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**Retention of Quality Teachers
in Small School Districts**

By

Donald E. Smith

1753 -

Field Experience

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Specialist in Educational Administration

in the Graduate School, Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, Illinois

1997

**I Hereby Recommend this Field Experience Be Accepted as
Fulfilling this Part of the Graduate Degree Cited Above.**

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Date
4/1/98
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Abstract

The retention of quality teachers in small school districts is a challenge for superintendents. The continual loss of quality teachers can be damaging to the overall success of the small district. In order to avert the loss, superintendents need to be made aware of strategies that will assist in retaining quality teachers. The purposes of this study were to determine the frequency of quality teachers leaving small school districts and then to identify strategies that superintendents felt were useful in averting the loss.

The study was conducted during the summer of 1997. Superintendents of unit school districts with 1000 students or less were surveyed. Forty-three unit districts which lay south of Interstate 70 in south central Illinois were identified for the study. Responses were received from 38 of the 43 superintendents resulting in a response rate of 88%.

The specific research questions addressed by this study were:

1. What is the frequency of quality teachers leaving small districts to accept teaching positions in larger school districts.?
2. What do superintendents perceive as the reason(s) for the departure of quality teachers?
3. What strategies have been successfully employed by administrators to retain quality teachers?

Results showed that a retention problem existed with 71% of the superintendents responding that at least one quality teacher had resigned over a three year period. The reason most identified for the departure was low salary and fringe benefits (66%). Family considerations (11%) and leaving education (8%) were second and third as reasons for quality teachers resigning.

Retention strategies were then identified by superintendents. The four most common methods of retention were found to be: (a) better salary; (b) faculty collegiality; (c) small classes; (d) self direction.

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Chapter 1

Overview of the Problem

The school superintendent faces a variety of tasks in the operation of a school district. In the researcher's opinion, the challenge is magnified in smaller districts due to the small size of the administrative team. The skills of a superintendent in a small district are thinly spread across many areas such as finance, facilities, grant applications, food service, transportation, curriculum, and personnel management. Of these, the greatest challenge may be personnel. The proper management of personnel is a daily challenge. The small district superintendent must depend upon skills and traits developed through experience and training. There is no team of assistant superintendents to turn to for deliberation and discussion.

Maintaining a competent and skilled teaching staff is an annual challenge. This is true not only in recruiting new teachers but also in preventing the loss of quality teachers. It is often said in sports that building a winning team is tough, but maintaining the excellence year after year is even more difficult. This is also true in education. Superintendents must constantly work to keep the quality of education within their districts at high levels.

Background

The loss of a quality teacher may have far reaching negative effects on a small school. In a small school one teacher may teach possibly 50 to 75% of the courses offered in a subject area. The departure of this person impacts immediately upon standardized test scores and student preparation for higher education (Bull & Hyle, 1989). This quality teacher is considered to be invaluable in the success of the school. The researcher has experienced this as a principal, noting lower standardized test scores, lower ACT scores,

and lower student morale when a quality teacher has resigned. Recovery from the loss of this teacher may be long-term due to a replacement with little experience and the time necessary to train the new person.

The general perception is that quality teachers left for a higher salary. Yet in many school districts these quality teachers will remain their entire careers. The factors behind each of these scenarios were worthy of study.

Statement of the Problem

The problems addressed by this study were (a) the frequency of the departure of quality teachers from small school districts, and (b) the search for strategies used by small school districts to prevent the loss of quality teachers.

The results of this study may provide administrators with insight regarding the frequency of the resignation of quality teachers. With this information, administrators can ascertain if the schools they direct are experiencing normal turnover in teaching staff. Administrators will also be given strategies utilized by districts to retain teachers who are offering significant contributions to a school. These administrators can incorporate these successful strategies into programs designed to retain quality teachers.

This study should be beneficial to the leaders of any school district. Although it was conducted for smaller districts, the findings should assist any district which attempts to retain quality teachers. An administrator may invest many hours, either through personal contacts or inservice training, in the development of a teacher. Identifying strategies to retain teachers and to avoid the hours invested in hiring and training new employees can be helpful to all school administrators.

It is the responsibility of school administrators to see that the children of the district receive a quality education. This means keeping quality teachers in positions where they

have the greatest impact on student success. Management strategies need to be identified which will lead to satisfied teachers. The successful use of these strategies can make the career of the administrator less stressful due to better control over staff morale. Many administrators may not have considered the burden of attempting to replace a teacher who has a positive impact upon a school. Working with new teachers is time consuming and difficult for administrators. Hindsight may reveal that it would have been wiser to adjust practices or procedures to prevent the loss of the quality teacher.

Research Questions

The specific research questions addressed by this study were:

1. What is the frequency of quality teachers leaving small districts to accept teaching positions in larger school districts?
2. What do superintendents perceive as the reason(s) for the departure of quality teachers?
3. What strategies have been successfully employed by administrators to retain quality teachers?

Assumptions

Following are assumptions of this study:

1. Administrators have knowledge of those teachers who are having a positive impact on student achievement.
2. Teachers leave their present positions for a variety of reasons which fall under the categories of economic, psychological, or sociological.
3. Administrators have knowledge as to the reason for the resignation of teachers within the school district.

Limitations

The factors placed outside the scope of the study were as follows:

1. Reasons for the resignations were not obtained from teachers who resigned. This was due to the difficulty in identifying and surveying those who had recently changed positions.
2. This study did not focus on strategies useful in keeping all teachers in their present positions. The primary focus was keeping quality teachers in their present positions.
3. This study did not deal with the relationship between teacher retention and hometown location of a teacher. Examinations could be made to determine who is most likely to remain with a school district. However, this type of study would be a tremendous undertaking due to the difficulty in obtaining a representative sample.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were placed upon the study:

1. Only unit districts were surveyed.
2. Only districts with less than 1,000 students were surveyed.
3. Only school districts located south of I-70 were surveyed.
4. Surveys were sent to superintendents only.

Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions are used for this study:

Teacher retention. The process of keeping a teacher in his/her present position.

Quality teacher. A teacher who, in the opinion of the school administrator, has had a strong positive impact upon the educational program of a school or district.

Small school district. A public school district with less than 1,000 students in grades K-12.

Successful program. A unit of study which is exceeding norms and expectations of school administrators as observed by high classroom achievement and standardized test scores.

Staff morale. The general feeling of well being (or lack of) held by a teaching staff.

Quality education. An education which provides an opportunity for a student to exceed standard or average.

Standardized tests. Achievement tests, such as the IGAP or ACT, which measure the overall performance, or capacity for performance, of students.

Chapter 2

Rationale, Review of Related Literature and Research

Rationale

The challenge of keeping quality people within an organization is a problem facing all leaders. The mix of compensation, autonomy, benefits, challenging tasks, and other factors will lead to a retention scenario which is an asset or a detriment to the success of the enterprise. The small school district is an institution that can be severely impacted by a recurring loss of quality teachers due to so few teachers on staff. One teacher may comprise an entire grade level or a majority of a department. The possibility of poor test results and recurring staff development needs may result when quality teachers decide to leave the district.

This study was undertaken to identify the frequency of quality teachers resigning from small school districts. It further sought to ascertain the perceived reason for the loss and provide strategies which have been successfully used to prevent the turnover of quality teachers. With this information, superintendents of small districts should be able to prepare for and possibly prevent the resignation of key teachers within the districts they lead.

Review of Related Literature

Teacher retention has often been studied with greatest interest during times of a teacher shortage. The problem is more intense in rural settings where schools face more difficulty in recruiting and maintaining well-trained teachers (Mathes & Carlson, 1987). Historically, it has been felt that poor salary is a primary reason for teachers exiting the profession (Goodlad, 1984). This commonly-held belief has been discussed often. Rosenholtz (1989) stated that an environment which allows for

professional discretion bolsters teachers' motivation, commitment, and confidence and leads to greater teacher retention. Mathes and Carlson (1987) also identified a sense of community support as an additional important factor in greater retention. In their summary, Mathes and Carlson (1987) stated that teachers are best retained with a professional working environment and a commitment to professionalism.

The problem of teacher retention in small schools is usually also a recruitment problem. Hapt (1990) stated that a complement of a good teacher recruitment program is the retention of competent, new teachers. The schools facing the greatest difficulty securing and retaining qualified and well-trained teachers are in small communities (Mathes & Carlson, 1987). Brim and Hanson (1980) noted that the benefits of job status, a good family environment, and slow-paced surroundings should be used to recruit new teachers.

Review of Related Research

Several researchers have studied factors which lead to the poor retention of teachers. Approximately 50% of beginning teachers leave the profession within seven years (Hawley, 1986). There are many factors which have been identified as contributing to this situation. Hill (1995) cited the lack of challenge, lack of control, and no sense of belonging as three primary reasons leading to teacher resignations. Schlecty and Vance (1981) found lack of shared decision making and bureaucratic management structures as direct causes of poor teacher retention. Chapman (1983) summarized past research as having identified four variables related to poor teacher retention—incompatible personal characteristics, lack of training and early teaching experience, deficiency of professional and social integration into teaching, and insufficient career satisfaction. Bloland and Selby (1980) found an association

between the lack of administrative support and increased teacher attrition. Schwab and Iwaniccki (1982) found conflict and ambiguous roles as contributors to burn-out among teachers. Large student/teacher ratio has also negatively affected teacher retention (Thoebald, 1990). Salary, autonomy, and opportunities to contribute to decision making were found to be important to teachers leaving the profession (Chapman & Hutcheson, 1982). Seifert and Kurtz (as cited by Bull & Hyle, 1989) found that rural teachers list salary and fringe benefits as major reasons for considering a job change. Other identified factors affecting small or rural school teacher retention are isolation (Williams & Cross, 1985), culture adaptation (Swift, 1984), and poor supervisors (Seifert & Kurtz, 1989).

Several studies have sought causes for greater teacher retention. Billingsley and Cross (1991) identified support from a leader, work involvement, and low levels of role conflict and stress as reasons for teachers being satisfied with their jobs and therefore remaining. Billingsley (1993) suggested the four major factors that influence teachers' career decisions are professional qualifications, work conditions and rewards, employability, and commitment. He also found that teachers who stay in teaching are more satisfied with their teacher preparation programs than those who left. Metzke (as cited in Billingsley & Cross, 1991) found a correlation between administrative support and a teacher remaining in teaching. Teachers experiencing support from the principal are less stressed, more committed, and more satisfied with their jobs (Billingsley & Cross, 1991). In a study of teachers remaining in the profession, it was found that first time teaching positions were viewed as positive experiences (Chapman & Green, 1986). Chapman and Hutcheson (1982) found that teachers remaining in teaching were more oriented toward interpersonal rewards such as approval by

supervisors, family, and friends. Lastly, teachers possessing graduate degrees were retained in jobs longer than those at the bachelor's level (Adams & Dial, 1994).

It would be difficult to draw any general conclusions regarding teacher attrition. Grissmer and Kirby (1987) described research up to that point as "sporadic and piecemeal" (p.18). Chapman and Green (1986) concluded that research into teacher retention had been characterized by inconsistent and sometimes contradictory findings. Billingsley (1993) suggested caution in developing teacher retention strategies due to the lack of a solid knowledge base about teachers' career decisions. Possible interventions would include attempts to modify the teachers' work environment, such as administrative support and role demands. Workplace environments could also be restructured to give teachers more responsibility and autonomy (Hawley, 1986). In addition, the attention administrators give to assuring high quality professional experiences for new teachers may have lasting impacts on their career development (Chapman & Green, 1986).

To avoid retention problems in small schools, Bull and Hyle (1989) suggested that administrators look for candidates who would accept the culture, adapt to different living conditions, and develop local and long distance support systems. Swift (1984) identified the positive attributes of small classes, less red tape, and fewer discipline problems that should be relayed to potential teaching candidates. A New York State School Board Association study (1988) indicated other factors which have been identified for successful teacher retention in rural schools. They include having existing family in the area, community friendliness, fewer discipline problems, faculty collegiality, and positive administrative support. Bull and Hyle (1989) identified three components of retention strategies including community/social environment, retention

procedures, and incentives. Being raised in or consciously socialized to rural areas has been identified as an integral factor in teacher retention (Bull & Hyle, 1989).

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

General Design of the Study

A survey on teacher retention was developed by the researcher to ascertain information related to the resignation of quality teachers as well as to identify strategies which have proven successful in retaining quality teachers. These strategies served as the independent variables. The retention of quality teachers served as the dependent variable. The survey was designed to provide data to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the frequency of quality teachers leaving small districts to accept teaching positions in larger districts?
2. What do superintendents perceive as the reason(s) for the departure of quality teachers?
3. What strategies have been successfully employed by administrators to retain quality teachers?

Sample and Population

The population studied was superintendents of unit school districts with enrollments of 1,000 or less. The sample was limited to unit districts south of Interstate 70 in south central Illinois. The 1996 Directory of Illinois Schools was used to identify these districts. This resulted in 43 superintendents being surveyed representing all Illinois districts meeting the criteria of 1,000 students or less and south of Interstate 70.

Data Collection and Survey

A cover letter and survey were designed by the researcher. The questions for the teacher retention survey were developed based on the researcher's personal experiences as an administrator, as well as issues expressed to him by colleagues regarding the loss of

quality teachers. The teacher retention survey was field tested at a regional meeting of principals and superintendents in March of 1997. Modifications were made to ensure reliability. A cover letter (see Appendix A) and survey (see Appendix B) were sent along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to each superintendent within the population. A follow-up letter (see Appendix C) and a duplicate survey were mailed approximately three weeks later to superintendents not responding. The survey gathered the following data to evaluate each of the research questions:

1. Superintendents were asked to identify their district size as less than 250 students, 251 to 500 students, or 501 to 1000 students. This survey item (#1) provided basic information regarding school size.

2. Superintendents were asked how many teachers are employed in the district. This survey item (#2) provided data to determine the percentage of teachers who left the district.

3. Superintendents were asked how often a quality teacher resigned to accept a position in a larger school district. The choices were: one teacher per year, one teacher every 2 years, one teacher every 3 years, or specifically state other situations. This survey item (#3) provided data to answer Research Question 1.

4. Superintendents were asked to rank from 5 (least important reason) to 1 (most important reason) for the teacher resignation. The choices were: salary and fringe benefits too low, desire for less student diversity, class size too large, left the field of education, search for better facilities, too many discipline problems, family considerations, and unknown. This survey item (#4) provided data to answer Research Question 2.

5. Superintendents were then asked to indicate if any of the following strategies were useful in preventing quality teachers from resigning: autonomy, faculty collegiality, improved funding, reduction of teaching preparations, smaller classes, improvement in extra curricular duties, salary improvement, or specifically stated other reasons This survey item (#5) provided data to answer Research Question 3..

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data collected for each research question. The analyses were presented by frequencies and percentages.

Chapter 4

Results of the Study

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What is the frequency of quality teachers leaving small districts to accept teaching positions in larger school districts?
2. What do superintendents perceive as the reason(s) for the departure of quality teachers?
3. What strategies have been successfully employed by administrators to retain quality teachers?

The data for each research question are presented in the following tables and are highlighted in the text.

Overview

Of the 43 surveys sent, 38 (88%) were completed and returned. Of the 38 surveys completed, 2 (5%) were from districts with enrollments of less than 250; 12 (32%) were from districts with enrollments between 250 and 500; and 24 (63 %) were from districts with enrollments between 500 and 1,000.

Results for Research Question 1

Tables 1 and 2 contain the responses to Research Question 1 regarding the frequency of quality teachers leaving a small district to accept a teaching position in a larger school district. Table 1 represents the summation of all responses. It further identifies data for districts of 500 or fewer students and 501 to 1000 students. As shown in Table 1, the departure of quality teachers from a district of 1000 students or less to a larger nearby district occurred at least 71% of the time over a three year period. Within this statistic,

18% of districts lose a quality teacher every year, 8% every two years, and 45% every three years.

Table 1

Frequency of Quality Teacher Resignations in Unit School Districts of Less Than 1000

Students

Resignations	Less than 500		501 to 1000		Total responses	
	students		students			
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
At least one resignation per year	3	22%	4	16%	7	18%
At least one resignation every two years	1	7%	1	8%	3	8%
At least one resignation every three years	8	57%	9	38%	17	45%
Other	2	14%	9	38%	11	29%

Also indicated in Table 1 are data concerning the departure of quality teachers in unit districts of less than 500 students. Eighty-six percent of respondents experienced the loss of a quality teacher at least once every three years. For districts with 501 to 1000

students, 62% of respondents indicated a quality teacher resignation at least once every 3 years.

Table 2 examines teacher departure by comparing this with the number of teachers employed by the district. School district size is divided into categories of 35 teachers or less (12 teachers in this group), 36 to 45 teachers (12 teachers in this group), and more than 46 teachers (14 teachers in this group). This depiction generally supports the percentages found in Table 1. Only 17% of districts with less than 35 teachers reported no quality teacher resignations within at least a three year period. Thirty four percent of districts with 36 to 45 teachers experienced no quality teacher departure within the three year reporting frame. Similarly, 36% of districts with 46 teachers or greater reported no departures at least once within the three year period.

Results for Research Question 2

The responses to Research Question 2 are contained in Table 3. This table shows the superintendents' perception regarding the reason(s) for the departure of quality teachers. The most listed reason for the departure was salary and fringe benefits which are too low. This was selected by 66% of the respondents. The second highest response at 11% was family considerations. Following this at 8% was leaving the field of education, and at 7% was unknown. Next was not applicable (no quality teachers had left) at 5%, and the search for better facilities at 3%. Since the responses were similar regardless of school size, analysis for resignation reason by school size was not depicted.

Results for Research Question 3

The responses to Research Question 3 are shown in Table 4. Superintendents were asked to check all strategies which assisted in the retention of quality teachers. There were 107 responses to this request. The strategies are shown in descending order by

percentage.

The most frequent response as shown in Table 4 was better salary with 22% of all responses. This was followed closely by faculty collegiality with 21% of all responses. Superintendents then selected smaller classes at 17% and self direction at 14%. These top four selections comprised 80 of the 107 responses, or 74%. Other responses were better funding (9%), better scheduling(fewer preps) (7%), and extra-curricular duties (6%).

Table 2

Frequency of Teacher Resignations in Unit Districts with Less Than 1000 Students as Shown by Faculty Size.

Resignations	35 teachers or less		36 to 45 teachers		46 or more teachers	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
At least one resignation per year	3	25%	1	8%	3	21%
At least one resignation every two years	1	8%	1	8%	1	7%
At least one resignation every three years	6	50%	6	50%	5	36%
Other (no resignations)	2	17%	4	34%	5	36%

Table 3

Superintendents' Perception for Quality Teachers Leaving Their School District.

Responses	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Salary and fringe benefits are too low	25	66%
Family considerations	4	11%
Teacher left the field of education	3	8%
Unknown	3	7%
Not applicable (no one has left)	2	5%
Search for better facilities	1	3%
Class sizes too large	0	0%
Too many discipline problems	0	0%
Desire for less student diversity	0	0%

Note. N = number of responses.

The least cited responses at 1% each were fewer discipline problems, discipline support, and extra pay.

Table 4

Retention Strategies Used to Assist in the Retention of Quality Teachers.

Reason	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Better salary	24	22%
Faculty collegiality	23	21%
Small classes	18	17%
Self direction(autonomy)	15	14%
Better funding	10	9%
Better schedule(fewer preparations)	8	7%
Extra-curricular duties	6	6%
Fewer discipline problems	1	1%
Discipline support	1	1%
Extra pay somehow	1	1%

Note. n = number of responses.

Chapter 5

Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

This research study examined the retention of quality teachers in small school districts. The loss of one or more quality teachers in a small school district can have a significant impact upon the success of the educational program of the district. The identification of reasons for the departure, along with the identification of strategies which may prevent the occurrence, can be invaluable to small district superintendents. The results of this study will be useful in the planning of inservice training for superintendents and teachers. This study may also allow superintendents to compare their faculty attrition rate to an established norm. With the increased pressures related to state and local testing, the superintendent will be increasingly challenged not only to hire, but to retain, quality teachers.

The specific research questions addressed by this study were:

1. What is the frequency of quality teachers leaving small districts to accept positions in larger school districts?
2. What do superintendents perceive as the reason(s) for the departure of quality teachers?
3. What strategies have been successfully employed by administrators to retain quality teachers?

The study was based on data collected from superintendents of unit school districts with 1000 students or less.. District location was restricted to those south of Interstate 70 in south central Illinois. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze and contrast the data collected for each research question.

Forty-three unit districts of 1000 students or less were found south of Interstate 70 in Illinois. Of the 43 superintendents surveyed, 38 responded (88%). This took place in two mailings during the months of June and July, 1997.

Findings

The results indicated that 71% of superintendents had a quality teacher resign at least once every three years. Within the 71% figure were 18% of respondents also reporting a departure at the rate of one per year. This indicates that small districts of 1000 students or less experience the departure of quality teachers on a frequent basis. It should be noted that superintendents were only asked about the departure of quality teachers, i.e., those having a strong positive impact upon the educational program. The frequency of teacher resignations is likely higher.

Superintendents most often cited low salary and fringe benefits (66%) as the reason for quality teacher resignations. Far behind this reason was family considerations at 11% and leaving the field of education at 8%. Superintendents failed to cite student diversity, class size, or discipline problems as a departure reason. Seven percent of superintendents indicated that they did not know the reasons for departure of quality teachers and 5% indicated that no quality teachers had departed.

Even though small unit districts were surveyed, the smaller of these (less than 500 students) experienced a slightly smaller problem than those larger in size (501 to 1000 students). This was shown by the data that revealed that 14% of the smaller districts reported no quality teacher resignations contrasted with 38% of districts with 501 to 1000 students.

The responses for preventing the loss of a quality teacher were mostly spread among the four reasons of better salary, faculty collegiality, small classes, and autonomy. These

comprised 74% of all responses to retention strategies. Better funding, better schedules, and extra-curricular duties were also responded to, but at a much lower rate (9% to 6%) than those listed previously.

Conclusions

As many people would predict, small school district superintendents face a continuing challenge in keeping quality teachers on staff. The departure of the quality teacher does occur, and it is usually for better salary and fringe benefits. While no one may ever know how many of these are preventable, the effort to avoid the loss of a quality teacher is certainly worthwhile. The identification and implementation of useful strategies which will lower the attrition rate will probably assist in maintaining a district's commitment to a quality educational program. The strategies must be ongoing and continual for them to be of benefit. Implementation of these strategies upon the possible loss of a quality teacher is likely too late, as the idea of looking elsewhere has already become a consideration to the teacher. When superintendents cited methods of keeping quality teachers on staff, these methods would probably assist in keeping all teachers satisfied with their job. Such satisfaction would probably result in less of a desire for changing jobs and therefore better retention of all teachers.

The most often cited prevention strategy was improvement of salary (22%) . This was followed closely by faculty collegiality at 21%. Faculty collegiality is a working condition which can be affected by leadership strategies implemented by the superintendent. The improvement of workplace environment would cost little money when compared with the challenge of improving salary in districts already facing tight budgets.

The next two retention strategies were small classes and self-direction (autonomy). Once again small classes may be a financial issue while autonomy would likely cost little money.

Interestingly, two of the top four choices for better retention of teachers would cost little money, but instead would address how teachers feel about their jobs. This is encouraging, but also challenging due the difficulty in developing autonomy and collegiality within a teaching staff. The opportunity for a less formal atmosphere within a small district can be an asset to the superintendent when compared to the counterpart in large districts. The greatest challenge to the superintendent is promoting this atmosphere while still monitoring and improving student achievement.

This study should be most useful to superintendents of small school districts as a starting point for assessing teacher retention strategies in their districts. First, comparisons can be made to determine if the district is normal in the loss of quality teachers. Second, and most important, is developing strategies for preventing future losses. Teacher morale is a frequently discussed subject by many within education. But in small school districts morale may play a large role in retention strategies. Autonomy, collegiality, and salary are all issues of morale which can be addressed, to some extent, by superintendents. Increasing autonomy and collegiality are areas in which many superintendents may need additional training. Even though they may appear to be challenges to building principals, superintendents set the tone for all employees of the district through their leadership styles. Superintendents are in need of additional training in the uplifting of teacher morale as a retention strategy. The superintendent is a manager but more so a leader. A leader takes people where they need to go. It is most successfully accomplished when those being led

enjoy their work and enjoy working with each other. These interpersonal skills of leadership can be developed and taught. The author's opinion is that superintendents have difficulty finding excellent leadership training within the education community. Too often management within education is done as it was done in the past. Good leaders need to be trained and motivated so they may return to the districts they lead and do the same. This need is even more accentuated in small districts where superintendents wear the hats of many when compared to their counterparts within large districts.

Recommendations for Further Study

An assessment of improving teacher autonomy while maintaining the proper control over curriculum is an area of further study. In addition, building faculty collegiality also presents a challenge for leaders and further study would be beneficial.

An interesting finding within this study which brings up further questions is that the most often cited reason for the loss of a quality teacher is also the most often cited strategy for preventing the loss of a quality teacher. This is in the area of salary. In 14 of the 38 responses from small school superintendents the cited reason for a loss of a quality teacher and the prevention method of averting that loss of a quality teacher was salary. This seems contradictory and difficult to analyze. It is an area within the study which poses many questions which can only be answered by further study.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

June 9, 1997

Don Smith
1612 Lindbergh Lane
Carterville, IL 62918

Dear Superintendent:

As part of a field study for a Specialist Degree from Eastern Illinois University, I am conducting a survey of superintendents regarding teacher retention. Specifically, I am inquiring about the loss of quality teachers in school districts of less than 1000 students. I am also identifying strategies useful in preventing quality teachers from accepting positions in larger, nearby school districts.

Your cooperation in completing the following survey is appreciated. If you would like the results of the survey mailed to you, please indicate so on the survey.

Please place the enclosed survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope and return to me by June 18, 1997.

Thank you,

Donald E. Smith

Appendix B
Survey
Teacher Retention

1. Please check the description for the size of your school district:

- less than 250 students enrolled
 251 to 500 students enrolled
 501 to 1000 students enrolled

2. How many teachers are employed in your district? _____

3. How often does a quality teacher resign to accept a position in a larger school district?

(A quality teacher is defined as one who has had a strong positive impact upon the educational program of a school or district.)

- At least one per year One teacher every 2 years
 One teacher every 3 years Other (please specify) _____

4. In your opinion, why do you believe teachers left? Rank from 1 (greatest reason for leaving) to 5 (least possible reason for leaving).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Salary and fringe benefits are too low | <input type="checkbox"/> Search for better facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Desire for less student diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Too many discipline problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class sizes too large | <input type="checkbox"/> Family considerations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Left the field of education | <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown |

5. Please check any of the following retention strategies listed below which assist in keeping quality teachers in your school.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-direction (autonomy) | <input type="checkbox"/> Small classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty collegiality | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra-curricular duties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better funding | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better schedule (fewer preparations) | <input type="checkbox"/> Better salary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please be specific) _____ | |

6. If you would wish to receive a copy of the results of this study, leave your name and mailing address below

Appendix C
Follow-Up Letter

July 3, 1997

Don Smith
1612 Lindbergh Lane
Carterville, IL 62918

Dear Superintendent:

As part of field study for a Specialist Degree from Eastern Illinois University, I am conducting a survey of superintendents regarding teacher retention. Specifically, I am inquiring about the loss of quality teachers in school districts of less than 1000 students. I am also identifying strategies useful in preventing quality teachers from accepting positions in larger, nearby school districts.

I earlier sent this survey to you but did not receive a response. I have enclosed another in case you have misplaced the earlier arrival. Your cooperation in completing the following survey is appreciated. If you would like the results of the study mailed to you, please indicate so on the survey.

Please place the enclosed survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope and return to me by July 10, 1997.

Thank you,

Don Smith