious but it is the onboarding process of courses that must be completed for the teacher certification process. I had zero teaching experience and these courses really helped to fill the gaps of course I didn't learn these things until halfway through my first year and even then, I had very limited number of people coming to inform me of any ways I can improve. They were few and far between and these courses that I needed to complete really helped in the beginning stages of not knowing what was going on.</p> <p>Some improvements I would make to the system (and I am aware that these require more resources and might not be feasible) is possibly a para who is familiar with the student body could model for me how to interact with the students so there is less of a learning curve and it could be a little more seamless. I was very thrown to the wolves and I had to learn very quickly what worked and what didn't. This really describes the job of being a teacher because it never is the same and that's what makes it such a difficult to find out how to cultivate the talent necessary to execute.</p>
Participant D	<p>Learning walks were the most helpful and insightful experience. I would have liked to have seen more professional development that focused on streamlining teaching as a whole. As teachers, we were asked to wear too many hats and then expected to work well beyond contract hours to fulfill different roles. As a new teacher, it would be helpful to see systems that work to efficiently manage the work load without spending an additional 40 hours/ week working at home.</p>

Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=4).

For question eight of the current early career educator survey, I asked: Do you plan to remain in the teaching profession? Why or why not? This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were four responses (Figure 8). There was one recurring positive theme: Passion for the job. There were two recurring negative themes: Workload and financial stability. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 8*Current Early Career Educator Survey Question 8 Responses*

Participant A	<p>I haven't totally decided. I don't like that we are always being watched to make sure we are doing what we are supposed to. I feel like I am a professional. I have a Master's degree and I should be treated as such. Every year, more and more responsibilities are being added to our "plates" and it is getting too much. I work 11 to 12-hour days and I still can't catch up. I am looking at other occupations that pay more and don't require that I work so much after work. There are a lot of behavior problems with students that aren't being addressed properly or being addressed by people that don't have the knowledge to make decisions, and it is putting other students and teachers in harm's way.</p>
Participant B	<p>Yes, I do. As hard as teaching is, it is rewarding and I love interacting with the kids. I have learned as I am in my career for longer that some years are great and some years are tough. Last year I felt I was 100% on my game as a teacher. This year with a new book and curriculum, I feel as stressed as I was in my early years. But I still love what I do.</p>
Participant C	<p>I do plan to remain in the teaching profession for a while. For some obvious reasons the time off during the year is amazing and I am also trying to stay long enough to revive some Public service loan forgiveness. Now for some more deeper reasons I do find that one of my biggest flaws is my inability to communicate effectively with others and if the crash course isn't to try and teach elementary children how to think critically about art then I don't know what is. I have seen even in my first two years the improvement of understanding how my words are perceived and how I can be more conscious in how I use them. Knowing there is a time and a place and I should be listening and observing far more than I should be talking, and teaching is integral in helping me learn that. I also feel like it's a pretty thankless job and I've never been one for needing notoriety so it's a good fit for someone who would like to do some good but not for any outwardly perceived reasons.</p>

Participant D	I know I won't be able to do it long term. I love working with my students, but the economics of teaching do not make sense. There was a 6.1% inflation rate my last year but I only made less than a 1% raise even while achieving some of the highest levels of professional success. I simply won't be able to afford being a teacher and taking care of my family long term.
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Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=4).

For question nine of the current early career educator survey, I asked: Please share any further thoughts or feelings about your experiences as an early career educator. This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were four responses (Figure 9). There were two recurring positive themes: School-based support and school-based training. There was one recurring negative theme: Workload. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 9

Current Early Career Educator Survey Question 9 Responses

Participant A	I love the kids. They are wonderful. If I could just teach my kids without being responsible for so many other things, I would never think of leaving.
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Participant B	I think EVERY new teacher should have to do a new teacher academy at THEIR school. Who knows the culture, kids, and environment of a school better than the people who work there? There was nothing more valuable to me than having that opportunity in July before I began. Not only did I learn a lot, but I was able to form relationships with the people at my school so I was comfortable enough to ask for help. I made friends with fellow new teachers and that friendship helped get us through those tough teacher moments and I built great working relationships with my admin, PDS, and veteran teachers. I knew if I needed help my first year (and I did many times) that there were many people on campus who would support me.
Participant C	I think It is a fine job that I was at first hesitant to do because what is the saying we all know "those who can't do... teach". I don't think anything can be farther from the truth. You need to really know how to do what you do in order to be an educator and I think he borders on surpassing that of any master. Nothing is useful to the world unless you can communicate it and I look forward to being a better communicator with the help of this job.
Participant D	The education system is brutally antiquated and clunky. Any attempt by a teacher to improve upon this system or raise questions/concerns to administrators at a district level is met by a resounding wall of indifference. Being a new teacher is the equivalent of being on a team of horses being driven off a cliff. The other horses (older teachers) are blindly following directions from a lunatic driver (district politics/ administration) and you get dragged along for the ride just like the students.

Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=4).

Current Early Career Educator Interview Summary. Following the surveys, I conducted interviews with current early career educator group members who opted to participate. Of the four participants in the current early career educator group who responded to the survey, two elected to participate in the interview. Participants were:

- Participant A: A third-year high school English teacher
- Participant C: A second-year elementary school art teacher

The interview consisted of six open-ended questions pertaining to the participant's experiences as a current new teacher. I conducted the interview with Participant A via phone, and with Participant C face-to-face. I analyzed the interview results and shared my findings below.

For question one of the current early career educator interview, I asked: Why did you choose to become a teacher? Participant A explained that she had earned a master's degree in human services and did not quite know what to do with it. A friend of hers who was a teacher suggested she consider becoming an educator, a job for which she said she never imagined she would be qualified. Participant C explained that he had a bachelor's degree and a passion for art, but felt like he did not know how to make use of either. He said his desire to share his passion for art led him to pursue teaching, a job that he believed would be difficult to attain. Both participants shared that they never imagined they would become a teacher, nor did they believe they were qualified.

For question two of the current early career educator interview, I asked: Describe the process you followed to become an educator (including but not limited to education, certification, career trajectory, etc.). Participant A explained that she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in human services, after which she was uncertain of her career aspirations. When school leaders hired her as an English teacher, she was out-of-field, so she had to take three online courses for certification purposes, all of which she paid for out-of-pocket. Participant C had a bachelor's degree in health service administration. The bachelor's degree enabled him to obtain a statement of eligibility, after which he applied for three art teaching positions. He stated he was surprised with how quickly he was hired and placed in a classroom, with the whole

process from application to placement only taking two weeks.

For question three of the current early career educator interview, I asked:

Describe your induction process as an early career educator (including but not limited to trainings, professional development, district-based and school-based support, mentorships, etc.). Participant A attended one day of district-based orientation and then participated in a school-based new teacher training program she referred to as the New Teacher Academy. The program, which was a week in duration and occurred one week prior to teachers' contractual start date for the upcoming school year, provided various learning opportunities for the school's novice educators. These learning opportunities included instructional strategy trainings, classroom management trainings, and lesson studies. Participant C explained that other than receiving a school-based mentor in his first year and a paraprofessional in his classroom during the first week of school, he participated in no formal training or school-based induction program. He was now participating in the Professional Development Certification Program (PDCP) and stated it was cumbersome and occupied much of his planning and personal time. Both participants shared that they wish they could have been in the classroom with another teacher, at least part of the time, during their first year.

For question four of the current early career educator interview, I asked: Explain the positive impacts the support and training you have received has had on your career thus far, and areas in need of improvement (please be specific). Participant A said the New Teacher Academy activities made her feel valued and supported. She said her colleagues and leaders from the program created a family environment, and she maintained contact with them after the program concluded. She remarked that she was

still teaching today because of the guidance she received during the program that week. Participant C said the most helpful support he had received so far was from his colleagues. He claimed he had never had a job until this one in which he felt he can make mistakes and be supported by his peers as he learns and grows from those mistakes. Both participants explained the most significant area in need of improvement in their experience was the fact that they were thrown into a classroom by themselves every day during their first year.

For question five of the current early career educator interview, I asked: Explain how you are feeling now as an early career educator. Do you feel supported? Do you plan to remain in the profession? Do you still want to be a teacher? If so, what contributes to your desire to continue? Participant A said she was not sure if she will remain in the profession. She said she still felt supported, but not as much as she did in the previous two years. She said she lived in a perpetual state of fatigue, and felt many of her actions were compliance-based simply because she had too much to do and could not put her full effort into so many things. Participant C explained he was uncertain of his future as a teacher because he was so overwhelmed. He said his issues with the teacher certification program, unexpected classroom management challenges, and lack of help in the classroom were compounding, causing him to put lesson planning on the back burner and hastily create lessons each day. Both teachers claimed if the current workload and feelings of isolation did not improve, they did not know how many years they would last.

For question six of the current early career educator interview, I asked: Please share any additional thoughts or feelings about your experiences as an early career educator. Participant A explained that she made every effort to remind herself that she

was still learning. She said students lacked motivation and social skills, and it was disheartening to her. She said she loved the kids, and if she could just teach them without being responsible for so many other things, she would never think of leaving. Participant C had no further comments.

Former Early Career Educator Data

I created and administered surveys and conducted interviews with the former early career educator participant group. Members of this group were teachers who left the profession, within the last five years, during their first three years in the classroom. The survey consisted of six prompts and four questions. The first six items on the survey were Likert scale type prompts in which I asked participants to respond using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. The next three survey items were open-ended short answer questions in which I asked participants to respond to each question based on their own perspective and experiences. For the final item on the survey, I asked participants to indicate their willingness to participate in the interview portion of my study. Question 10 asked: Would you be willing to participate in a brief interview (approximately 20 minutes) with the researcher about your experiences as an early career educator? Select Yes or No. If a participant selected Yes, they then indicated their preferred interview method, if applicable (phone, video conference, email, or face-to-face). Question 10 was a central piece of my research methodology, but I did not design it to yield data pertinent to my research questions. To maintain relevance, I omitted responses from question 10 in the findings below. I conducted all surveys and data collection electronically via Google Forms. I analyzed survey results and shared my findings below.

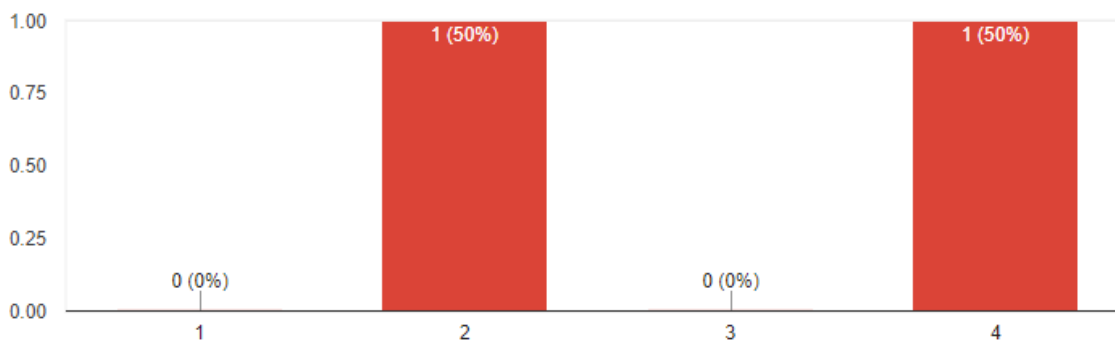
Former Early Career Educator Survey Summary. I received two survey responses from former early career educators. Participants were as follows:

- Participant A: A former high school agriculture teacher who left in year three
- Participant B: A former high school science teacher who left in year two

In the first prompt of the former early career educator survey, I stated: I felt informed and supported during the hiring process. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were two responses (Figure 10). One teacher (50%) chose disagree, and one teacher (50%) chose strongly agree. Half of the teachers formerly in their first three years of teaching felt informed and supported during the onboarding process, and the other half did not feel informed or supported.

Figure 10

Former Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 1 Responses

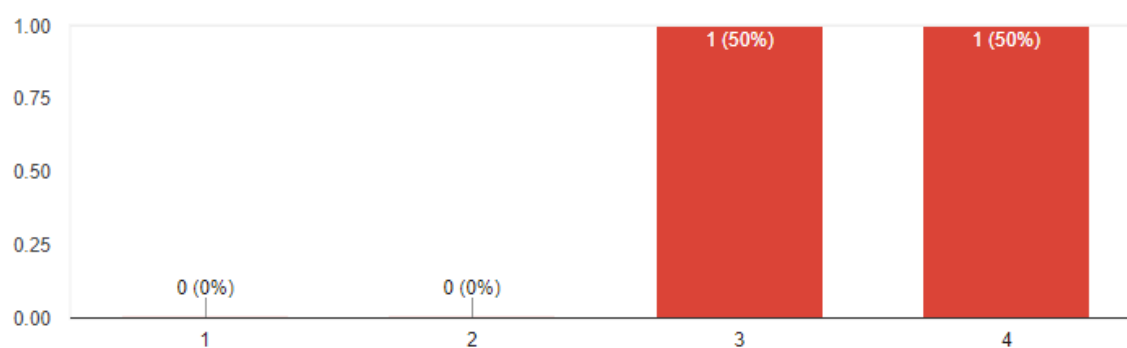


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=2).

In the second prompt of the former early career educator survey, I stated: The initial orientation training I received upon entering the education field was sufficient, relevant, and timely. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were two responses (Figure 11). One teacher (50%) chose agree, and one teacher (50%) chose strongly agree. Both teachers surveyed indicated they were satisfied with their initial training and onboarding experience, with one teacher more satisfied than the other.

Figure 11

Former Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 2 Responses

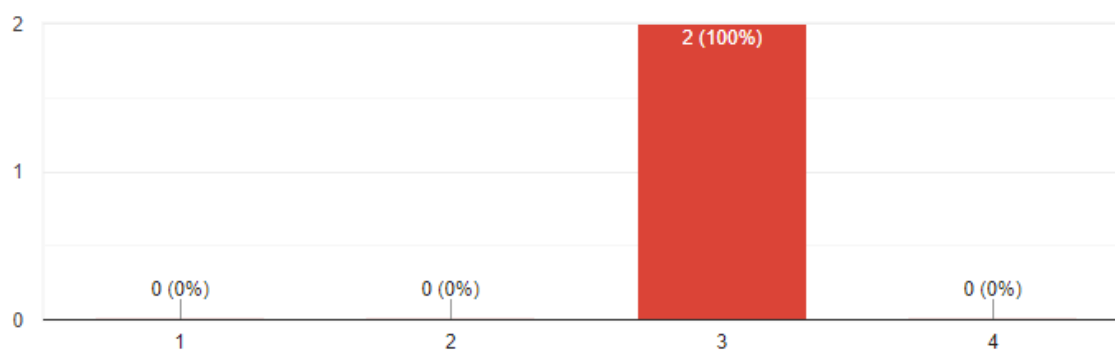


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=2).

In the third prompt of the former early career educator survey, I stated: The subsequent training and professional development I received as an early career educator was sufficient, relevant, timely, and provided opportunities for professional growth. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were two responses (Figure 12). Both teachers (100%) chose agree. Both teachers surveyed indicated they were satisfied with the subsequent training they received as new teachers after the initial hiring process.

Figure 12

Former Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 3 Responses

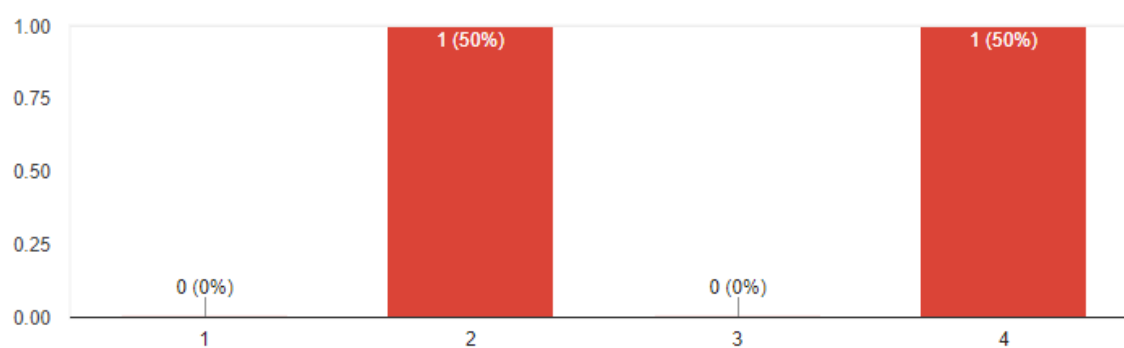


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=2).

In the fourth prompt of the former early career educator survey, I stated: I felt adequately supported and mentored as an early career educator by my school-based leaders and peers. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were two responses (Figure 13). One teacher (50%) chose disagree, and one teacher (50%) chose strongly agree. Half of the teachers surveyed indicated they did not feel supported by their school-based leaders and peers, and the other half indicated they felt very supported by their school-based leaders and peers.

Figure 13

Former Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 4 Responses

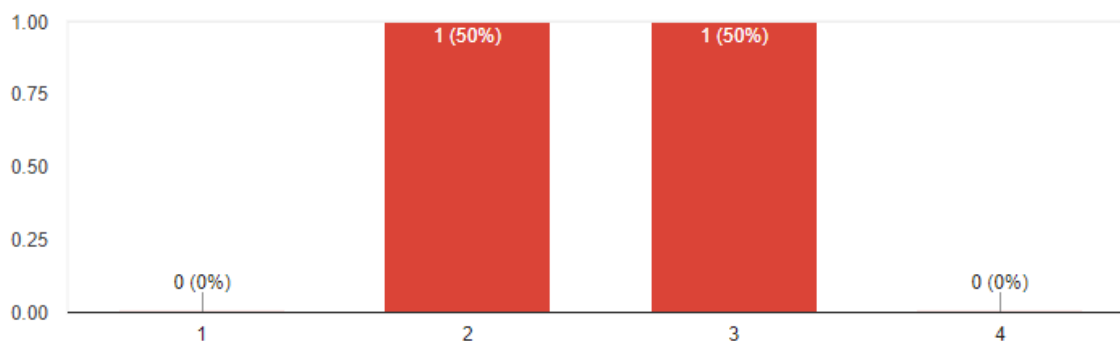


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=2).

In the fifth prompt of the former early career educator survey, I stated: I felt adequately supported and mentored as an early career educator by leaders in the district office. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were two responses (Figure 14). One teacher (50%) chose disagree, and one teacher (50%) chose agree. Half of the teachers surveyed indicated they did not feel supported by leaders in the district office, and the other half indicated they did feel supported by district leadership.

Figure 14

Former Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 5 Responses

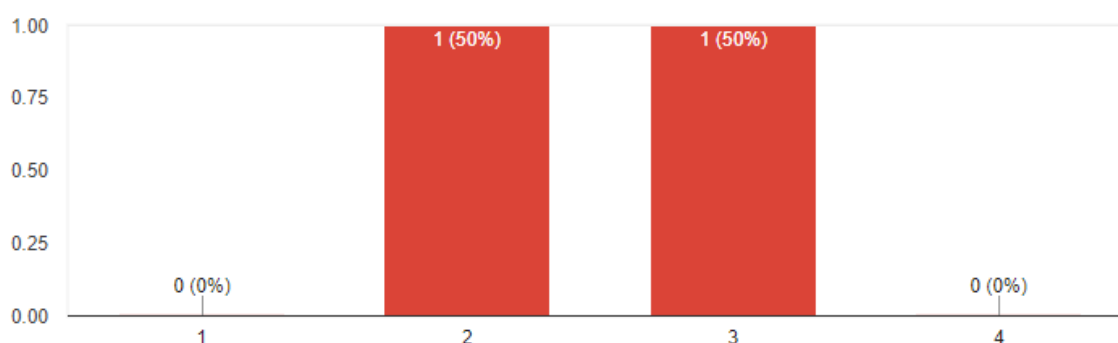


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=2).

In the sixth prompt of the former early career educator survey, I stated: Teaching turned out to be what I expected and what I hoped it would be. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were two responses (Figure 15). One teacher (50%) chose disagree, and one teacher (50%) chose agree. Half of the teachers surveyed indicated they did not feel like teaching turned out to be what they expected and hoped it would be, and the other half indicated it did turn out how they expected and hoped it would be.

Figure 15

Former Early Career Educator Survey Prompt 6 Responses



Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=2).

For question seven of the former early career educator survey, I asked: What was most helpful to you as an early career educator? What improvements could be made to the support programs for early career educators? This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were two survey submissions, but only one contained a response to this question (Figure 16). There was one positive theme: Training

to become a mentor teacher. There was one negative theme: Lack of content area support. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 16

Former Early Career Educator Survey Question 7 Responses

Participant A	I received very little support as an early educator and relied heavily on seeking training related to my field. Additionally, training as a mentor helped my own teaching.
Participant B	No response from participant.

Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=2).

For question eight of the former early career educator survey, I asked: Why did you choose to leave the teaching profession? This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were two responses (Figure 17). There was one positive theme: Training to become a mentor teacher. There was one negative theme: Workload and financial stability. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 17*Former Early Career Educator Survey Question 8 Responses*

Participant A	I did not want to remain in the K-12 public education system as a teacher. I am working on becoming a faculty member to train the next generation of teachers.
Participant B	Multiple reasons: I felt that there was an overwhelming workload; trying to keep up with the required "teacher development" on top of trying to create new curriculum for multiple courses; salary amount for time spent working is very imbalanced, students that were placed in my class to acquire a science credit in order to graduate were not interested in the subject, and brought an extreme amount distraction to the classroom. Personal Life/ Work was heavily imbalanced.

Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=2).

For question nine of the former early career educator survey, I asked: Please share any further thoughts or feelings about your experiences as an early career educator. This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were two survey submissions, but only one contained a response to this question (Figure 18). There were no recurring positive themes. There was one negative theme: Lack of content area

support. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 18

Former Early Career Educator Survey Question 9 Responses

Participant A	Career and technical educators often times get over looked and it is assumed that our fields have handled our training.
Participant B	No response from participant.

Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=2).

Former Early Career Educator Interview Summary. Following the surveys, I conducted interviews with former early career educator group members who opted to participate. Of the two participants in the former early career educator group who responded to the survey, one elected to participate in the interview: Participant A, a former high school agriculture teacher who left in year three. The interview consisted of six open-ended questions pertaining to the participant's experiences as a former new teacher. I conducted the interview with Participant A via phone. I analyzed the interview

results and shared my findings below.

For question one of the former early career educator interview, I asked: Why did you choose to become a teacher? The participant stated she fell in love with her content area during her undergraduate program and realized the need to educate youth about agriculture. She said she had many teachers in her undergraduate program who exemplified quality teaching and inspired her to pursue the profession.

For question two of the former early career educator interview, I asked: Describe the process you followed to become an educator (including but not limited to education, certification, career trajectory, etc.). The participant explained she obtained a bachelor's degree in animal science, which led to a master's degree in agricultural education and communication. During her master's degree program, she completed a teacher preparation program that fulfilled the requirements for teacher certification.

For question three of the former early career educator interview, I asked: Describe your induction process as an early career educator (including but not limited to trainings, professional development, district-based and school-based support, mentorships, etc.). The participant explained that she received very little support in her first two years. She said teaching Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses was often a lonely job because there were so few people in any given school district who understand what the job entails. She was told members of the district-based CTE department would serve as her mentors. She was not assigned a school-based mentor because there were no other teachers on campus in her content area. She claimed she relied heavily on what she learned in her agricultural education program and the continuing professional development opportunities the program offered to alumni.

For question four of the former early career educator interview, I asked: Explain the positive and negative impacts the support and training you received had on your career during your time as a teacher, and areas that could have been improved (please be specific). The participant said her school-based leaders and district-based CTE leaders were very supportive and communicative, but she still felt isolated in her position. She said those feelings of isolation compelled her to self-reflect and actively seek advice and guidance from her peers. She commented that although this helped her grow, she wished she had received more direct mentorship and support.

For question five of the former early career educator interview, I asked: What contributed to your departure from the teaching profession? What factors could have encouraged you to remain in the profession had they been different? The participant explained that she left the classroom because she intended to become a professor at a college or university in a teacher education program. She said the lack of support she experienced in her first two years revealed to her a need for more comprehensive teacher training practices, and she hoped to use her own experiences as an early career educator to help others be successful in the profession.

For question six of the former early career educator interview, I asked: Please share any additional thoughts or feelings about your experiences as an early career educator. The participant conveyed the need for consolidated new teacher trainings focused on one or two specific skills. She said she attended too many trainings in which the focus was constantly shifting and lacking cohesion. She also said new teachers should be required to complete internships or participate in co-teaching with a veteran teacher during their first year in the classroom.

District Personnel Data

I created and administered surveys and conducted interviews with the district personnel participant group. Members of this group were district administrators directly involved with teacher recruitment, induction, and retention practices in the district under study. The survey consisted of six prompts and four questions. The first six items on the survey were Likert scale type prompts in which I asked participants to respond using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. The next three survey items were open-ended short answer questions in which I asked participants to respond to each question based on their own perspectives and experiences with teacher recruitment, induction, and retention. For the final item on the survey, I asked participants to indicate their willingness to participate in the interview portion of my study. In question 10, I asked: Would you be willing to participate in a brief interview (approximately 20 minutes) with the researcher about your experiences as an early career educator? Select Yes or No. If a participant selected Yes, they then indicated their preferred interview method, if applicable (phone, video conference, email, or face-to-face). Question 10 was a central piece of my research methodology, but I did not design it to yield data pertinent to my research questions. To maintain relevance, I omitted responses from question 10 in the findings below. I conducted all surveys and data collection electronically via Google Forms. I analyzed the survey results and shared my findings below.

District Personnel Survey Summary. I received four survey responses from district personnel. Participants were as follows:

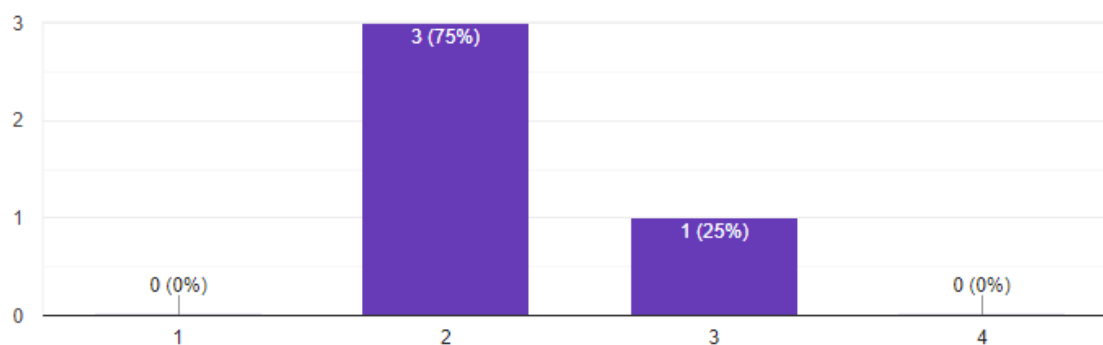
- Participant A: The director of the district office of Talent Development

- Participant B: A coordinator in the district office of Professional Leadership and Learning
- Participant C: A program specialist in the district office of Professional Leadership and Learning
- Participant D: The director of the district office of Professional Leadership and Learning

In the first prompt of the district personnel survey, I stated: Current teacher recruitment efforts generally yield qualified candidates to fill teacher vacancies. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 19). Three participants (75%) chose disagree, and one participant (25%) chose agree. The majority of district personnel surveyed indicated that current teacher recruitment efforts do not generally yield qualified candidates to fill teacher vacancies.

Figure 19

District Personnel Survey Prompt 1 Responses

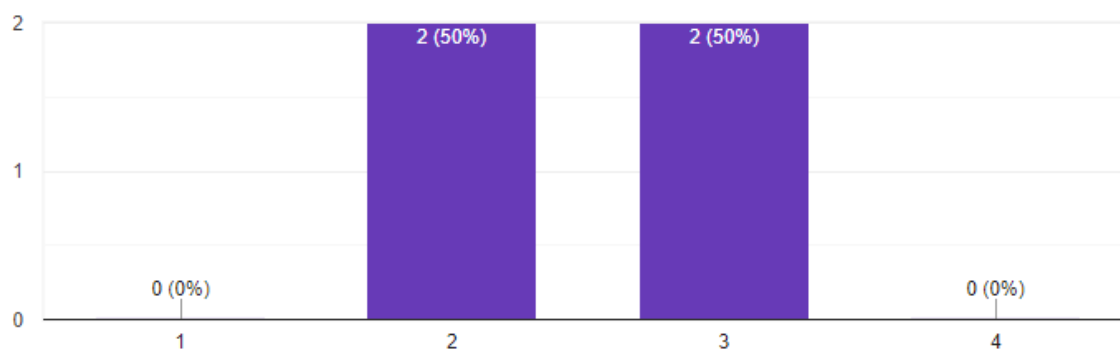


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the second prompt of the district personnel survey, I stated: The initial orientation training new teachers receive upon entering the education field is sufficient, relevant, and timely. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 20). Two participants (50%) chose disagree, and two participants (50%) chose agree. Half of the district personnel surveyed indicated that the training new teachers receive upon entering the field is not satisfactory, and the other half indicated it is satisfactory.

Figure 20

District Personnel Survey Prompt 2 Responses

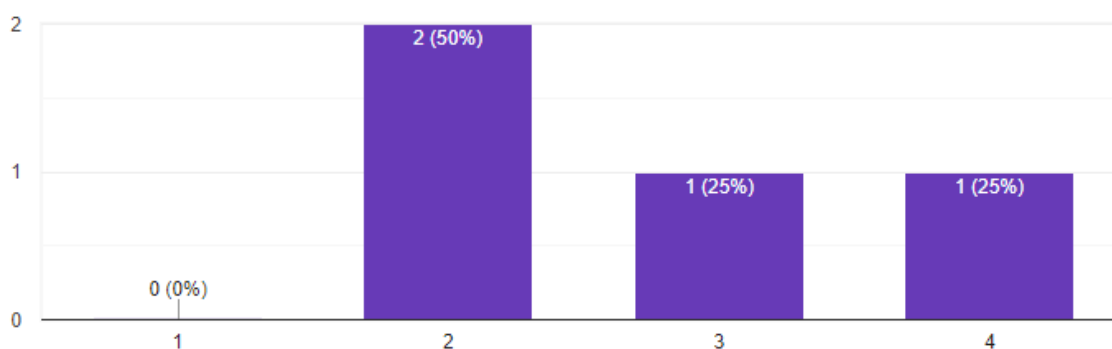


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the third prompt of the district personnel survey, I stated: The ongoing training and professional development early career educators receive is sufficient, relevant, timely, and provides opportunities for professional growth. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 21). Two participants (50%) chose disagree, one participant (25%) chose agree, and one participant (25%) chose strongly agree. Half of the district personnel surveyed indicated that the ongoing training new teachers receive in their formative years is not satisfactory, and the other half indicated it is satisfactory.

Figure 21

District Personnel Survey Prompt 3 Responses

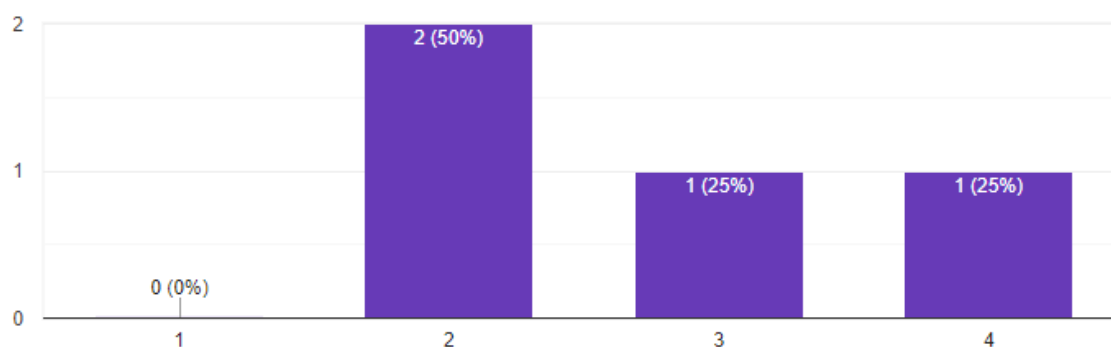


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the fourth prompt of the district personnel survey, I stated: Early career educators are adequately supported and mentored by school-based leaders and peers. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 22). Two participants (50%) chose disagree, one participant (25%) chose agree, and one participant (25%) chose strongly agree. Half of the district personnel surveyed indicated that new teachers do not receive adequate support from school-based leaders and peers, and the other half indicated they do receive adequate school-based support.

Figure 22

District Personnel Survey Prompt 4 Responses

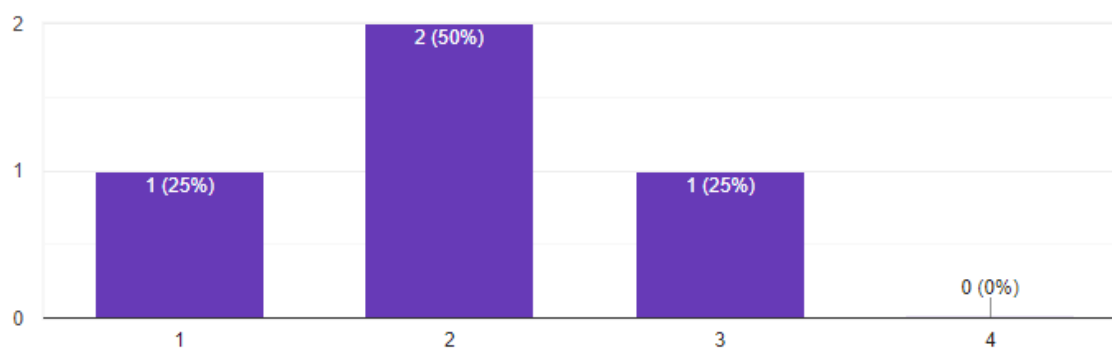


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the fifth prompt of the district personnel survey, I stated: Early career educators are adequately supported and mentored by leaders in the district office. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 23). One participant (25%) chose strongly disagree, two participants (50%) chose disagree, and one participant (25%) chose agree. Half of the district personnel surveyed indicated that new teachers do not receive adequate support from school-based leaders and peers, and the other half indicated they do receive adequate school-based support. The majority of district personnel indicated that new teachers are not adequately supported by leaders in the district office.

Figure 23

District Personnel Survey Prompt 5 Responses

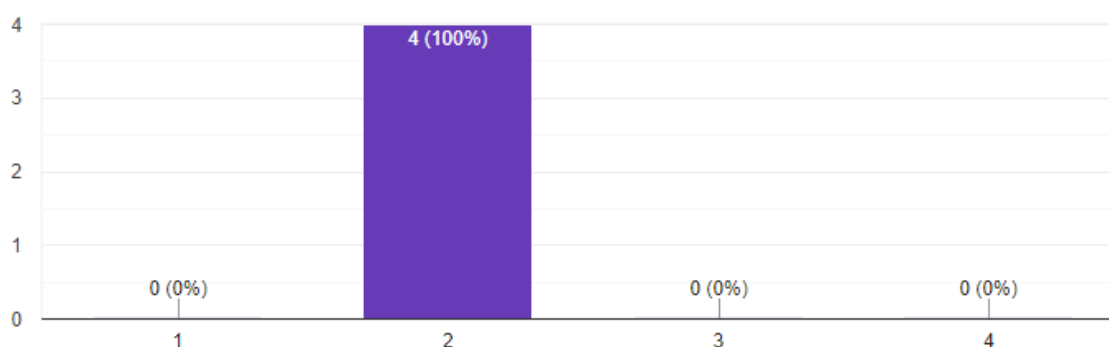


Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

In the sixth prompt of the district personnel survey, I stated: New teachers discover teaching to be what they expected and what they hoped it would be. This was a Likert scale type question in which I asked participants to respond to the prompt using a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being agree, and 4 being strongly agree. There were four responses (Figure 24). All four participants (100%) chose disagree, indicating all district personnel surveyed agree that new teachers do not discover teaching to be what they expected and hoped it would be.

Figure 24

District Personnel Survey Prompt 6 Responses



Note. Data show participant responses on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree (n=4).

For question seven of the district personnel survey, I asked: What induction practice is most helpful to early career educators? What improvements could be made to the support programs for early career educators? This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were four responses (Figure 25). Response themes included district recruitment and internship initiatives, professional development and training, district and school-based mentorship, and professional certification and continuing education. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 25

District Personnel Survey Question 7 Responses

Participant A	Most helpful: having school-based mentors/ITD [Instructional Talent Developer: In the district under study, Instructional Talent Developer (ITD) is the title held by a teacher serving as a school-based mentor to a new teacher.], if they qualify for one, not all do. Someone to go to, assuming the fit is right. However, improvements are many: Induction must start from onboarding, continue forward from district to school support, and involve a common, research-based, practice that is uniformly adhered to from the district and school level. This way district and school staff are unified around a few core focus areas to support early career educators...deeply implementing this practice and support. Too many people doing too many different things and not unified around a common program of effective induction for early career educators.
Participant B	Courses provided by the district are helpful, but poorly attended by participants. In school, Professional Development that teacher could do instructional rounds to view good teaching.

Participant C	Observing the instructional practice of effective teachers.
Participant D	Providing a Mentor that is located on their campus. More training provided the summer prior to them starting in the classrooms. Due to how hiring is done, they are usually not able to start until the first day of the contract for the school year. Often teachers coming in after the school year only get a couple days to prep.

Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=4).

For question eight of the district personnel survey, I asked: In your experience supporting early career educators, what are common motives for leaving the teaching profession? This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were four responses (Figure 26). Response themes included district recruitment and internship initiatives, professional development and training, district and school-based mentorship, and professional certification and continuing education. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 26*District Personnel Survey Question 8 Responses*

Participant A	Lack of support, which is inclusive of a lack of communication, lack of a core focus on a few core areas to support the educator and not working opposite of this to overwhelm them. Too many leaders want to fire off lots of do this, don't do that, etc., then the next administrator with a separate set of do this/not that, then the district support saying doing something different...too disjointed, must be around common, researched-based program of support/practices. Also, relationship building around this "common" support builds their commitment to the profession and location (school). Had the lowest of all levels and schools for 3 years of new teacher turnover based (in part) on a common, ongoing, and targeted focus on induction, through a relationship building structure. We do not have a good system for identifying the turnover of early career educators that must be improved upon within our exit surveys and/or other exit data gathering strategies. Outside of this, other common motives for leaving teaching comes from career changers (largest group) who were not as prepped for the change to teaching and/or not what they thought it would be (need to prepare and support this group in different ways than we do those who come from education programs). Must focus on the work-life balance...emphasis on "life." If we support early career teachers in the right ways so that their time is respected, utilized effectively, and with lots of support around limited core areas, the "life" side of the profession can help to keep them engaged and energized.
Participant B	Too many expectations and student behavior
Participant C	Teaching is far more challenging than anticipated.

Participant D	Not prepared for the reality of the day to day work. Not prepared for the social emotional aspect for both students and teachers.
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Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=4).

For question nine of the district personnel survey, I asked: Please share any additional thoughts or information pertaining to your experiences with recruitment, induction, and retention practices in your school district. This was an open-ended short answer question in which I asked participants to respond to the question based on their own perspectives and experiences. There were four responses (Figure 27). Response themes included district recruitment and internship initiatives, professional development and training, district and school-based mentorship, and professional certification and continuing education. I analyzed the survey responses in the interpretations section of this chapter.

Figure 27*District Personnel Survey Question 9 Responses*

Participant A	Each cannot work independently, but collectively...the synergy of all. Different departments can't have different pieces. All these pieces should be under the roll of one core department, with core input and decision maker(s) so that the total system of all three are truly unified. When these areas are spread among various departments, with no one true "owner" of all three, this runs the risk of leaving the work and synergy of all three to be disjointed, no matter the collaboration between departments. Ownership needs to rest in one area with collaboration coming from one area to all, not multiple owner areas to one. Workflow is more streamlined, focused, and greater chance of coming to fruition under this type of structure (one department) vs. left to chance under the current structure (multiple departments).
Participant B	Induction practices only work if participants attend professional learning. Retention starts at the school level with the school administration. Administrators need to build relationships and have an environment where learning of all (staff and students) is a priority and a safe place to make errors.
Participant C	My primary role surrounds mentoring and induction. Through this role the greatest challenge our early career educators face is a lack of experience. The majority of our newest educators come to us with a temporary certificate with no formal background in education. In addition to the absence of experience, they have an abundance of state requirements which must be met during their three-year temporary certificate validity period. Accomplishing these tasks along with the everyday challenges of being in the classroom each day becomes daunting.
Participant D	Looking at research from many other countries, it is helpful to see that they have programs where teachers come in and teach side by side and teach for a portion of the day with professional learning for the other portion of the day. My personal belief is that new teachers need a longer integration period before they are put in a room alone with children and with curriculum they are not familiar with.

Note. Data show open-ended participant responses that convey the original thoughts of the participant. Responses provided by the participant are displayed here verbatim and I have not modified the contents in any way (n=4).

District Personnel Interview Summary. Following the surveys, I conducted interviews with district personnel group members who opted to participate. Of the four participants in the district personnel group who responded to the survey, all four elected to participate in the interview. Participants were as follows:

- Participant A: The director of the district Department of Talent Development
- Participant B: A coordinator in the district Department of Professional Leadership and Learning
- Participant C: A program specialist in the district Department of Professional Leadership and Learning
- Participant D: The director of the district Department of Professional Leadership and Learning

The interview consisted of six open-ended questions pertaining to the participant's experiences with teacher recruitment, induction, and retention practices in the district under study. I conducted the interview with Participant A face-to-face, Participant B via email, Participant C via phone, and Participant D via video conference. I analyzed the interview results and shared my findings below.

For question one of the district personnel interview, I asked: What are the current practices for recruiting teachers in your school district? Participant A explained they focused on three core areas. The first area of focus was everyday recruiting opportunities, including open houses, sporting events, school lobbies, distribution of business cards, and job fairs. The second focus was promoting the community the district under study served, including efforts to attract people to the features and amenities of the county and surrounding area. The third focus was growing their own community members into

teachers, including developing current non-instructional employees into teachers.

Participant B stated she was not involved with teacher recruitment and therefore could not provide a relevant response. Participant C explained an inconsistency in job responsibilities in the area of teacher recruitment. She explained that the Department of Professional Learning and Leadership was formerly responsible for both teacher recruitment and teacher induction, but now that department only oversaw teacher induction, and recruitment was handled by the Department of Talent Development. She said this created some overlapping job responsibilities for members of each department, and some confusion regarding which department was responsible for the various aspects of teacher support. Participant D stated she was not involved with teacher recruitment and therefore could not provide a relevant response.

For question two of the district personnel interview, I asked: What does the current new teacher induction program entail? Participant A explained that every new teacher received an ITD mentor in their first year, and district-based support personnel attended new teacher cohort meetings at schools. He informed me that he was more directly involved with recruitment than induction, but had ideas and suggestions for induction practices, which he shared in subsequent responses. Participant B explained that first-year teachers received a paid one-on-one ITD mentor, participated in the district-based orientation and induction prior to the start of the school year, and participated in district-based professional learning on various topics throughout the year.

Participant C explained her role in the induction process for new teachers. She said she received daily reports of new hires or candidates approved for hire, which contained each candidate's certification requirements. She identified personnel with less

than six months of teaching experience, or those with a professional educator competency requirement, meaning they had no internship or clinical practice experience in education. She said 90% of applicants had a professional educator competency requirement, meaning they were out-of-field or had no background in education. These were the teachers she assigned to the induction and mentorship program. Participant D said the district-based induction and orientation was a two-day process, after which the school-based leaders took over induction responsibilities as each teacher was assigned an ITD mentor.

For question three of the district personnel interview, I asked: How are early career educators supported during their first three years of teaching? Participant A explained that once a new teacher was recruited and hired, the Department of Professional Leadership and Learning assumed the induction responsibilities. He added that he would have liked to see induction support practices last longer than one year of the teacher's career. Participant B explained that first-year teachers received a paid one-on-one ITD mentor, participated in the district-based orientation and induction prior to the start of the school year, and participated in district-based professional learning on various topics throughout the year. She said district personnel visited schools frequently and collaborated with school-based lead ITDs and ITD mentors. Participant C and Participant D explained the first three years of the process. They said a novice educator in year one received a paid one-on-one ITD mentor, with a requirement of 30 hours of off-contract coaching and collaboration. In year two, the school-based lead ITD served as the teacher's mentor, and the teacher continued to attend school-based new teacher cohort meetings. In year three, the teacher's need to continue participating in the new teacher

induction program was determined by the principal and school-based lead ITD. Both participants stated that the ITD mentors also received training throughout the year, sometimes facilitated by district personnel, and sometimes by the school-based lead ITD.

For question four of the district personnel interview, I asked: What support practices for early career educators have proven effective? What practices could be improved, and how? Participant A explained that he felt confident that the one-on-one ITD mentor was the most impactful form of new teacher support. He said he would have liked to see the program expanded to year two of the new teacher's career so they would have received concentrated support for a longer period of time. He identified areas of improvement, including the need for a unified, centrally-created induction curriculum. This would have created a common language of instruction and consistency between schools, enabling a new teacher to receive the same induction support if they transferred to a different school. Just as students are taught with a curriculum map, new teachers should be provided with a map as well. He also expressed the need for frequent and ongoing professional development from school-based administrators, including topics such as lesson planning, classroom management, and balancing workload with personal life.

Participant B had no response to this question. Participant C explained the effectiveness of the school-based ITD mentor, citing this practice as most beneficial to new teachers. She said the relationships built between teacher and mentor had established trust, and new teachers were able to rely on their mentors for guidance in all aspects of the teaching profession. She emphasized the importance of gradually releasing new teachers into the classroom rather than just dumping them in there at the start of their

careers. She conveyed the need for new teachers to participate in learning walks so they could see what effective teaching looks like and then adapt what they observed to fit their own teaching style. Participant D explained that district personnel researched teacher induction practices in other countries to discover effective techniques for future implementation in the district under study. She explained that most other countries did not permit teachers to be in the classroom full-time during their first year, but instead operated on a co-teaching model in which novice educators co-taught with a veteran teacher. She stated that this practice was improbable in the district under study due to time constraints and personnel shortages, but it was an idea that leaders should consider.

For question five of the district personnel interview, I asked: What retention efforts are in place to encourage early career educators to remain in the profession? Participant A said that in his experience, the school-based leadership team can make or break a first-year teacher's success. With copious amounts of support and an effective onboarding process at the school level, new teachers were more likely to stay because they felt supported and valued by their leadership team. Participant B said a quality mentor made teachers want to stay. Participant C stated that all induction and support efforts were designed around the goal of keeping new teachers happy and successful. She said that included effective induction and training, but also building morale with social outings and personal connections with colleagues. Participant D said the key to keeping teachers was giving them one practical, actionable item in each professional development session that they could take back with them to their classrooms and see immediate results after implementing.

For question six of the district personnel interview, I asked: Please share any

additional thoughts or information pertaining to recruitment, induction, and retention practices in your school district. Participant A conveyed the need for consistency in job duties among district personnel. He explained that there were lots of hands involved in making decisions, but they were working on streamlining the process by using the district strategic plan as a guide. Participant B stressed the importance of collaborating with colleges or universities to recruit student interns to the district under study. She also reiterated the importance of the district under study growing their own employees into teachers by working with them to provide opportunities for training and certification for teacher eligibility. Participant C provided no response to this question. Participant D expressed concern for the future of the teaching profession. She said the next generation of potential teachers had a different mindset and point of view, and school leaders were trying to place a new generation of workers into a career modeled after a previous generation. She said district and school leaders must approach the mentoring and induction of the new generation with methods to which they were receptive.

Context

Wagner et al. (2006) defined context as “The larger organizational systems within which we work, and their demands and expectations, formal and informal” (p. 104). Contexts, when pertaining to education, are external factors operating outside of the organization that have a significant impact on the work of those within the organization. These include cultural, political, and economic factors that are often beyond the realm of control of district and school leaders (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 104). As-Is contexts in the district under study included a high teacher turnover and demission rate, a critical shortage of teacher candidates to replace outgoing teachers, and underqualified or out-of-

field teachers or substitutes frequently filling teacher vacancies. See Appendix G for a complete As-Is 4Cs chart.

Conditions

Wagner et al. (2006) defined conditions as “The external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources” (p. 101).

According to Wagner et al., “Opportunities to further develop and effectively use the new competencies they [teachers] have acquired are seriously undermined by the conditions of work imposed on them” (p. 101). As-Is conditions in the district under study included a low starting salary for teachers, unexpected challenges with student behavior and classroom management, first-year teachers placed in the classroom on their own, and overwhelming teacher workload with ancillary responsibilities. See Appendix G for a complete As-Is 4Cs chart.

Competencies

Wagner et al. (2006) defined competencies as “The repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning” (p. 99). Teachers were required to fulfill several requirements for professional certification and had the option to obtain additional certifications or endorsements. Effective teachers also grew their craft by participating in frequent and ongoing professional learning. However, the As-Is competencies in the district under study worked against these responsibilities. Competencies included an overwhelming and cumbersome induction and professional certification program for new teachers, few incentives to obtain further education or certification beyond minimum requirements, and the direct ITD mentor being limited to new teachers’ first year only. See appendix G for a complete As-Is 4Cs chart.

Culture

Wagner et al. (2006) defined culture as “The shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (p. 102). Strategic plans, school improvement plans, and organizational charts may exist in an effort to establish a culture for learning, but the reality of culture is the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 102). The As-Is culture in the district under study included teachers operating in “silos” in their own classroom, leading to feelings of isolation, teachers being divided between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset, teachers experiencing an imbalance of work life and personal life, leading to premature burnout, and the teaching profession having lost the high regard of members of society it once commanded. See appendix G for a complete As-Is 4Cs chart.

Interpretation

To succinctly interpret the data gleaned from my study, I referred to Patton’s (2008) guidance pertaining to divergence and convergence. Patton (2008) stated, The evaluator’s role is to help them [stakeholders] move from a rather extensive list of potential questions to a much shorter list of realistic questions and finally to a focused list of essential and necessary questions. This process moves from divergence to convergence, from generating many possibilities (divergence) to focusing on a few worthwhile priorities (convergence). This applies to framing overall evaluation questions as well as to narrowing items in a particular instrument, such as a survey or interview. Many questions are interesting, but

which are crucial? These end up being choices not between good and bad, but among alternatives, all of which have merit. (p. 478)

Using Patton's (2008) concept of convergence as the lens through which I viewed the data, I explored the experiences of early career educators and determined the ways recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in the district under study impacted these experiences.

Data results painted an overall picture of overwhelmed, underpaid, ill-prepared early career educators. Recurring themes in the data that negatively impacted early career educator experiences include overbearing workload, low financial compensation, and lack of support inside the four walls of the teachers' classrooms. However, despite these debilitating circumstances, data also showed several positive experiences for early career educators in the district under study. Positive themes included support from school-based leaders, camaraderie among school-based new teacher cohort members, lesson studies, and learning walks. I also interpreted the data to indicate early career educators' unwavering passion for student success and an appreciation for the relationships built with them. Despite the bond with students and colleagues, my data show that early career educators felt isolated and exhausted, which caused disenchantment with the profession and led to premature burnout.

Data showed district personnel with overlapping responsibilities in the area of teacher recruitment, induction, and retention among members of two district departments in the district under study. Responsibilities included recruitment and internship, professional development and training, district- and school-based mentorship, and professional certification and continuing education. I interpreted these overlapping

responsibilities as an increased risk of one or more district personnel inadvertently neglecting one or more responsibilities, causing any number of elements of new teacher support to fall through the cracks.

Judgments

I used the three goals of my study to categorize my research questions, with three research questions per goal. My first goal in this study was to analyze current and former early career educator experiences in one school district and understand the effects of those experiences. My research questions related to this goal were:

1. By what process did current and former early career educators in the district under study enter the education field?
2. What induction and support practices have current and former early career educators experienced in the district under study?
3. How have the experiences of current and former early career educators in the district under study impacted their careers?

For research question one, my data showed that the current and former early career educators took varied paths to become educators. Only one participant (16.7%) earned a degree in an education major and participated in a formal teacher preparation program. The remaining five participants (83.3%) transitioned to teaching from other fields and were required to complete additional professional educator competency requirements for certification.

For research question two, my data show that participant experiences with induction and support had been varied and inconsistent. Of the current early career educators, two out of four (50%) shared induction experiences that made them feel

prepared and supported, while the remaining two (50%) said they experienced little to no support. Of the former early career educators, both participants (100%) said they experienced little to no support and felt isolated, overwhelmed, and ill-prepared.

For research question three, my data show mixed results. Of the four current early career educator participants, three (75%) stated that based on their experiences so far, they were uncertain about their intention to remain in the teaching profession. The remaining participant (25%) claimed he intended to remain in the teaching profession to maintain eligibility for student loan forgiveness programs, but was otherwise uncertain of his dedication to the profession based on his experiences so far.

My second goal in this study was to analyze teacher recruitment, induction, and retention practices in one school district and the impact of these practices on early career educators. My research questions related to this goal were:

1. What are the current recruitment practices in the school district under study?
2. In what ways are new teachers prepared for the classroom in the school district under study?
3. What efforts are in place in the district under study to retain teachers and continue to provide them with support after their initial induction?

For research question one, data showed several recruitment practices in the district under study. Recruitment initiatives included collaborative job fairs with other county agencies, partnerships with local businesses, a grow-your-own initiative that cultivated high school students who aspired to be educators, and a strong social media presence. When reviewing the data pertaining to recruitment, I noticed the absence of collaboration between colleges or universities and the district under study.

For research question two, data showed several practices for teacher preparation in the district under study. Practices included a district-based two-day orientation for new hires, a school-based new teacher induction program with an assigned ITD mentor, and frequent and ongoing professional learning opportunities provided by district personnel throughout the school year. According to data, new teachers also had the option to participate in the district-based PDCP program to satisfy any additional certification requirements.

For research question three, data showed that leaders in the district under study relied heavily upon the induction and support process to retain teachers. Data from my interviews with district personnel did not yield any results specifically pertaining to teacher retention efforts other than their efforts to support and grow teachers. Data showed no additional incentives existed, monetary or otherwise, to encourage teachers to remain in the profession. Data showed if teachers were retained it was because of the support systems district and school leaders had put in place for them.

My third goal in this study was to offer data-driven, actionable suggestions to fortify new teacher support practices and increase teacher retention in the district under study. My research questions related to this goal were:

1. How can school and district leaders in the district under study attract highly-qualified candidates for teaching positions?
2. How can school and district leaders in the district under study provide comprehensive and sustained support to early career educators?
3. How can school and district leaders in the district under study increase retention of early career educators?

For research question one, data showed recruitment initiatives in the district under study were on par with recruitment strategies I discovered were used in other school districts in my literature review in chapter two. These strategies included job fairs, open houses, aspiring educator programs, and branding, which included attracting people to the area by sharing the amenities of the community in which the district under study was located. District and school leaders can improve the likelihood of attracting candidates for teaching positions in the district under study by incentivizing candidates monetarily with paid internships, relocation bonuses, and salaries that are competitive with surrounding districts.

For research question two, data showed that school and district leaders can provide comprehensive and sustained support to early career educators by extending the duration of the ITD mentorship program. All six current and former early career educator participants (100%) lamented the restriction of the ITD mentor to only their first year, which indicated a need for district leaders to expand the program. Furthermore, data showed the need for consistent, ongoing, purposeful learning walks for new teachers. Three out of four (75%) current early career educators cited observations of other teachers as the most helpful professional learning in which they participated. Additionally, district and school leaders can provide comprehensive and sustained support by reducing the ancillary duties required of teachers. All six early career educator participants (100%) cited a heavy workload as one of the main reasons for job dissatisfaction. School and district leaders need to make every effort to reduce a new teacher's workload, especially during their first year.

For research question three, data showed that out of recruitment, induction, and

retention, retention was the most significant challenge school and district leaders were facing in the district under study. Two of my study participants had already left the profession, and of the current early career educator participants, three (75%) said they were uncertain of their intention to remain a teacher, and one (25%) said he was planning to stay, but only for the student loan forgiveness incentive. Survey and interview data regarding retention indicated new teachers were leaving the profession due to negative experiences during the induction phase of their career.

Recommendations

Leaders in the district under study must adjust induction practices in order to see increases in teacher retention rates. After reviewing my data analysis, interpretations, and judgments, I identified the area of teacher induction as the predominant area in need of change. Specifically, the area of teacher mentorship and support in the classroom within the induction process. District- and school-based leaders in the district under study already provided support to first-year teachers in the form of an ITD mentor, but this support fell short when the new teacher lost their ITD mentor in their second year. Based on the data I collected in my study, I recommended the ITD mentorship program be expanded into an early career educator's second year. Furthermore, I recommended first-year teachers spend all or part of their instructional time as a co-teacher with a veteran teacher, preferably their ITD mentor. Additionally, I recommended that all early career educators participate in purposeful learning walks in their first and second years, with the option to participate during their third year.

I made these recommendations based on my interpretation of the data, which showed new teachers felt overwhelmed and isolated during their first year as teachers in

the district under study. I have converged my focus on these specific aspects of teacher induction because I believe fortifying these support structures will instill confidence in new teachers in and out of the classroom. When new teachers feel confident and supported, they will be more inclined to continue learning and growing as teachers, and retention rates in the district under study will increase.

Conclusion

I collected data for my study and explored new teacher experiences to understand how teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in the district under study impacted these experiences. I analyzed my data and learned about the current state of the education profession in the district under study, specifically pertaining to early career educators. I interpreted this data and identified positive and negative trends in new teacher experiences and determined what practices effectively supported new teachers and what made them leave. Armed with this knowledge, I envisioned my vision for future context, conditions, competencies, and culture (Wagner et al., 2006) in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: To-Be Framework

Many new teachers leave the profession within the first three years, and there are few people in line to replace them. In chapter four, I analyzed data I collected in an effort to determine why this is such a prevalent issue. Data revealed several recurring contributing factors to teacher demission, including workload, pay, and support. In this chapter, I explored these factors and used them to craft a change leadership plan that identifies areas of focus and builds ideal future circumstances. Addressing these issues may lead to an added interest in the profession, improved teacher morale, higher teacher retention, and, ultimately, increased student achievement.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

When envisioning the success To-Be of teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in the school district under study, I included ideal contexts, conditions, competencies, and culture (Wagner et al., 2006). My vision for the To-Be analysis culminates in all teachers being effectively supported during their first three years and beyond, and creating sustainable and prosperous teaching careers. Furthermore, the success To-Be will be continued in perpetuity, ensuring the cultivation of highly-qualified teachers for generations to come. See Appendix H for a complete To-Be 4Cs Analysis chart.

Future Contexts

Regarding contexts, Wagner et al. (2006) stated, “To help inform and shape the work we do to transform the culture, conditions, and competencies of our schools and districts, we must first understand all contextual information” (p. 104). The context surrounding the problem of practice in this study led me to choose the topic to begin

with: there is a teacher shortage in the district under study as well as in a plethora of other school districts across the nation. The As-Is context of the situation includes high teacher turnover and demission rates, a critical shortage of candidates to replace outgoing teachers, and teacher vacancies filled with underqualified or out-of-field teachers or substitutes. Ideal future contexts will include low teacher turnover and demission rates, a sufficient number of candidates in the teaching profession pipeline to replace outgoing teachers, and teacher vacancies filled with highly-qualified, certified teachers.

Teacher turnover and demission rates continue to plague the education profession. At the onset of this study, the district under study had 72 vacant teaching positions at the start of the school year in August 2019. By the end of September 2019, nearly two months into the school year, 30 vacancies remained. Two years later, in December 2021, the district under study had 83 vacant teaching positions. Of those 83 vacancies, 41 were at the elementary school level, meaning nearly half of the vacancies were leaving students in their formative years without a certified, highly-qualified teacher (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Some of these elementary students had completed a semester without a teacher. Others were about to enter the second semester without a teacher because their teacher had quit at the mid-term break.

While teachers continue to leave the profession, there is a critical shortage of candidates to replace them. As a result, school leaders fill many vacant teaching positions with underqualified or out-of-field teachers or substitutes. These vacancies also have an adverse effect on the rest of the students and staff in the school. In my professional experience as a school administrator, teaching positions often remain vacant for days, weeks, or months at a time. If a temporary teacher or long-term substitute is unable to be

secured, other school employees are called upon to provide coverage for those classrooms without a teacher. This means many school employees, including paraprofessionals, inclusion support facilitators, ESOL paraprofessionals, and clerical staff, are often pulled away from their daily responsibilities to substitute in classrooms. This creates a domino effect across the entire campus.

When employees are removed from their regular job responsibilities to fill a teacher vacancy, their tasks can no longer be accomplished, which affects the rest of the teachers, staff, and students in the school. When administrators remove paraprofessionals from the classrooms, they are no longer there to provide the teacher with assistance supporting students or working in classroom centers or collaborative groups. When inclusion support facilitators are removed from the students they support, students in special education programs are deprived of the extra assistance they are required to receive at regular intervals, which in turn is a violation of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). When clerical staff are pulled away from their responsibilities, meetings are not scheduled in a timely manner, student records are not properly maintained, and parent phone calls go unanswered.

In my role as a school-based administrator, determining classroom coverage is a daily battle. Each morning, I work with our school secretary to decide which employees, when pulled for classroom coverage, are likely to have the least detrimental impact on the school as a whole that day. This additional task takes me away from my other assigned responsibilities as an administrator but has become a part of my normal routine. In a school district operating under the aforementioned future contexts, district administrators will develop, adopt, and enact policies and strategies to aid the effective hiring and

support of instructional employees. When teachers are in the classrooms, students can learn, and educators can all do the jobs they are meant to do to support student learning.

Future Conditions

Working conditions in the teaching profession are a significant contributing factor to teacher demission. Unfavorable conditions teachers in the district under study were experiencing included a relatively low beginning salary with a low salary cap, unexpected challenges with student behaviors, and low parent involvement (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Ideal future conditions include competitive salaries, teachers being prepared and effectively trained to respond to student behavior and individual determination challenges, and ample parent involvement.

No one ever enters the teaching profession to become wealthy. However, my research and data collection showed that low salaries could be one of the reasons teachers leave the profession. As I discussed in my data collection findings in chapter four, the average teacher salary in the district under study was \$46,026.57 per year. Although the salary was not the most significant contributing factor to teacher demission in my study, nevertheless, an ideal future condition will include a higher annual salary for teachers, as well as a higher salary ceiling with pay increasing in larger increments along each step of the salary schedule over time.

This ideal future condition may be one of the more challenging conditions to improve. According to Wagner et al., "Context also refers to the larger organizational systems within which we work, and their demands and expectations, formal and informal. For a school this might be the district; for the district it might be the state; the state exists within the context of the federal government" (2006, p. 104). Although this assertion

pertains to context, it is pertinent to mention here because it supports the fact that many conditions are beyond the control of those who work within them. School leaders must work within the parameters set forth by district leaders, and district leaders must work within the parameters set forth by state leaders.

As district leaders allocate funds for teacher salaries, they must work within the confines of the district budget, which includes funding for all other aspects of school district operations as well. A state-mandated minimum salary requirement of \$45,000 per year, enacted in 2019, necessitated budget cuts in other areas in the district under study, including support staff, to permit funding reallocation for teacher salaries. The salary increase also proved to be a source of contention among teachers. Prior to the increased minimum salary requirement, a first-year teacher started with a salary of \$36,000 per year, and a teacher needed 14 years of teaching experience to obtain a salary of \$45,000 per year. When the minimum salary was increased by state mandate, brand new teachers in the district under study were suddenly earning the same salary as 14-year veteran teachers. Although this provided a morale boost to new teachers and created more opportunities for recruiting people to the profession with the allure of a higher starting salary, it embittered many veteran teachers who had worked for years to rise to that level on the pay scale. Furthermore, the salary cap remained the same; at 30 years of experience, teachers earned their terminal salary amount, which was \$57,850 per year (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Ideal conditions would see district administrators enacting policies to increase this salary cap in efforts to retain teachers for longer periods of time. Teachers are often dissuaded by the knowledge that they can work for 30 years and never surpass \$60,000

per year. Increasing the salary cap will provide more incentive for teachers to remain in the profession for the duration of their working lives. As a proponent of increasing teacher salaries, this future condition is of particular importance to me, especially when proposing effective solutions for increasing the recruitment and retention of quality teachers. However, salary alone will not save our teachers.

On my first day of school as a new teacher, I was surprised to learn rather abruptly that my students were not going to be like I was as a student. I imagined them coming to my class with enthusiastic anticipation, eager to listen, learn, share, and work hard. It became swiftly and abundantly clear that every student was different in their needs, interests, and behavior. Herein lies another current condition many new teachers are facing when they begin their careers: teaching simply does not turn out to be what they thought it would be. Student behavior and individual determination are not what they expected to encounter, and instead of teaching students the content of their lessons, they end up spending the majority of the class period attempting to manage behavior and encouraging students to at least attempt to listen and try to learn.

An ideal future condition will be teacher preparedness through consistent support of new teachers in the areas of behavior management and classroom learning expectations. This will be accomplished by providing teachers with one-on-one mentors to help them develop effective classroom management strategies, arranging frequent and ongoing learning walks in which early career educators have an opportunity to observe veteran teachers – their mentor teacher and others – in action in the classroom. These learning walks will give teachers an opportunity to witness effective classroom

management procedures and instructional strategies to take back to implement in their own classrooms.

First-year teachers will also participate in a collaborative book study, facilitated by an administrator or the school-based instructional coach, of the book *The First Days of School*, by Harry Wong and Rosemary Wong (1997). By reading the book in a group with other new teachers, they can share ideas with one another and discuss the efficacy of the practices and any adjustments made in their classrooms. Discipline often has a negative connotation, but without classroom management, learning cannot take place. As Wong and Wong (1997) said,

Students want a safe, predictable, and nurturing environment – one that is consistent. Students like well-managed classes because no one yells at them, and learning takes place. Effective teachers spend the first two weeks teaching students to be in control of their own actions in a consistent classroom environment. (p. 82)

In today's society of instant communication, teachers can connect with parents in a myriad of ways. While some parents are involved and in regular contact with teachers, many parents are absent entirely, unable to be reached by teachers by any means, despite the availability of multiple communication platforms. Low parent involvement was another condition teachers in the district under study experienced which hindered their ability to keep students on the right track and build relationships with community stakeholders.

Ideal future conditions will include efforts to increase parental involvement at the school and district levels. District- and school-based administrators will implement action

plans to reach out to the community each school serves. Educators will host open houses as they often do currently, but they will also host open forums at prominent community locations to allow parents and community members to meet school staff, ask questions, and provide input. Furthermore, parents and community members will be encouraged to stay informed by following schools on social media platforms, signing up for email newsletters, and attending School Advisory Council (SAC) meetings.

At the classroom level, teachers will be encouraged to reach out to parents for positive reasons rather than making contact only when an issue arises. School leaders will provide tutorials and modeling for effective parent phone calls and parent-teacher conferences to new teachers, with administrators giving support when necessary. When teachers have the proper support and training, contacting a parent is not quite such a daunting task. Maintaining regular contact with parents will become a part of a teacher's professional practice, and this will familiarize the parents with their child's teacher and reinforce their collaborative efforts to help their student succeed.

Future Competencies

Professional development is an integral part of growing and supporting teachers. "Competencies are most effectively built when professional development is focused, job-embedded, continuous, constructed, and collaborative" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 99). Based on my professional experience, new teachers, especially, need focused and continuous, job-embedded professional learning. However, many of the professional development practices in the district under study were driving early career educators away from the profession. Teachers were besieged with certification and professional development requirements, and my data showed the overwhelming barrage of

professional responsibilities outside the classroom was the single greatest contributing factor to teacher job dissatisfaction.

According to the data I collected, teachers in the district under study, particularly early career teachers, were inundated by overwhelming and cumbersome induction and professional certification programs. Direct mentorship, in which a mentor teacher is paid for their time, was limited to a new teacher's first year. Furthermore, few incentives were offered by leaders to encourage teachers to obtain further education or certification beyond minimum requirements. I have also observed these factors in my experience as a school-based administrator working closely with new teachers. Ideal future competencies include structured, timely, and manageable induction and professional certification programs for new teachers, direct mentorship provided to teachers during their first two years in the profession with an option for a third year, and increased incentives to obtain further education or certification beyond minimum qualifications.

According to my interview data, 90% of teachers hired at the district under study were classified as out-of-field. This means their college degrees were in an area other than education. They met eligibility requirements to teach because they had a bachelor's degree, but once they were hired, they still needed to complete additional certification requirements to become a professionally licensed teacher. Teachers in this classification were issued a temporary teaching certificate so they could teach while they were working on fulfilling the additional certification requirements to obtain a professional educator certificate. Newly hired teachers were typically able to satisfy these additional certification requirements by following one of two routes: they could take supplementary classes at a college to earn credit hours in the education major, or they could enroll in a

district-provided program known as the Professional Development Certification Program, or PDCP.

While the college courses were typically highly concentrated, short-term classes for which teachers had to pay out-of-pocket, PDCP provided an opportunity for new teachers to meet their certification requirements in a cohort of their district peers over the course of three years. There was still a cost associated with the program, but it was lower than the cost of tuition for continuing education courses at a college or university, and could be paid in small increments over time through payroll deduction. However, despite the appeal of the PDCP option, and the undoubtedly good intentions of the program's creators and facilitators, teachers indicated a high level of dissatisfaction with that route. In my professional experience working with new teachers, they lamented their enrollment in the PDCP program due to the complicated tasks and heavy workload. Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed and overly scrutinized in the program, causing strain on their certification progress, and spawning doubt in their minds about their commitment to the profession.

When a new teacher was hired, they were required to participate in the new teacher induction program. The program consisted of combined district- and school-based support during year one, school-based support during year two, and optional school-based support during year three. The school principal decided if the teacher received the support in the optional year three. First-year teachers also received a direct, one-on-one mentor teacher for the duration of their first year. These mentor teachers, known as Instructional Talent Developers, or ITDs, were colleagues on the same campus as the new teacher they supported. They had to be trained in clinical education and have

at least three years of teaching experience. The ITDs were paid a supplement for the time they spent mentoring the new teacher, as long as the time they met was outside normal contract hours.

In my experience supervising and coordinating ITDs and their mentees, nearly all new teachers who finished their first year and moved into their second year lamented the loss of their direct mentor. The new teachers often expressed to me that they were just beginning to form ideas of their own, and they believed they would benefit even more from a direct mentor during their second year because they were finally starting to grasp the concepts they were taught in year one. Ideal future competencies will include a new practice of permitting early career teachers to keep their ITD mentor for a second year, with the option for a third year based on principal discretion, provided the mentor teacher is still available and willing to serve. This future competency is so critical that I have included it in greater detail in chapter six as one of the strategies and actions to implement my plan for change.

Another current competency missing from the district under study was the lack of significant incentives for teachers to obtain further education or certification beyond the minimum qualification requirements. The district under study offered an advanced degree supplement to teachers, but, in accordance with state statute, teachers were only eligible for the supplement if their advanced degree was in the same area in which they held a professional educator's certificate. This policy made it particularly tedious for an out-of-field teacher to earn an advanced degree supplement, as their previous degree was not likely in any field pertaining to education. Furthermore, the advanced degree supplement dollar amounts were low when weighed against the cost, time and resources invested in

obtaining an advanced degree. In the district under study, advanced degree supplements were \$2,500 per year for a master's degree, \$4,500 per year for a specialist degree, and \$6,500 per year for a doctoral degree. After these supplements were taxed and divided into equal paycheck payments throughout the year, the amounts were barely noticeable. An ideal future competency will increase the dollar amounts of the advanced degree supplements and increase their availability to teachers by simplifying eligibility requirements. These ideal advanced degree supplements will encourage current teachers to pursue further education and professional growth while providing more recruitment incentive to potential teachers.

Future Culture

Regarding culture, Wagner et al. (2006) stated, "Culture refers to the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system" (p. 102). When considering the culture of a school, one question comes to my mind: Do people want to be there? Just as leaders encourage teachers to create a learning environment that makes their students want to come to class each day, school leaders must create a working environment that makes teachers and staff members want to come to work each day. Culture is arguably the most impactful arena of change out of the 4Cs. In my professional experience, when the school atmosphere is positive, encouraging, and engaging, people want to be there. When the atmosphere is negative, discouraging, and divisive, people do not want to be there. Teacher efficacy can be impacted more significantly by a change in culture – positively or negatively – than by any other factor. People do not learn from those they do not like, and they do not work toward a vision they do not share.

Nothing is more crippling to a new teacher than feeling alone. Overwhelmed, underpaid, and flying blind in their fledgling years as an educator, this is how teachers become disgruntled and disenchanting with the profession. Even the most jaded veteran teacher once stepped into a classroom with hope, eager to inspire generations of students. But now, years later, they operate on their own, resistant to new ideas, impervious to the spark of optimism carried by others. School leaders, have the job to ensure early career educators are so well-supported and encouraged that they are never at risk of losing that spark. The current culture in my study included teachers operating in “silos” in their classrooms, teachers divided between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset, teachers feeling overwhelmed with certification requirements, standards-based teaching, frequent and ongoing assessments, and the looming societal disillusionment with the teaching profession. The ideal future culture will include teachers operating with a collaborative approach to all aspects of the profession, teachers adopting a growth mindset and consistently pursuing professional growth, teachers being supported and mentored through each step of certification requirements, standards-based teaching, frequent and ongoing assessments, and the education profession being restored to being respected and highly regarded by society.

In *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol Dweck (2006) said, “No matter what your ability is, effort is what ignites that ability and turns it into accomplishment” (p. 56). In an ideal future culture, school leaders will inspire new teachers to adopt this mindset with every hurdle they approach in their teaching careers. With a growth mindset, silos will become collaborative learning communities, and challenges will become new opportunities for learning. Rather than becoming

overwhelmed by certification requirements, teachers with a growth mindset will see professional development as a bridge to get them from where they are professionally to where they need to be, for their career and for their students.

In an ideal future culture, teachers will not feel overburdened by standards-based teaching or frequent and ongoing assessments. They will receive enough training and support from school and district leaders to be able to use these often-daunting aspects of the profession to their advantage. School-based administrators and instructional coaches will provide training to new teachers, along with their more experienced colleagues, on how to unpack standards to design lesson plans. Based on my observations as a school-based administrator, when standards-based teaching seems unnerving, it is often because the teacher does not fully understand the intricacies of the standard. Providing professional learning opportunities for teachers to work with their peers to dissect standards and use them to frame a lesson is essential for student mastery of the standards.

School-based administrators will also provide teachers with deliberate, focused training on the effective use of data to drive instructional decisions. Assessment of student progress is frequent, ongoing, and vital to measure student progress. In an ideal future culture, teachers will know how to analyze data to determine areas of student need within each standard in their content area, and use the assessment data to provide individualized remedial instruction. Furthermore, teachers will use the assessment data to instill student ownership of learning and create a culture of trust, understanding, and achievement in the classroom.

During my years in the education profession, I have observed that the teaching profession is not the highly regarded and respected career it once was, with many people

reacting in dismay when I tell them what I do for a living. I attribute much of this consternation to current teachers' job dissatisfaction. When teachers discuss their discontentment and unhappiness as a teacher with family and community members, this portrays the profession in a negative light, which is only exacerbated by the increasing teacher vacancies and inadequate amount of quality replacement candidates. This is why culture is the most impactful arena of change. When teachers are happy – when they truly love their job – it will be reflected in school culture and student learning, and the respect for the teaching profession will be restored.

Conclusion

These future contexts, conditions, competencies, and culture ideals will be cultivated by district leaders through the development of action plans and the implementation of strategies to recruit teacher candidates, provide them with adequate support and training, and retain them in the classroom. After conducting research and collecting data, I discovered several key matters impacting teacher recruitment, induction, and retention in the school district under study. My change leadership plan, derived from the most impactful elements of each of the 4Cs, aims to contribute to the consistent placement of certified, highly qualified teachers in front of students to increase student learning and proficiency.

Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions

When I was an aspiring school leader, I worked for a principal dedicated to developing leadership skills in others. Her cultivation of others was one of her many virtues which I hoped to emulate when it was my time to serve in a leadership capacity. Among the many leadership lessons she bestowed upon me, one piece of advice is particularly prudent here. She said, “Never bring a problem to the table without an idea for a possible solution.” I can recall a conversation between a teacher and that principal in which she shared that same advice when the teacher approached her with a problem. The teacher was taken aback at first, because people are often accustomed to identifying a problem, communicating it to their leader, and then being provided with a solution determined by the leader. This leader, however, was putting the onus of responsibility back on the teacher. The teacher walked away from that conversation perplexed, downtrodden, and without a solution. The principal looked over at me with a smile and said, “Just wait, she’ll come back.”

The next day, the teacher returned, armed with enthusiasm, resolve, and three or four ideas for potential solutions to the problem she had identified. When she had left the conversation the previous day, she was under the impression that her leader was dismissing her concerns and had no intention of doing anything about them. What she had not realized, which was now evidently clear, was that her leader had given her the ability to create and propose potential solutions. The teacher eagerly shared her ideas, and the principal helped her decide on the solution that served the best interest of all parties involved. The teacher left inspired and ready to share her ideas with her colleagues. What a truly powerful way this was for my principal to empower those she served. As a current

school leader, I now make every effort to put this approach into practice on a regular basis, empowering others to make decisions for change leadership.

In this chapter, I will use this approach to identify potential solutions to challenges presented by my research questions and data collection. I will develop an organizational change plan which includes strategies and actions in accordance with John Kotter's Eight-Step Process for Leading Change outlined in the book *Leading Change* (2012). These strategies and actions, which are based on research and professional experience, are proposed below and are also outlined in a strategies and actions chart in Appendix I. This plan will serve as a bridge between the challenges identified in the As-Is 4Cs analysis and the vision of success outlined in the To-Be 4Cs analysis. After all, what can be accomplished by identifying a problem without offering a solution?

Strategies and Actions

Of the circumstances detailed in the As-Is 4Cs analysis in chapter five, a high turnover and demission rate among teachers in their first three years in the profession represents the overall context of the problem. In my development of strategies and actions for change, I will concentrate on one area of focus from each of the remaining three arenas of change. The main areas of focus I identified in this study that need to be addressed are: Overwhelming and cumbersome induction and professional certification processes, the learning environment and classroom management, and school cultures operating under a fixed mindset. In this chapter, I will develop strategies and actions for all three areas of focus.

To devise strategies and actions for change, I must first refer to my initial goals and research questions. Of the research questions I posed at the onset of this study, the

following three questions – one from each goal category – will serve as my guide as I follow Kotter’s (2012) model for leading the change process:

- What induction and support practices have current and former early career educators experienced in the district under study? This research question relates to the identified area of focus of overwhelming and cumbersome induction and professional certification processes.
- In what ways are new teachers prepared for the classroom in the school district under study? This research question relates to the identified area of focus of the learning environment and classroom management.
- How can school and district leaders in the district under study provide comprehensive and sustained support to early career educators? This research question relates to the identified area of focus of school culture operating under a fixed mindset.

When considering these research questions and their related identified areas of focus, it is evident that any proposed strategies and actions will need to be planned and enacted with multiple tiers of implementation and support. This study encapsulates an entire school district, in which all schools are impacted by the problem and any potential solutions. In order to make any progress toward improvement, district leaders alone must not be relied upon to enact change. Leading change for these areas of focus will require collaborative efforts from district personnel, school-based leaders, and teachers in all phases of their careers. Each step outlined below will require all parties to do their part for the change initiative, working symbiotically to accomplish a shared goal. There is no other way.

Create a Sense of Urgency

According to Kotter (2012), transformation is a process, not an event. The first step in the Eight-Step Process for Leading Change is to create a sense of urgency. This problem is not going to go away on its own. If leaders avoid it, it will fester, and all stakeholders will suffer. As Kotter (2012) said, “Whenever smart and well-intentioned people avoid confronting obstacles, they disempower employees and undermine change” (p. 10). Creating a sense of urgency means school and district leaders must acknowledge these three areas of focus and place them at the forefront of district change initiatives. This begins with the superintendent appointing a leader in each area of focus to spearhead the change initiatives. The appointed leader, henceforth referred to as a “champion,” will take ownership of their designated area of focus and report progress to the superintendent. These champions will not operate in silos; they will be three leaders working in tandem, all charged with leading the same change initiative under a shared vision, each responsible for a different area of focus within the vision.

Build a Guiding Coalition

The appointed champions cannot enact these strategies and actions alone. Kotter’s (2012) second step is to build a guiding coalition. “A guiding coalition made up only of managers – even superb managers who are wonderful people – will cause major change efforts to fail” (Kotter, 2012, p. 59). The champions must build a guiding coalition composed of members representing all stakeholder groups. Coalition members will include district program specialists who work in each area of focus, school-based leaders including principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, veteran teachers, and early career teachers.

A strategy that may prove helpful here is something I have learned in my experience as a school-based leader. If a point of contention is present in school culture, or there is an identified problem with the way a school is functioning, when forming a committee to enact change, a school leader should always ask the most dissenting staff members to serve on the committee. Bearing this in mind, coalition members should not be selected based solely on their attitude or willingness to change. In my professional experience, sometimes those who are resistant to change can be an asset to a change initiative because they test the mettle of any proposed strategy or action. Including dissenting members in the guiding coalition empowers them with the ability to make change, makes them feel like their voices are heard, and may potentially reinvigorate their attitudes by giving them purpose and value. It is essential to the success of the change initiative to cultivate a guiding coalition of people with various perspectives, opinions, and values to ensure the adequate representation of all stakeholder groups.

Form a Strategic Vision

Once the guiding coalition is assembled, they will then form a strategic vision, Kotter's (2012) third step. Change initiatives often come with a lofty vision and cumbersome strategies and actions. Kotter (2012) said, "If you cannot describe your vision to someone in five minutes and get their interest, you have more work to do in this phase of a transformation process" (p. 78). A vision of change is often conveyed by a single, all-encompassing vision statement, derived from the goals and areas of focus in the change initiative. The strategic vision for this change initiative should contribute to the efficacy of recruitment, induction, and retention practices in an effort to increase the consistent placement of certified, highly-qualified teachers in front of students. The

coalition, which represents all stakeholders, will unite under this unanimously-created vision, and the vision statement will help coalition members succinctly share the vision with others. This vision will drive all decisions, strategies, and actions throughout the course of the change initiative.

Enlist a Volunteer Army

Once the guiding coalition is united under a shared strategic vision, they will work to enlist a volunteer army, Kotter's (2012) fourth step, to aid in the implementation of the change plan. This step will require effective communication with all stakeholders, beginning with conversations with each stakeholder group. Champions will host roundtable discussions with district personnel, veteran teachers, early career educators, school-based leaders, and community members. During these discussions, champions will outline the goals of the change initiative and convey the sense of urgency and the need for an army of volunteers. They will recruit volunteers from each stakeholder group who will contribute to the change initiative by providing perspectives from their particular group. This will also enable sustained communication between the school district and the community, as the members of the volunteer army will serve as liaisons between the guiding coalition and their stakeholder group. With this army, each stakeholder group will be represented and involved in the decision-making process, and the liaisons will maintain strong bonds between the school district and the community its members serve.

Enable Action by Removing Barriers

Kotter's (2012) fifth step is when the change initiative moves from theory to action. In the first four steps, I explained how a call to action was created, a coalition was

formed, a vision was established, and stakeholder involvement was secured. Now the guiding coalition will begin enacting the strategies and actions that support the vision. Kotter's (2012) fifth step is to enable action by removing barriers, of which there is no shortage in each area of focus.

In the area of teacher induction and certification processes, one significant barrier is the limiting of direct mentorship of new teachers to their first year only. New teachers receive an Instructional Talent Developer (ITD) mentor during their first year of employment, but they lose their mentor in their second year. Many teachers, in both my surveys and professional experience, lamented the loss of their mentor in their second year. To remove this barrier, the coalition will recommend continuing the direct ITD mentorship into the new teacher's second year. Because ITD mentors are in high demand, the school-based lead ITD will take over mentorship in the new teacher's third year to allow the ITD to move on to a new teacher. By providing continuous mentorship to new teachers through their first two years, the coalition will ensure the new teachers are not pushed from the nest before they have fully spread their wings.

In the area of the learning environment and classroom management, one significant barrier is the practice of placing new teachers in the classroom on their own from day one. Budget constraints and staffing allocations in the district under study restricted filling instructional positions to only one person, so any new teacher hired was alone in their classroom during instructional time, regardless of years of experience. The true challenge here is combating new teachers' feelings of isolation in their professional responsibilities. To remove this barrier, the coalition will recommend that all new teachers in their first and second years of teaching participate in school-based and

district-based learning walks. A learning walk is the practice of one teacher visiting another teacher's classroom to observe classroom management and instructional strategies. The visiting teacher can then take what they have learned back to their classroom and implement the strategies in a way that suits their students and teaching style.

When analyzing the data that I collected in this study, new teachers identified learning walks as the most impactful professional learning practice during their formative years. As a result, the coalition will recommend learning walks as an integral part of the induction process. Many schools in the district under study already conducted learning walks, but I am proposing that the guiding coalition recommend structured, deliberate, district-wide learning walks for all early career educators. New teachers will participate in strategically planned observations of other teachers, including their ITD mentor teacher, teachers within their content area, teachers outside their content area, and even teachers at other schools. After all, good teaching is good teaching regardless of what content or location, and learning walks will provide ample opportunity to model effective teaching strategies to new teachers.

In the area of school cultures operating under a fixed mindset, one significant barrier was complacency. In this area, teachers can often be their own worst enemy. The unfortunate reality is that many veteran teachers in the district under study were complacent, jaded, and burned out, which led to the festering of negativity and resistance to change. This can create an environment rife with "that will not work" or "this is what we have always done" mindsets. When new teachers enter the profession with enthusiasm, hope, and vigor, they can often be stifled by the negativity of others in the

school. As Kotter (2012) said, “Bureaucratic cultures can smother those who want to respond to shifting conditions” (p. 27). One strategy to combat this is to identify teachers in their fourth or fifth year of teaching and recruit them to serve as mentor teachers. These teachers recently completed all elements of district- and school-based induction, as well as at least three years in the classroom in front of students. These teachers know what it is like to be a new teacher because they just made it through the first three years in their own careers. Consider a novice sailor navigating treacherous waters – there is no better guide than a sailor who just made it through the water themselves.

In the district under study, administrator turnover was high at the school level, with many principals serving a school for an average of three years before being moved to another school by district leaders. This further exacerbated the complacency of veteran teachers because they knew any change initiative implemented by a school principal would likely be irrelevant in three years when that administrator was replaced by another administrator with a new change initiative. All they must do was maintain the status quo and outlast the current principal. Therefore, it is crucial to recruit and empower those with dissenting voices and establish a common vision to enable the momentum of the change initiative to be sustained, even under a change in leadership.

Generate Short-term Wins

Kotter (2012) conveyed the importance of generating short-term wins in his sixth step, stating, “Without short-term wins, too many employees give up or actively join the resistance” (p. 11). Short-term wins build confidence, boost morale, and sustain momentum. As the expression goes, an elephant must be eaten one bite at a time. For an early career educator, short-term wins can come in many forms, including trying a new

instructional strategy in the classroom, soliciting help from a parent with student behavior, or passing a state teacher certification test. While these may seem commonplace to a veteran teacher, for a new teacher these short-term wins require stepping out of their comfort zone in the classroom, opening lines of communication to parents, and earning a passing score on a daunting test on which their continued employment depends.

School-based leaders, including administrators and instructional coaches, play a key role in generating short-term wins for new teachers. The guiding coalition will recommend the generation of short-term wins be spearheaded by the school-based instructional coaches. Instructional coaches can not only provide the tutelage needed to lead new teachers to short-term wins, but they can also advocate for new teachers by showcasing their accomplishments to school-based leaders and members of the guiding coalition. Instructional coaches are the thermometers of a school, checking and maintaining the school climate through active support and mentorship. Coaches can determine the needs of new teachers, provide them with the skills to meet those needs, and celebrate short-term wins along the way.

Sustain Acceleration and Institute Change

Once the coalition reaches Kotter's (2012) seventh and eighth steps, sustain acceleration and institute change, respectively, change is already well underway. To sustain this acceleration and maintain momentum, a change initiative must have adequate organizational capacity and routine assessment of efficacy. One prominent risk associated with a change initiative is miscommunication or misinterpretation of intentions. "Nothing undermines change more than behavior by important individuals that is inconsistent with

the verbal communication” (Kotter, 2012, p. 11). Any changes instituted must align with the goals communicated to stakeholders by the guiding coalition. If stakeholders perceive the changes instituted to be inconsistent with the communicated message, there will be a breakdown in communication. To combat any misconceptions, members of the guiding coalition will develop and implement a training module that will inform all administrators and instructional personnel of the goals and practices of the change initiative pertaining to supporting and mentoring new teachers. This will ensure the shared vision is conveyed with fidelity with all employees, and new teacher support practices are common across all school campuses. School leaders will share the content of these modules with community members via School Advisory Councils or parent-teacher organizations to ensure all stakeholders receive a unified message.

To further support continual growth, members of the guiding coalition will conduct frequent and ongoing needs assessments of new teachers. These needs assessments will be conducted quarterly via an online survey designed to assess the efficacy of current support practices and identify areas of need for future support practices. When completing the needs assessments, new teachers will have the opportunity to share what supports have been the most helpful to them and the areas in which they would like additional support. Any future change initiatives for new teacher support practices will be driven by data gathered from these needs assessments. A quote often attributed to leadership lessons in the United States Air Force states, “Plan the flight and fly the plan, but don’t fall in love with the plan.” To heed this advice, the guiding coalition will continue to meet regularly to analyze the needs assessments, evaluate the efficacy of current practices, and make any course corrections deemed necessary. The

guiding coalition and champions of each area of focus will remain flexible and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders throughout the course of the change initiative.

Conclusion

In his development of the Eight-Step Process for Leading Change, Kotter (2012) highlighted an important notion regarding culture change:

One of the theories about change that has circulated widely over the past 15 years might be summarized as follows: The biggest impediment to creating change in a group is culture. Therefore, the first step in a major transformation is to alter the norms and values. After the culture has been shifted the rest of the change effort becomes more feasible and easier to put into effect. I once believed in this model. But everything I've seen over the past decade tells me it's wrong. Culture is not something that you manipulate easily. Attempts to grab it and twist it into a new shape never work because you can't grab it. Culture changes only after you have successfully altered people's actions, after the new behavior produces some group benefit for a period of time, and after people see the connection between the new actions and the performance improvement. Thus, most cultural change happens in stage eight, not stage one. (p. 155)

Of the four arenas of change, culture is perhaps the least malleable. Culture is shaped not by the circumstances surrounding an organization, but by the mindset and methods with which these circumstances are met. Leading a change in culture is accomplished by the fortitude and tenacity of those within an organization. The goal of this guiding coalition, and the purpose behind any strategies and actions I suggest, is to shape a culture of support, camaraderie, and positivity for new teachers. To institute this

change in culture, the guiding coalition must first institute change in the other three arenas: context, conditions, and competencies. In the following chapter, I will make a policy recommendation in one of those three areas. When the needs of new teachers are met in these three areas, a shift in culture will occur, and only then will the district under study be on the right path to creating lifelong educators.

Chapter Seven: Implications and Policy Recommendations

When considering implications and policy recommendations, I am faced with the challenge of devising a solution that is both innovative and practical. Balancing the two is no easy task, especially with the education profession's state of budget constraints, personnel shortages, and stakeholder apathy. During the course of this study, I awaited a revelation. I collected data, analyzed the significance, interpreted the meaning, and formulated an action plan in response to the data and the practices in the district under study. I eagerly anticipated an idea, groundbreaking and revolutionary, to present itself to me as I developed strategies and actions to address teacher shortages and demission. Armed with several key ideas and strategies for leading change, I was ready to create a policy recommendation. Still, no epiphany.

In my work as an administrator, the instructional coach works hand-in-hand with me to support early career educators. At the onset of the second semester, we were discussing our plan for the continued support of new teachers at our school, and she shared a story about when she served as a mentor to a first-year teacher. She said the new teacher was fortunate enough to have two class periods per day during which the instructional coach taught with her, giving the new teacher one-on-one time with her mentor every day. The new teacher would observe and co-teach with her mentor each day, and then emulate those teaching strategies in her own classroom. This teacher was still thriving in the classroom at the time of this study and was a testament to the efficacy of this training model. The instructional coach and I agreed that the co-teaching model would be a game-changing approach to new teacher induction, if only it were possible. If only we had the personnel, the funding, and the stakeholder support to attempt such a

bold initiative. If only someone would use data collection, scholarly research, and professional experience to recommend such an endeavor. There it was, my long-awaited epiphany. The irony in waiting so long for this epiphany is that it is something I have known all along; our new teachers need help and the best place for them to get it is from other teachers.

Policy Statement

I devised the strategies and actions in chapter six from the survey and interview feedback which comprised the data in this study. I am generating this policy directly from my analysis of these data, scholarly research, and my professional experience. I am incorporating the key strategies and actions from chapter six into my policy recommendation to ensure it meets the needs of new teachers in accordance with the needs I identified in the data analysis. I am recommending a policy that creates a hybrid schedule designed to balance classroom instructional time with mentorship and professional learning activities for first-year teachers.

In the district under study, schools operate on a six-period day. Some schools run a bell schedule with all six periods in a row every day, with each class period averaging about 50 minutes in duration. Other schools modify the bell schedule, operating on three 100-minute block periods per day, with odd- and even-numbered class periods meeting on alternating days. Regardless of the individual school bell schedule, the amount of instructional time per year is the same across the district. This is crucial to my plan because new teachers' classroom time and professional learning time should be consistent and equal at all schools across the district to ensure equitable opportunities for professional growth.

Consider a new teacher's obligations during a typical week: Parent-teacher conferences, faculty meetings, department meetings, mentor meetings, and professional development sessions, which are more abundant for a teacher in the induction phase of their career. Because the district under study operates on a six-period bell schedule, teacher planning and professional learning time are limited. Teachers do not have a planning period built into the school day. They have common planning time during the first hour of the workday, after which they teach six class periods in a row for the remainder of their contract day. This schedule requires teachers to conduct any mentoring, trainings, or meetings during that first hour of the day, which interferes with their designated planning time. While veteran teachers may be acclimated to this way of work, it can be daunting, overwhelming, and stressful for an early career educator.

Now, consider the domino effect resulting from these conditions. All of the obligations mentioned above occur during that first hour of common planning time, leaving new teachers very little time to lesson plan. Based on my professional observations, without adequate planning and preparation, lessons lack rigor and relevance, which makes student engagement highly improbable. In the absence of an engaging lesson, students begin to look for other ways to occupy their time and expend their energy. This leads to classroom disruptions and student misbehaviors, which further interfere with the lesson and cause additional strife for the teacher and students. The teacher must then make parent contact to address the misbehaviors, which often results in another parent-teacher conference, which further interferes with the teacher's morning planning time. Consequently, teachers often compensate for their shortage of planning time by going to work early or staying late on a regular basis. This creates an imbalance

between work life and personal life, resulting in fatigue, stress, and premature burn-out. It is a vicious cycle from which a new teacher seldom emerges. Thus, the seed of discontentment is planted in the early career educator's mind, and they inevitably begin to consider leaving the profession.

In this cycle, it is nearly impossible for student learning to occur. Students experience a haphazard lesson presented by a flustered, ill-prepared teacher who barely had a chance to finish their morning cup of coffee. Students perceive the teacher as incapable of managing their classroom, leading to further disengagement and a lack of respect for the teacher. These conditions are detrimental to the learning environment, depleting morale in the teacher and students and straining their relationships with one another. As Rita Pierson once said, "Kids don't learn from people they don't like" (Pierson, 2020, 1:41). Relationships are the foundation of effective teaching, and once diminished, any other efforts to salvage student learning are futile.

My policy recommendation will break this cycle and change the way of work for early career educators by providing adequate time for new teachers to learn how to be teachers. I am basing this new policy on the pedagogical concept of gradual release, an instructional strategy I have observed frequently in my professional experience. Teachers often utilize gradual release to strategically transfer the learning responsibility to the students, first collectively, then individually. When teachers utilize gradual release in the classroom, they first demonstrate the lesson content to the students, commonly referred to as the "I do" stage of gradual release. In this stage, the teacher models learning expectations for the students. The next stage, commonly referred to as "we do," involves a collaborative approach to the lesson in which students and the teacher work together to

learn the content. The final stage of gradual release, commonly called “you do,” involves the students taking what they have seen and learned and putting it into practice on their own. Gradual release is an effective teaching strategy that provides students with a modeled example of proficiency, adequate support from their teacher and peers throughout the lesson, and ample time to demonstrate mastery. This approach will prove effective for learning and content mastery for teachers, just as it does for students.

My policy recommendation for new teacher support uses the gradual release model to create a new district- and school-based teacher induction program. I have dubbed this program Gradual Release Induction and Training, or GRIT, for short. In the district under study, the previously discussed Instructional Talent Developer (ITD) program serves as the primary form of induction and mentorship for new teachers. In my new induction plan, elements of the ITD program will remain, but the program as a whole will merge with the GRIT program, creating a new induction and mentorship platform that incorporates key data-driven strategies and actions. Specific steps in the GRIT program are as follow.

New teachers participate in the GRIT program for the first three years of their careers. During year one, the teacher will be assigned an ITD mentor, just as they already are in the district under study. Under the GRIT program, a first-year teacher will be assigned students for only three of the six class periods in the school day. School-based administrators will be mindful of this when preparing class sections and allocating teaching units in the master schedule. A preferable schedule for a first-year teacher under the new GRIT program guidelines will leave the first, second, and sixth periods open for mentorship and professional learning. Ideally, the new teacher will spend first period

lesson planning and second period co-teaching with their ITD mentor in their mentor's classroom. Then, the new teacher will teach their own classes during third, fourth, and fifth period, during which they will implement their lesson plans and incorporate instructional strategies they have learned while co-teaching with their mentor. Finally, during sixth period, they will return to their ITD mentor's classroom to co-teach once more and debrief on the day's student learning and their professional progress. This schedule layout is ideal for maximizing opportunities for collaborative learning with the ITD, and the plan also allows for flexibility in the scheduling specifics for each school. Every school has varying needs, and each new teacher and ITD are able to arrange their GRIT schedule accordingly as long as the overall model is followed. This gradual release support plan will remain in effect for the duration of the new teacher's first year in the profession, ensuring ample time for lesson planning, comprehensive mentor modeling and support, and classroom teaching experience.

To maximize the beneficial impacts of the GRIT program, I am designing it to incorporate the three key strategies and actions derived from my data analysis. The first action calls for the continuation of the ITD mentorship of first-year teachers into their second year. The GRIT program accomplishes this by continued adherence to the gradual release model. In this plan, I am evolving the role of the ITD mentor into an actual co-teacher during the new teacher's first year. In year two, the new teacher will have a full six-period class schedule but will retain their ITD mentor for the duration of their second year. With this plan, I am expanding the ITD mentor's role in year one, and moving the current iteration of the ITD mentor to year two. Retaining the ITD mentor in year three is a collective, school-based decision made by the new teacher, the ITD mentor, and the

school principal.

The second action calls for the planning and implementation of district-wide learning walks for all early career educators. I plan to accomplish this initiative through the GRIT program by recommending learning walks take place during one of the three periods the first-year teachers have no students assigned to them. I have already built in school-based learning walks in this plan in the form of co-teaching for one to two periods per day. When the new teacher is co-teaching with their ITD mentor, they are observing the modeling of instructional practices and learning new strategies to implement in their classrooms. Therefore, they are already participating in a learning walk during that time. New teachers also need to observe teachers in other content areas, or even at other schools, to be exposed to as many strategies and practices as possible and collect as many tools for their teaching arsenal as possible. This is where scheduling flexibility comes into play. The new teacher can regularly utilize one of their three student-free periods to observe another teacher in the classroom. Under this model, a first-year teacher will participate in a learning walk with their ITD mentor every day, and will also have ample room in their schedule to coordinate observations of other teachers across the content areas.

The third action calls for the recruitment of fourth- and fifth-year teachers to serve as mentors for new teachers. The rationale behind this strategy is that a teacher who recently made it through their formative years is perhaps best suited to guide a new teacher in their first few years. A fourth- or fifth-year teacher may be best because they still have the realities and experiences of a new teacher fresh in their minds. I include this action as a recommended practice in the GRIT program to maximize relevance and

relatability, fortifying the relationship between the new teacher and their ITD mentor. I anticipate this practice will prove most helpful when the GRIT program has been underway for a few years and we are able to recruit recent GRIT graduates to serve as new teacher mentors.

An early career educator participating in the GRIT program will receive concentrated, structured support during their first year of teaching, continued one-on-one mentorship in their second year, and the option for school-based further enrichment in their third year. If enacted, this policy will directly impact student learning by developing happy, well-trained, fully supported teachers in classrooms for students. New teachers will enter the classroom, confident and prepared, ready to teach students, and invest in their careers as educators. Quality induction practices lead to increased teacher retention, which leads to higher-quality teaching and increased learning opportunities for students. I am designing this program to give first-year teachers what they need more than anything: time. Time to learn. Time to plan. Time to grow. And most importantly, time to build their skill set for the benefit of all students they may have in their classroom in the future.

Analysis of Needs

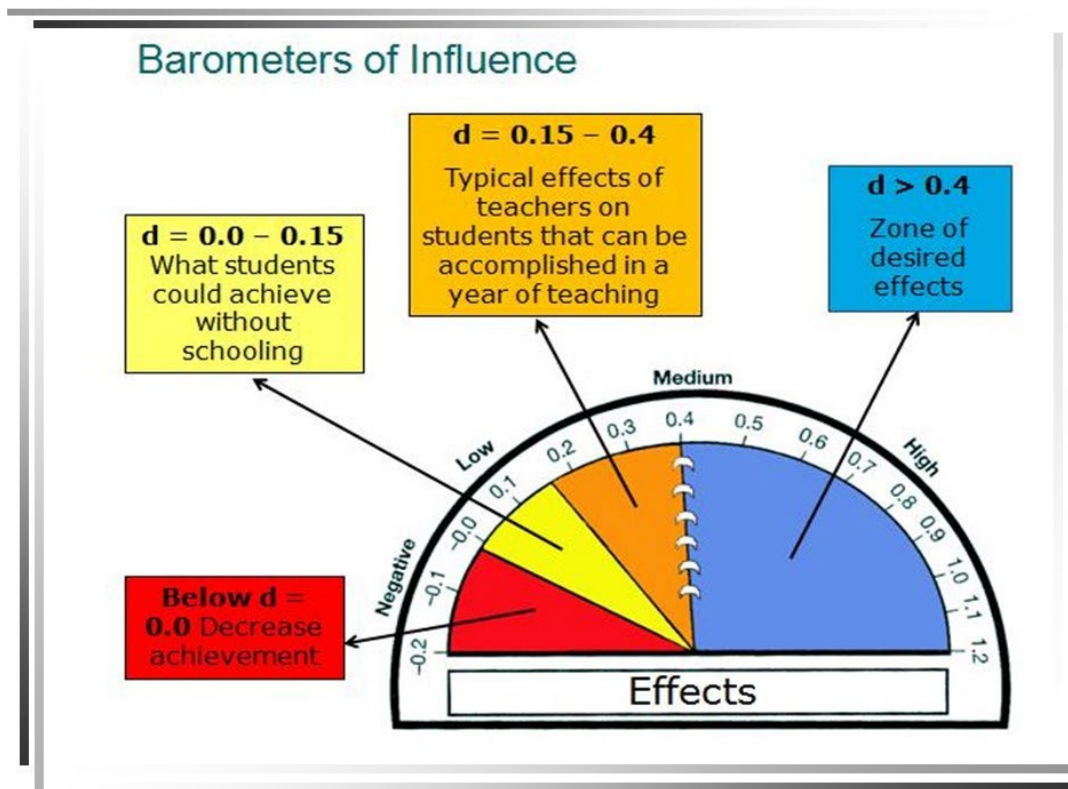
The new practices proposed in this policy recommendation are not without limitations, no matter how well-intentioned I may be. In the analysis of needs below, I analyze my policy through the lenses of six distinct disciplinary areas: educational, economic, social, political, legal, and ethical. I explore the implications of this new policy, potential barriers to its implementation, and I attempt to garner a deeper understanding of the impact this policy will have on all stakeholders.

Educational Analysis

In the book *Visible Learning*, John Hattie (2016) shared his findings from over 800 meta-analyses of key influences on student learning and achievement. Hattie assigned a point value, known as an effect size, to indicate the magnitude of the effect of each element pertaining to student achievement. As seen in Figure 28, sourced from Hattie (2016), effect sizes typically range from -0.2 to 1.2, with the average effect size of elements rated at 0.4. Any element scoring an effect size of 0.4 or greater fell in the zone of desired effects, which means that element has a significant impact on student learning and achievement (Hattie, 2016). Hattie's (2016) meta-analysis revealed the single greatest contributing factor to student success is collective teacher efficacy, with an effect size of 1.57, a score over twice that of the second- and third-highest elements on the list, feedback and classroom management, respectively (Hattie, 2016). Hattie confirmed the most impactful influence on student learning is the collective belief of teachers in their ability to affect students positively.

Figure 28

Effect Sizes



Note. The effect size of collective teacher efficacy is 1.57, which is not visible on the scale as it is well beyond the zone of desired effects.

Hattie's (2016) findings directly support the reasoning behind my policy recommendation. If a teacher's belief in themselves and each other is the greatest contributor to student learning, education leaders must build confidence in their teachers and create a truly collaborative learning community. By providing new teachers with a co-teacher and mentor, leaders pave the way for trust, accountability, and camaraderie. Leaders should provide teachers with the opportunity to be active members of a genuine professional learning community in which all members are equal contributors. Through collaboration and support, leaders cultivate early career educators into future leaders and

teacher mentors themselves, and the cycle of collective efficacy continues. Only then can educators be the prosperous, high-quality teachers their students deserve.

Economic Analysis

When I collected data from district personnel specifically pertaining to the cost of teacher turnover in the district under study, district officials were not able to provide a specific monetary amount for the cost of hiring and replacing teachers in perpetuity. They said there are many factors involved, including the recruitment pipeline used, certification requirements, ITD mentor eligibility, new hire training sessions, and employment services personnel establishing the new employee profile, which includes background checks, employee records, finance, and payroll. All of these elements are a factor in determining the cost of hiring and training a new teacher, and according to district personnel, the district under study does not measure the impact of these costs with regard to recruitment, induction, and retention of new teachers.

In 2017, researchers at the Learning Policy Institute conducted a meta-analysis of three case studies on the topic of the cost of teacher turnover. Their goal was to identify the average cost a school district incurs when hiring a new teacher, from the first step to the last, in school districts of varying populations. Under the parameters established by the Learning Policy Institute researchers, the cost of recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and training a new teacher in the district in my study is \$11,000 per teacher (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). To provide a cogent, relevant, and applicable economic analysis, I am using this figure of \$11,000 per teacher when comparing costs of the GRIT program and the district under study's current teacher induction program.

In the district under study, the ITD program allocates funding to pay a supplement

in the amount of \$1,100 to teachers serving as ITD mentors. The ITD contract requires mentors to meet with their new teachers for mentoring activities during off-contract time to be eligible for the ITD supplemental pay. That means any meetings between mentor and mentee must take place early in the morning before contract time, or late in the day after their contract time ends. This often creates hasty, inconsistent meetings or inaccurately reported timesheets. Under the GRIT program, the ITD mentor continues to be paid the \$1,100 supplement for their services, but the requirements and parameters are different. Mentors in the GRIT program receive the \$1,100 flat rate supplement, paid as an add-on to each paycheck, for the duration of the school year in which they are serving as an ITD mentor. Meeting times will not be required to be off-contract because of the new co-teaching model the program follows, which allows for most mentoring to occur during the school day. Under the GRIT program, new teachers retain their ITD mentors for their second year of teaching. Any ITD mentor serving teachers in their second year will also receive the supplement, and the off-contract time requirement for meetings will no longer be a condition.

The \$1,100 supplement paid to ITD mentors under the district's current induction program is already factored in to the \$11,000 total cost of recruiting and training a new teacher, as this is the total amount under current practices. The challenge for district leaders will be allocating funds to pay the influx of ITD mentors created by the new practice of expanding mentorship from one year to two years, with many ITD mentors serving first- and second-year teachers concurrently. Under the GRIT program, an additional \$1,100 for the second-year ITD will be added to the total cost of onboarding a new teacher, making the total cost of onboarding a new teacher with a two-year ITD

mentor \$12,100 per teacher.

Furthermore, I must consider the cost of classroom coverage for the new teacher's time spent in their mentor's classroom under the co-teaching model in the GRIT program. If the new teacher spends three class periods per day co-teaching with their mentor teacher, a substitute teacher will be needed for the new teacher's class while they are with their mentor. Alternatively, the mentor teacher may co-teach with the new teacher in the new teacher's classroom, but then a substitute will be needed to cover the mentor teacher's class. Either way, a substitute teacher will be needed to cover a classroom for at least three periods per day, per new teacher. In the district under study, this type of substitute teacher will be classified as a continuing substitute teacher because their services will be retained for 10 or more consecutive days in the same assignment. The salary for a continuing substitute teacher in the district under study is \$115 per day. With 180 student instructional days, the total cost of the substitute teacher coverage needed under the GRIT program is \$20,700 per teacher, per year.

Under my proposed parameters for the GRIT program, with the new teacher's first full year spent in a co-teaching model with their mentor teacher, the total cost of recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and training a new teacher in the GRIT program is \$32,800 per teacher for the first two years of the new teacher's career. This total includes the \$11,000 onboarding costs, which are already inclusive of the \$1,100 ITD mentor supplement for year one, the additional \$1,100 ITD mentor cost for year two, and the \$20,700 substitute teacher cost for the first year of classroom coverage. Under current teacher retention conditions and current practices for teacher induction in the district under study, the total cost of hiring and replacing a teacher over the course of two years is

\$22,000 per teacher. I derived this amount from the total cost of the onboarding process and one year of ITD mentorship, which is \$11,000 per teacher, and another total of \$11,000 for the second year, which is the cost of onboarding a new teacher in the second year to replace the outgoing new teacher who just quit at the end of their first year.

My economic analysis of my policy recommendation reveals over \$10,000 per teacher in added costs to implement the GRIT program for the first two years as it is proposed in this study. This analysis shows it is more cost-effective for the district under study to continually hire, train, and replace new teachers each year for the first two years. However, hiring and onboarding a new teacher each year under the current induction program culminates in a total cost of \$33,000 over three years. By year three, the total cost of the GRIT program of \$32,800 is \$200 less than hiring and onboarding another new teacher for a third year. My cost analysis shows that the GRIT program will require an up-front investment, but will yield cost savings in the third year of the program (see Appendix J for a cost analysis chart). In an effort to combat added up-front costs and make the GRIT program more fiscally feasible for the district under study in years one and two, I am proposing two alternative versions of the GRIT program and an economic analysis for each.

The first modified version of the GRIT program reduces the amount of time a new teacher spends in the co-teaching model with their ITD mentor. My original proposal allocated the first full year of a new teacher's career to be spent co-teaching. This first modified version allocates the first semester of the new teacher's first year to be spent co-teaching with their mentor teacher, after which the new teacher will move to a full schedule in their own classroom for the second semester, with regular observation and

feedback from their ITD mentor. This version will cut the amount of time a substitute teacher is needed in half, reducing the instructional days from 180 to 90. At the rate of \$115 per day for substitute teacher pay, the new total for the substitute teacher coverage is \$10,350. This amount, when combined with the \$11,000 onboarding costs, which are already inclusive of the \$1,100 ITD mentor supplement for year one, and the additional \$1,100 ITD mentor cost for year two, yields a total cost of \$22,450 to recruit, onboard, and train a new teacher for two years under the semester co-teaching GRIT program plan. This amount is nearly even with the \$22,000 cost of recruiting, onboarding, and training a new teacher each year for two years under the current induction program. This proposed model will cost the district almost the same amount of money, but will yield more effective teachers, higher morale and camaraderie, and increased teacher retention rates.

The second modified version of the GRIT program even further reduces the amount of time a new teacher spends in the co-teaching model with their ITD mentor. My original proposal allocated the first full year of a new teacher's career to be spent co-teaching, and the first modified version allocated the first semester. This second modified version allocates the first quarter of the new teacher's first year to be spent co-teaching with their mentor teacher, after which the new teacher will move to a full schedule in their own classroom for the remainder of the school year, with regular observation and feedback from their ITD mentor. This version will cut the amount of time a substitute teacher is needed to one quarter of the original amount, reducing the instructional days from 180 to 45. At the rate of \$115 per day for substitute teacher pay, the new total for the substitute teacher coverage is \$5,175. This amount, when combined with the \$11,000 onboarding costs, which are already inclusive of the \$1,100 ITD mentor supplement for

year one, and the additional \$1,100 ITD mentor cost for year two, yields a total cost of \$17,275 to recruit, onboard, and train a new teacher for two years under the quarter co-teaching GRIT program plan. This amount is \$4,725 less than the \$22,000 cost of recruiting, onboarding, and training a new teacher each year for two years under the current induction program. This proposed model will cost the district significantly less money, but is still capable of providing the support needed to new teachers to cultivate their instructional capacity and increase teacher retention rates.

As one final effort to make the GRIT program as feasible and practical as possible, I propose piloting the program in one or two schools before implementing it as a district-wide initiative. One or two schools could pilot one or two versions of the GRIT program with their school-based new teacher cohorts to determine the efficacy of the program and measure return on investment in the form of new teacher job satisfaction and new teacher retention. If the GRIT program is deemed successful and cost-effective from data produced at the pilot school, district officials could use this data to support the implementation of the GRIT program with all new teacher hires in the district. If the district elects to implement the GRIT program at its originally-proposed full-year duration of co-teaching, the district will incur additional costs up front in the amount of \$10,000 per teacher. However, although this will increase costs at the onset of the program, if the program is effective it will reduce the number of new teachers each year, which will reduce costs over time as retention rates increase. In the program's third year, if even one new teacher is retained for a third year, the district will recoup the \$11,000 it would normally spend on recruiting, onboarding, and training a new teacher. As new teacher retention rates continue to improve, the district will see a return on investment in

the form of cost savings, teacher retention, and student achievement. See Appendix J for an economic analysis chart containing figures for each program and a three-year total cost investment.

Social Analysis

From a social perspective, the new way of work outlined in my policy provides benefits and detriments. Pairing a first-year teacher with a mentor in a co-teaching model will increase morale for both. The new teacher will receive support and tutelage from the mentor and will be able to emulate instructional and classroom management strategies modeled by the mentor. The mentor teacher, in turn, experiences renewed purpose and a confidence boost when the mentee learns how to implement teaching strategies effectively. The mentor teacher also benefits from fresh ideas the new teacher may bring to the table from an outside perspective. The new teacher and mentor form a symbiotic relationship under the GRIT model, providing support and accountability to one another and building a bond that lasts well beyond the formative years of their partnership.

Another social benefit of the GRIT model is the camaraderie built during participation in learning walks. When teachers visit their colleagues' classrooms, the feeling of isolation abates, and true collaboration can flourish. While there can be potential resistance to learning walks from teachers who do not want people observing them for fear of judgment, in my professional experience, most teachers are enthusiastic before, during, and after the learning walk process. Learning walks provide examples and non-examples of effective teaching practices, further expanding instructional arsenals and boosting the confidence of all parties involved.

When considering my policy from a lens of social implications, I must also

acknowledge the potential social detriments. One such downside to my policy is the unfortunate reality that some veteran teachers who are qualified to serve as mentors do not exhibit the positive attitude ideal for cultivating new teachers. Some experienced teachers are burned out, jaded, or indifferent. Ideally, these teachers will not be selected to serve as mentors, but it may be difficult to find teachers who meet the mentor requirements. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure a wide variety of experienced teachers are certified to become mentors, and another reason why it is prudent to recruit fourth- and fifth-year teachers to be mentors. A new teacher enters the profession with wide-eyed enthusiasm, and leaders must take care to shield them from negativity and help them grow and flourish with positivity and optimism which they can pass down to their students.

Political Analysis

The political climate in the state under study does not encourage teachers to stay in the profession. School-based administrators work within the parameters set forth by the district office, and the district office operates under policies and laws enacted by the state department of education and legislature. Ultimately, teachers must work within the confines established by decisions made at the state level which are often politically driven. Some policies can deter aspiring teachers from joining the profession, to begin with, and some policies can cause new teachers to leave the profession once they realize the impact the policy has on their daily job. Some political policies that hinder teacher recruitment or retention include oft-ignored class size mandates, salary insufficiency and inconsistency, and performance-based pay and evaluation ratings derived from standardized testing data.

One such example that is highly politicized is the decisions mandated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this study, I have intentionally refrained from including the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in my research questions and data analysis. My purpose for omitting COVID-19 was because I desired to develop actions and strategies based on specific practices within the education profession itself that have contributed to teacher demission, rather than circumstances outside the profession that are beyond our control. In theory, COVID-19 will eventually dissipate, but the challenges with recruiting, inducting, and retaining quality teachers will remain unless education leaders analyze and re-evaluate their methods.

However, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are prevalent, and I would be remiss if I did not address how their political implications act as a deterrent to potential educators. Fickle policy decisions made by state lawmakers lead to added stress and anxiety in schools, such as the inconsistent face mask mandates in the state under study. Masks were initially recommended, then required, then no longer required for students but still required for school employees, then made optional entirely even at the outbreak of the second virus variant. This caused discord among educators, with some teachers unwilling to report to a school during a pandemic without a face mask, and others unwilling to wear the mask at all. Vaccinations, on the other hand, have been left to the personal decision of each person, creating insecurity between colleagues with conflicting political or medical perspectives. As a school-based administrator, I have done my best to protect the privacy, safety, and well-being of all teachers and staff while remaining cognizant of the varying opinions and political ideals. Nevertheless, political issues can be harmful to the morale in a school environment, cause unrest among teachers and staff,

and result in employees walking off the job.

Legal Analysis

A few years ago, my principal and I hired a man for a high school math teaching position. He had spent most of his career as a bank teller and had no educational background. However, he interviewed well, and he was enthusiastic about math, working with kids, and pursuing something he had always wanted to try. This teacher, who I will call Jim, would have been the perfect candidate for the GRIT program. Jim was thrown into a classroom for six periods a day with 25-30 high school teenagers in front of him. He had the knowledge, he had the will, but he had no idea what he had gotten himself into.

One day, a student decided she no longer wished to be in Jim's class. She asked him if she could leave, which he declined. What happened next is, in retrospect, a prime example of the failures of Jim's support system. I am not implicating any specific person or group in the school or district, but this incident is indicative of a larger issue in the education profession as a whole. When the student stood from her seat and made her way to the door to exit the classroom without permission, Jim blocked the door with his body. When she attempted to pass by him, he placed his hands on her shoulders and prevented her from moving any further. Infuriated, the student pushed him into the wall and stormed out of the classroom.

This incident is a prime example of the shortcomings and failures of a way of work that dumps new teachers into the classroom without adequate support. In Jim's testimony, he revealed that he did not intend to harm the student, and he had no ill will toward her, he was simply under the impression that students were not allowed to leave

the classroom unsupervised. He believed he would get in trouble for allowing a student to leave the room without permission, and he also knew a student roaming the hall unsupervised was a safety concern. This was his rationale for blocking the doorway, an action which, it seems, was done with good intentions. If Jim had been a member of the GRIT program, or a comparable induction program that provided direct, in-class mentorship during his first year, this predicament could have been avoided. His mentor teacher would have been in the classroom with him and could have provided guidance to him in this situation with the student.

The proper procedure would have been for Jim to let the student leave the room and then contact the discipline office to inform them that the student had left without permission. Had he done this, the conversation with the student and parent would have been entirely different, and Jim could have gone on with his day teaching his students. But no one was there to help Jim in this situation. No one was there to show him the proper way to respond to the incident. As a result, the district incurred legal fees, the students witnessed a situation that compromised the integrity of the learning environment, and they lost a new teacher who had otherwise shown promise. The co-teaching model in this policy recommendation offers a safety net for new teachers which allows for mistakes and provides the teacher with the opportunity to learn and grow from them.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

In the medical field, new physicians take an oath of ethics known as the Hippocratic Oath. This oath binds physicians to specific ethical standards, requiring them to swear to uphold altruistic principles and maintain the utmost respect and care for

human life. While there is no formal oath taken by teachers in the education profession, educators are held to a high moral standard and there are guiding principles to which they must adhere. These core values, known as the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession, provide guidance to the educator in the same way the Hippocratic Oath guides physicians.

One of the more prominent principles states, “The educator’s primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student’s potential. The educator will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity” (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). In the same way the Hippocratic Oath prioritizes the protection and care of human lives, this guiding principle places the success, safety, and well-being of the student above all else. It is the moral and ethical duty of educators to do all they can to ensure the success of students. My policy recommendation will enact new teacher induction and retention practices that will increase teacher efficacy on all fronts. Teacher morale, skill, and capacity for success will improve, providing students with a safe, engaging, enriching learning environment that will empower them to succeed. It is education leaders’ responsibility to protect teachers and students and cultivate their personal and professional growth, contributing to the fulfillment of educators’ own version of the Hippocratic Oath. Student learning first, always, which is impacted most by none other than the teacher.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

The policy I am advocating will improve relationships within all stakeholder groups. Teachers will feel a true sense of belonging to a professional learning community

where they will learn and grow together. Feelings of isolation and solo operation will be reduced, replaced by a collaborative approach to all aspects of the classroom environment. Teachers will share ideas and feedback with one another, working to grow their craft under a common vision.

Community relationships will also be revitalized because parents and community members will see the benefits of the increased efforts to effectively train and retain teachers. Student learning will improve, teacher morale will increase, and the news of these improved conditions will trickle out into the community. Parents will see their students succeed academically and socially under the guidance of a properly trained and supported teacher, which will inspire support and involvement from the parents. Furthermore, the public image of the teaching profession will be restored, fostering increased interest in the teaching profession, and leading to more candidates for teaching positions. When community stakeholders see earnest efforts to improve teacher efficacy and student learning, they will be more inclined to support and advocate for the profession. This policy, enacted carefully and with fidelity, could break the current cycle of teacher demission and create a sustainable pipeline of happy, effective educators.

Conclusion

When considering the myriad of decisions to be made, the implications of each, and the stakeholder buy-in needed to enact this policy, it is easy to become mired in the barriers and limitations of the process. Contemplating this, I am reminded of a child's first swimming lesson. The coach walks the child into the shallow end of the pool one step at a time, embracing and supporting the child as they enter the water together. The coach demonstrates skills and techniques to the child, watching closely and providing

feedback as the child practices what they have just learned. Only after the consistent demonstration of mastery of swimming abilities is the child gradually released by the coach to swim on their own. In education, leaders are pushing aspiring educators into the deep end of the pool with no life preserver. Unless leaders become effective coaches and help new teachers learn to swim, they will inevitably drown, and no one else will want to get in the pool.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

In this study, I analyzed early career educator experiences and the impact of teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in one school district. In the past few years as a school-based administrator, I have worked closely with the school's new teacher cohort each year, providing support to our early career educators and helping them grow their craft. I became increasingly aware of the alarming rate at which new teachers quit within their first three years, and each time they would leave, I wished I could have done something more to keep them. I chose to focus my study on the experiences of new teachers because I sought to understand how their experiences with recruitment, induction, and retention contributed to job preparedness and satisfaction. I wanted to know what aspects of the job contributed to their uncertainty about remaining in the profession, and what I could do to support them through these challenges to help them grow into happy, successful teachers.

Discussion

The purpose of my study was to analyze the context, conditions, competencies, and culture surrounding the experiences of new teachers in their first three years in the profession, and to understand how these experiences were contributing to teacher demission. My ultimate goal was to contribute to the mitigation of teacher demission by learning how to keep teachers supported, happy, and thriving in the classroom. To accomplish this, I analyzed new teacher recruitment initiatives, induction programs, and retention efforts in the district under study and sought to understand how these practices were supporting new teachers and contributing to their desire to remain in the profession.

As I consider the ways in which this process has addressed my purpose, I return to

the goals I established at the onset of this study. My first goal was to analyze current and former early career educator experiences in one school district and understand the effects of those experiences. In pursuit of this goal, I surveyed and interviewed current early career educators in their first three years in the profession, as well as former early career educators who left the profession in their first three years. I discovered varying teacher experiences among participants, but one prominently recurring theme I found in my data analysis was the feeling of isolation these teachers all experienced. They were each placed in a classroom on their own from day one, with support only available before or after school rather than during crucial student contact time. To their further dismay, they were only eligible for a mentor during their first year as a teacher. These experiences compounded, causing new teachers to feel detached from a unified learning community, overwhelmed by the workload, and ill-prepared for students, culminating in premature burnout and uncertainty of their intention to remain in the profession.

My second goal was to analyze teacher recruitment, induction, and retention practices in one school district and the impact of these practices on early career educators. In pursuit of this goal, I surveyed and interviewed district personnel whose job duties pertained to recruitment, induction, and retention. My analysis of these elements in the district under study revealed practices that were impactful to new teachers, some positively, some negatively. Practices positively impacting new teachers included the Instructional Talent Developer (ITD) mentoring program, the frequent and ongoing professional development opportunities offered by district support personnel, and the collaboration between district- and school-based leaders to support new teachers. Practices negatively impacting new teachers included the restriction of the ITD mentor to

year one only, the placement of first-year teachers in a classroom on their own from day one, and the overlapping of district leadership in multiple areas pertaining to new teacher recruitment, induction, and retention, resulting in inconsistent policies and practices.

When considering the implications of my findings pertaining to this goal, I am compelled to acknowledge the efforts of school and district leaders in the district under study. Although I was able to generate ideas, strategies, and actions for improvement after analyzing their programs and initiatives, I also observed many practices in place that my research has proven to make a difference. District leaders responsible for teacher recruitment had implemented a myriad of projects designed to attract quality teachers to the district, including collaborative job fairs with other county agencies, partnerships with local businesses, a grow-your-own initiative that cultivated high school students who aspired to be educators, and a strong social media presence. District leaders responsible for teacher induction worked closely with school-based leaders, providing district-based training and support while also empowering school-based leaders with the tools and training needed to support new teachers at the school level. Perhaps most noteworthy is the level of care and dedication district leaders in the district under study exhibited, particularly those who participated in this study. At the conclusion of my study, I was invited to a teacher intern orientation in the district under study, during which I observed the district leaders' commitment to cultivating and supporting new teachers. Based on my research, analysis, and professional experience, it was evident that these aspiring educators were in good hands in the district under study.

My third goal was to offer data-driven, actionable suggestions to fortify new teacher support practices and increase teacher retention in the district under study.

Through data collection, I was able to establish the needs of the district under study and develop policy recommendations based on these needs. In pursuit of this goal, I used the qualitative data I gathered in my surveys and interviews, coupled with my research in this study and my own professional experience, to devise strategies and actions to address needs in the district under study. I offered a policy recommendation based on these strategies and actions.

The key components of my policy recommendations include an expansion of the current teacher induction program, district-wide learning walks for all early career educators, and the recruitment of fourth- and fifth-year teachers to serve as mentors for new teachers. I am advocating for the development of a new teacher induction program based on the gradual release model, which places first-year teachers in classrooms with their mentor teachers rather than being dumped into a classroom on their own right from the start, reducing feelings of isolation and enabling collaboration. I am proposing that all early career educators in the district under study participate in learning walks with their mentor and other teachers, which will provide effective modeling of instructional strategies and classroom management techniques for new teachers to emulate in their own classrooms. I am a proponent of empowering teacher leaders with the ability to help their colleagues be successful, which includes recruiting fourth- and fifth-year teachers to serve as mentors to new teachers, providing guidance and direction as they navigate the intricacies of being a teacher. I offer these suggestions with confidence in their ability to fortify new teacher support practices and increase new teachers' job satisfaction and desire to remain in the profession.

Leadership Lessons

Ernest Hemingway once said, “There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self.” When contemplating the leadership lessons I have learned in this process, this quote represents the lesson that has resonated the most: I must always strive to be better than I was before. Any changes I make, whether leadership decisions or policy revisions, must be based on what I need to accomplish to get from where I am to where I need to be. Just as teachers monitor student progress through formative assessment, educational leaders must monitor the progress of their initiatives by conducting frequent and ongoing self-assessments to identify needs and make any necessary course corrections. Progress is the goal, not perfection. I can only hope that educators will consistently monitor their own progress, adjust as needed, and continue to look inward along the way.

When I began devising a plan for policy recommendations in this study, my ideas were daunting. The ideas seemed far-fetched and outside the realm of possibility, which made them feel futile and insignificant. I almost abandoned my plan in favor of creating another one with fewer obstacles and an easier path to implementation. However, another leadership lesson I have learned from this study is I must not be afraid of change just because it may seem daunting or discouraging. I know, based on research, data collection, and professional experience, that my plan is both viable and beneficial. If I am ever in a position to implement it, I will be challenged and my resolve will be tested, but because of this leadership lesson I know I will find a way to make it happen as long as it is in the best interest of students and all other stakeholders.

Another leadership lesson I garnered from this study was the reminder that I must

always presume good intentions. Education is a people business. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, school support staff, and community members are all human beings, and human beings are not perfect. People have flaws, they make mistakes, and everyone has the capacity to learn and grow from these mistakes. Members of society developed the education system to work toward the same goal of cultivating and developing children into effective citizens, and it is important for all stakeholders to remember that. As a school leader with the capacity to enact change, I hope always to presume good intentions when analyzing current practices and offering suggestions for improvement. I wish to be the kind of leader who sees the good in people and helps them see the good in themselves as they learn and grow.

Conclusion

As I pause for reflection at the conclusion of this study, I recall a conversation I had with one of the study participants during my data collection. She was an early career teacher in her third year; weary, but resilient, refusing to relent on her optimism. She and I were laughing together as we shared stories of past students, both of us hoping their memory of us brought a smile to their faces as well. We shared stories of our past teachers, whom we remember so vividly, and the impactful differences they made in our lives that resonate to this day. Then, as we concluded our interview session, she made one final remark that lingers in my mind. She said, "I love the kids. They are wonderful. If I could just teach my kids without being responsible for so many other things, I would never think of leaving." This is the heart of what it means to be a teacher, and the true sign of the difference a teacher can make in the lives of students for generations to come.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Current Early Career Educator Survey Questions

Appendix B: Current Early Career Educator Interview Questions

Appendix C: Former Early Career Educator Survey Questions

Appendix D: Former Early Career Educator Interview Questions

Appendix E: District Personnel Survey Questions

Appendix F: District Personnel Interview Questions

Appendix G: As-Is 4Cs Analysis Chart

Appendix H: To-Be 4Cs Analysis Chart

Appendix I: Strategies and Actions Chart

Appendix J: Economic Analysis Chart

Appendix A: Current Early Career Educator Survey Questions

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please respond to the questions and/or prompts below.

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

- 1) I felt informed and supported during the hiring process.
- 2) The initial orientation training I received upon entering the education field was sufficient, relevant, and timely.
- 3) The ongoing training and professional development I am receiving as an early career educator is sufficient, relevant, timely, and provides opportunities for professional growth.
- 4) I feel adequately supported and mentored as an early career educator by my school-based leaders and peers.
- 5) I feel adequately supported and mentored as an early career educator by leaders in the district office.
- 6) Teaching is turning out to be what I expected and what I hoped it would be.

Short Answer – Please respond to the following questions and/or prompts:

- 7) What has been most helpful to you as an early career educator? What improvements could be made to the support programs for early career educators?
- 8) Do you plan to remain in the teaching profession? Why or why not?
- 9) Please share any further thoughts or feelings about your experiences as an early career educator.

Indicate Yes or No:

- 10) Would you be willing to participate in a brief interview (approximately 20 minutes) with the researcher about your experiences as an early career educator?

Appendix B: Current Early Career Educator Interview Questions

- 1) Why did you choose to become a teacher?
- 2) Describe the process you followed to become an educator (including but not limited to education, certification, career trajectory, etc.).
- 3) Describe your induction process as an early career educator (including but not limited to trainings, professional development, district-based and school-based support, mentorships, etc.).
- 4) Explain the positive impacts the support and training you have received has had on your career thus far, and areas in need of improvement (please be specific).
- 5) Explain how you are feeling now as an early career educator. Do you feel supported? Do you plan to remain in the profession? Do you still want to be a teacher? If so, what contributes to your desire to continue?
- 6) Please share any additional thoughts or feelings about your experiences as an early career educator.

Appendix C: Former Early Career Educator Survey Questions

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please respond to the questions and/or prompts below.

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

- 1) I felt informed and supported during the hiring process.
- 2) The initial orientation training I received upon entering the education field was sufficient, relevant, and timely.
- 3) The subsequent training and professional development I received as an early career educator was sufficient, relevant, timely, and provided opportunities for professional growth.
- 4) I felt adequately supported and mentored as an early career educator by my school-based leaders and peers.
- 5) I felt adequately supported and mentored as an early career educator by leaders in the district office.
- 6) Teaching turned out to be what I expected and what I hoped it would be.

Short Answer – Please respond to the following questions and/or prompts:

- 7) What was most helpful to you as an early career educator? What improvements could be made to the support programs for early career educators?
- 8) Why did you choose to leave the teaching profession?
- 9) Please share any further thoughts or feelings about your experiences as an early career educator.

Indicate Yes or No:

- 10) Would you be willing to participate in a brief interview (approximately 20 minutes) with the researcher about your experiences as an early career educator?

Appendix D: Former Early Career Educator Interview Questions

- 1) Why did you choose to become a teacher?
- 2) Describe the process you followed to become an educator (including but not limited to education, certification, career trajectory, etc.).
- 3) Describe your induction process as an early career educator (including but not limited to trainings, professional development, district-based and school-based support, mentorships, etc.).
- 4) Explain the positive and negative impacts the support and training you received had on your career during your time as a teacher, and areas that could have been improved (please be specific).
- 5) What contributed to your departure from the teaching profession? What factors could have encouraged you to remain in the profession had they been different?
- 6) Please share any additional thoughts or feelings about your experiences as an early career educator.

Appendix E: District Personnel Survey Questions

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please respond to the questions and/or prompts below.

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

- 1) Current teacher recruitment efforts generally yield qualified candidates to fill teacher vacancies.
- 2) The initial orientation training new teachers receive upon entering the education field is sufficient, relevant, and timely.
- 3) The ongoing training and professional development early career educators receive is sufficient, relevant, timely, and provides opportunities for professional growth.
- 4) Early career educators are adequately supported and mentored by school-based leaders and peers.
- 5) Early career educators are adequately supported and mentored by leaders in the district office.
- 6) New teachers discover teaching to be what they expected and what they hoped it would be.

Short Answer – Please respond to the following questions and/or prompts:

- 7) What induction practice is most helpful to early career educators? What improvements could be made to the support programs for early career educators?
- 8) In your experience supporting early career educators, what are common motives for leaving the teaching profession?
- 9) Please share any additional thoughts or information pertaining to your experiences with recruitment, induction, and retention practices in your school district.

Indicate Yes or No:

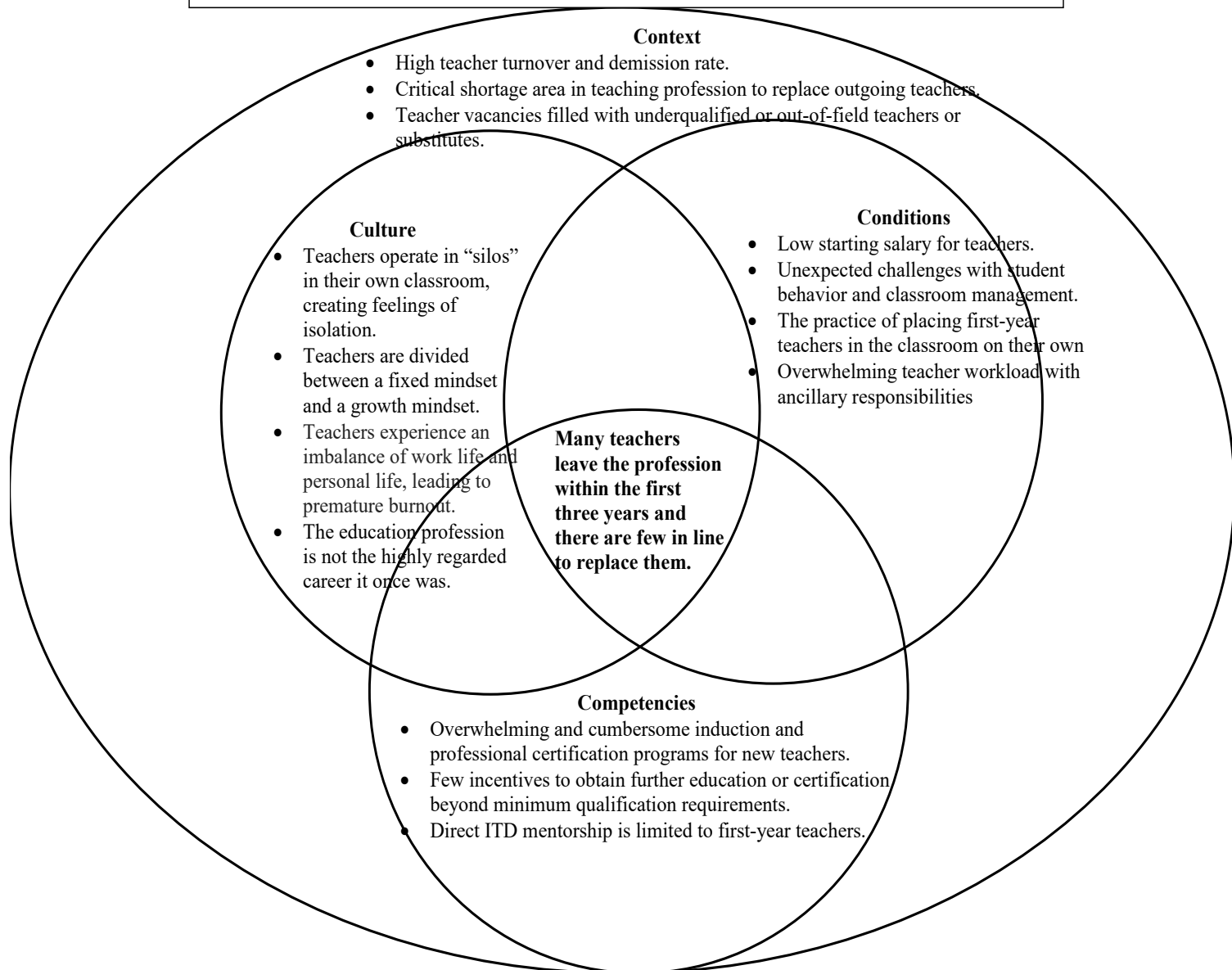
- 10) Would you be willing to participate in a brief interview (approximately 20 minutes) with the researcher about your experiences with teacher recruitment, induction, and retention?

Appendix F: District Personnel Interview Questions

- 1) What are the current practices for recruiting teachers in your school district?
- 2) What does the current new teacher induction program entail?
- 3) How are early career educators supported during their first three years of teaching?
- 4) What support practices for early career educators have proven effective? What practices could be improved, and how?
- 5) What retention efforts are in place to encourage early career educators to remain in the profession?
- 6) Please share any additional thoughts or information pertaining to recruitment, induction, and retention practices in your school district.

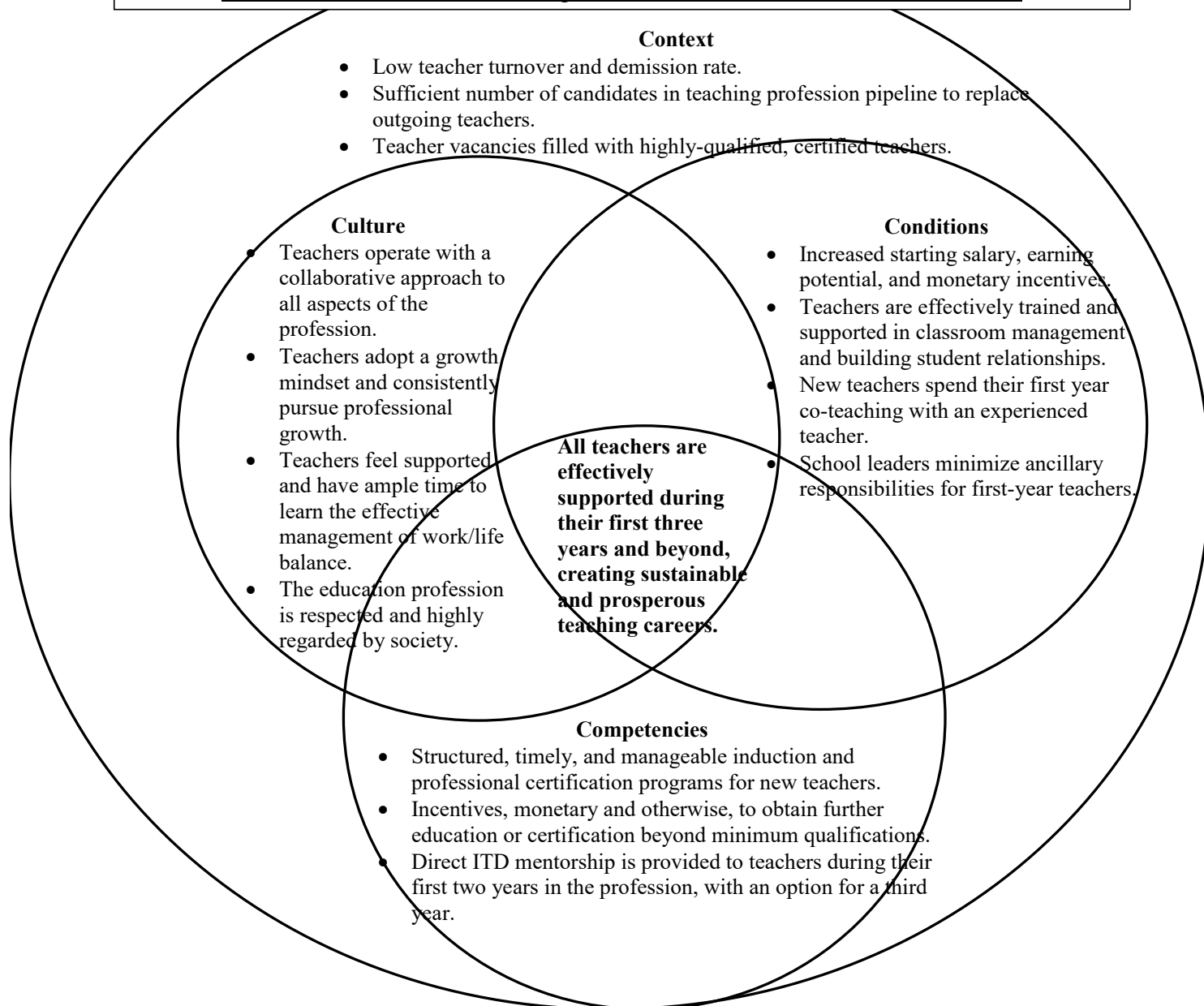
Appendix G: As-Is 4Cs Analysis Chart

As-Is 4Cs Analysis for An Analysis of Early Career Educator Experiences and the Impact of Teacher Recruitment Initiatives, Induction Programs, and Retention Efforts in One School District



Appendix H: To-Be 4Cs Analysis Chart

To-Be 4Cs Analysis for An Analysis of Early Career Educator Experiences and the Impact of Teacher Recruitment Initiatives, Induction Programs, and Retention Efforts in One School District



Appendix I: Strategies and Actions Chart

Strategies	Actions
Create a sense of urgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify areas of focus for the change initiative. ● Appoint “champions” to serve as leaders of change in each area of focus.
Build a guiding coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assign roles of champions within each area of focus. ● Appoint members from each stakeholder group to serve as members of the guiding coalition.
Form a strategic vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the goal and purpose of the change initiative. ● Create a vision statement which enables coalition members to share the vision ● Ensure all voices are heard and all stakeholder groups are represented when developing the vision.
Enlist a volunteer army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Champions will host roundtable listening sessions with each stakeholder group. ● Volunteers from each stakeholder group will serve as liaisons between the coalition and the stakeholder group they represent. ● Each group will have a voice in the decision-making process.
Enable action by removing barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue direct ITD mentorship of new teachers into their second year. ● Plan and implement district-wide learning walks for all early career educators. ● Recruit fourth- and fifth-year teachers to serve as mentors for new teachers.
Generate short-term wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilize school-based instructional coaches to help new teachers step out of their comfort zone, maintain open lines of communication, and showcase new teacher accomplishments.
Sustain Acceleration and Institute Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure progress of the change initiative is communicated clearly. ● Conduct frequent and ongoing needs assessments with new teachers. ● Conduct frequent and ongoing assessments of efficacy with the guiding coalition. ● Adjust the change initiative as needed.

Appendix J: Economic Analysis Chart

Program Cost Analysis				
Program	Year One Cost (per Teacher)	Year Two Cost (per Teacher)	Total Program Cost (per Teacher)	Difference in Cost (per Teacher)
Current ITD Program	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$22,000	N/A
GRIT Program: Full Year Co-Teaching	\$31,700	\$1,100	\$32,800	+ \$10,800
GRIT Program: Semester Co-Teaching	\$21,350	\$1,100	\$22,450	+ \$450
GRIT Program: Quarter Co-Teaching	\$16,175	\$1,100	\$17,275	- \$4,725
Three Year Cost Trajectory				
Program	Year One Cost	Year Two Cost	Year Three Cost	Three Year Total
Current ITD Program	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$11,000	\$33,000
GRIT Program: Full Year Co-Teaching	\$31,700	\$1,100	\$0 (Teacher Retained)	\$32,800
GRIT Program: Semester Co-Teaching	\$21,350	\$1,100	\$0 (Teacher Retained)	\$22,450
GRIT Program: Quarter Co-Teaching	\$16,175	\$1,100	\$0 (Teacher Retained)	\$17,275