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Optimal Conditions to Support School Climate and Increase Teacher Retention in Middle School Classrooms

Kimberly Taylor Coleman

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Optimal Conditions to Support School Climate and Increase Teacher Retention in Middle School
Classrooms

By
Kimberly T. Coleman

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
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Approval Page

This dissertation proposal was submitted by Kimberly T. Coleman under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

Optimal Conditions to Support School Climate and Increase Teacher Retention in Middle School Classrooms. Coleman, Kimberly T., 2018: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Teacher Retention/Teacher Turnover/Middle School/School Climate/Teacher Motivation

This study addressed the increasing attrition and migration of teachers from middle school classrooms. The study also sought to determine to what extent specific research-based factors motivated teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was used in this study. The first portion of the study included quantitative and qualitative data collection through the administration of an online survey instrument. Survey data results were utilized to create and modify questions used to gather additional qualitative data during the administration of two focus groups.

This study found a positive school climate, administrative support, and collegiality to be essential factors to increase teacher retention in middle school classrooms. Additional factors motivating teachers to remain in middle school classrooms gathered from qualitative data were the ability to have a positive impact on student lives and receiving professional development to address the unique needs of individual teachers. The study noted the impact administrative support, collegiality, and family/community support had on the creation of a positive school climate as well as the effect these factors have on a teacher's ability to positively impact student lives. The study also noted the need for

professional development designed to address the needs of individual teachers.

Recommendations to increase teacher retention in middle school classrooms are provided along with the study's implications for future research.

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Significance of the Study	2
Purpose of the Study	13
Study Overview	13
Research Questions.....	14
Definitions of Terms.....	15
Related Literature.....	16
Deficiencies in the Literature.....	17
Summary.....	17
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	19
Overview.....	19
Organization of this Chapter.....	21
Background.....	21
Theoretical Framework.....	24
Conceptual Framework.....	26
Reasons for Turnover.....	27
Reasons Teachers Remain in the Classroom	34
NCTWC Survey.....	42
Summary.....	43
Chapter 3: Methodology	45

Introduction.....	45
Problem Addressed.....	45
Research Design and Rationale	46
Research Questions.....	48
Research Methodology	49
Survey Instrument.....	50
Data Collection	60
Data Analysis	63
Reliability and Validity.....	66
Threats to Validity	67
Ensuring the Quality of the Research	67
Anticipated Outcomes.....	67
Limitations of the Study.....	68
Delimitations of the Study	68
Summary	68
Chapter 4: Results.....	69
Introduction.....	69
Organization of the Chapter.....	69
Research Questions.....	69
Data Collection	70
Research Question 1	75
Data Analysis	75
Research Question 2	89

Focus Groups	91
Summary	98
Chapter 5: Discussion	100
Introduction.....	100
Summary of the Study	100
Overview of Chapter 5.....	100
Research Questions.....	101
Data Analysis	102
Comparison to NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey Results.....	110
Theoretical Framework.....	115
Interpretation of Findings	116
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	118
Threats to Validity and Reliability.....	119
Recommendations.....	119
Implications for Future Research.....	124
Chapter 5 Summary	124
References.....	125
Appendix A.....	133
Appendix B.....	138
Appendix C.....	142
Appendix D.....	150
Appendix E	154

Appendix F.....	156
Appendix G.....	160
Appendix H.....	163
Tables	
1 Teacher Turnover Rates by School.....	5
2 2016 NCTWC Survey Question 10.6	5
3 2016 NCTWC Survey Question 10.1	6
4 Interpretation and End Result of Answer Choices from NCTWC Survey Item 10.1.....	7
5 Number of Teachers Represented by Percentages.....	9
6 Intended Retention and Migration of Teachers at each School	10
7 Total Classroom Migration and Attrition	11
8 Motivating Factors to Remain at Current School	12
9 Survey Item Alignment: School Climate Construct	53
10 Survey Item Alignment: Administrative Support Construct	54
11 Survey Item Alignment: Professional Development Construct.....	55
12 Survey Item Alignment: Collegiality Construct	56
13 Survey Item Alignment: Family and Community Support Construct	57
14 Pilot Test Group Feedback and Recommendations.....	59
15 Factors for Remaining in the Middle School Classroom (Expected Values)	64
16 Years of Teaching Experience	72
17 Highest Degree Obtained.....	72
18 Level of Motivation to Remain in the Middle School Classroom.....	73

19	Survey Item Alignment to Potential Motivating Factor	73
20	Respondent Plans in the Near Future.....	74
21	Model Fit.....	76
22	Extent School Climate Motivates Middle School Classroom Retention.....	78
23	School Climate CFA.....	79
24	Extent Administrative Support Motivates Middle School Classroom Retention	80
25	Administrative Support CFA.....	81
26	Extent Individual Professional Development Motivates Classroom Retention.....	81
27	Individualized Professional Development CFA	82
28	Extent Collegiality Motivates Middle School Classroom Retention.....	83
29	Collegiality CFA.....	84
30	Extent Family and Community Support Motivates Classroom Retention.....	84
31	Family and Community Support CFA.....	85
32	Quantified Themes.....	91
33	Focus Group Demographics	93
34	Motivational Factor Survey Item Correlations	111
35	Comparison of Conditions Present and Factors for Retention	112

Figures

1	Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods Design Process..	48
2	Correlation Among Factors.....	88
3	Possible Overlap of Factors	89
4	Themes Gathered from Survey Instrument Qualitative Data Analysis.	90
5	Focus Group Question Themes.....	94

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

“Contemporary educational theory holds that one of the pivotal causes of inadequate school performance is the inability of schools to adequately staff classrooms with qualified teachers” (Ingersoll, 2001). Fifty-five percent of middle school teachers have left their schools within 3 years, and some have left education altogether (Cramer, 2011; Marinell & Coca, 2013). The attrition rate of middle school teachers has been higher than both elementary and high school attrition rates (Cramer, 2011; Kraft & Marinell, 2016; Marinell & Coca, 2013).

“The middle grade years are crucial in students’ academic and social-emotional development and play a critical role in influencing students’ high school and post-secondary outcomes” (Kraft & Marinell, 2016, p. 3). Transition from middle school to high school has proven to be challenging for students, thus increasing the need to create and maintain strong middle schools that include stable teaching staffs (Marinell & Coca, 2013). Unstable and impersonal middle schools may have created more challenging transitions into, through, and out of these crucial middle school years (Marinell & Coca, 2013).

Some departure of teachers from schools is, of course, normal, inevitable, and even beneficial. Some teachers leave classroom teaching to pursue administrative positions or other education related roles.

Others leave the classroom because they discover that teaching isn't right for them. Some turnover is due to the termination of low-performing teachers. But regardless of the reason, none of these departures are cost-free. All teachers who depart leave a space behind, which takes time and

effort to refill. (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2016, par. 5)

In order to advance in the teaching profession, some veteran teachers left the classroom for a role in the district office or for administrative positions (Kopkowski, 2008). Other teachers considered middle school teaching assignments as “stepping stones to more competitive positions in elementary schools or to assignments in high schools” (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p. 3). Regardless of the motivation, classrooms are left without experienced teachers (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). “Teacher attrition represents a net loss to the system in a way that mobility between schools does not” (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p. 10). Attrition has led not only to a shortage of experienced teachers in classrooms but also to a mentor teacher shortage (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Attrition also has impacted beginning teachers who are in need of support from more experienced veteran teachers; therefore, the attrition rate of veteran teachers has had a direct effect upon the attrition rate of beginning teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

The increasing teacher turnover rate has required school districts to spend millions of dollars to recruit and train new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Stuit & Smith, 2010). Training these new teachers, whether they are new to a school or new to a system, required a substantial amount of resources; losing them represented a loss from an investment (Marinell & Coca, 2013). With a growing number of veteran teachers exiting the classroom, school districts may have needed to provide alternative methods to train and recruit new teachers, seizing additional funding from classrooms and students.

Significance of the Study

“Teacher turnover is a critical issue with K-12 public schools” (Stuit & Smith, 2010, p. 3). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2014), the national teacher turnover rate for the 2012-2013 school year was 15.6% and rose 0.2% to

15.8% for the 2013-2014 school year. The North Carolina teacher turnover rate for 2012-2013 was 14.33% and fell to 14.12% during 2013-2014, a decrease of 0.21%; however, the decline was short lived and rose to 14.84% for the state of North Carolina during the 2014-2015 school year, a 0.72% increase (North Carolina Teacher Turnover Report, 2015). Approximately one half of the overall teacher turnover resulted from teacher migration from one school to another (Ingersoll, 2001).

In the past, concerted efforts were taken to support and retain teachers in North Carolina. As a part of a Beginning Teacher Induction Program, beginning teachers were provided with paid mentors (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In addition, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program (n.d.) provided scholarships and opportunities for potential teachers in exchange for 3 years of teaching service. Pay incentives for obtaining advanced degrees were in place to further practicing teachers' scholarship as well as reduce the number of teachers who left the classroom within their first 3 years. As of 2016, all of these incentives had disappeared from the educational setting of North Carolina public schools (Buxton, 2016).

The North Carolina General Assembly voted to end the Teaching Fellows Program in 2011. This act had a direct effect on classrooms in the state by decreasing the number of potential new teachers entering preparatory programs (North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program, n.d.). In 2017, beginning teachers were still provided a mentor teacher; however, the mentor teacher was no longer compensated for this service. This lack of supplement added additional duties and stress to veteran teachers across the state for no compensation (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The North Carolina Legislature revoked the pay incentives for obtaining higher degrees in 2013. The only way to receive a salary increase for an advanced degree obtained after 2014 was to hold a position

requiring an advanced degree. Most of these positions required the teacher to leave the classroom.

Although North Carolina had a teacher recruitment problem, the state had an even larger retention problem (Schaffhauser, 2014). According to Barnwell (2015), “Recent studies suggest that it takes many educators a decade or even more to become truly effective in their craft—to efficiently deal with distractions and disruptions, create and implement engaging curriculum, and provide meaningful feedback to students” (para. 7). To make matters worse, “frequent turnover hurts student performance, especially in high-poverty schools” (Mongeau, 2015, para. 13). As stated by Ingersoll et al. (2016), “The data make it clear ... to ensure that all students are taught by qualified teachers, many schools must pay more attention to teacher retention” (para. 6).

Archival data analysis. The school district used in the study had consistently higher teacher turnover rates than the state average over the past 6 years, as evidenced by North Carolina School Report Cards (n.d.) data. Most middle schools in the district had a steady increase in teacher turnover rates, as seen in Table 1. More alarmingly, the teacher turnover rates in the middle schools of the participating district reported an all-time high 18.4% average teacher turnover rate in 2016.

Table 1

Teacher Turnover Rates by School

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
District	20%	17%	20%	20%	15%	17%
State	15%	16%	15%	16%	14%	13%
School A	14%	11%	12%	8%	4%	Not Open
School B	14%	5%	15%	10%	5%	5%
School C	11%	11%	14%	24%	19%	9%
School D	36%	32%	35%	35%	24%	23%
School E	17%	15%	14%	13%	13%	25%
Mean	18.4%	14.8%	18%	18%	13%	15.5%

In an effort to better understand the increasing turnover rates at each school and the average turnover rate during 2016, the researcher analyzed results from the 2016 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions (NCTWC) survey. As seen in Table 2, 94% of teachers at School A, 93% of teachers at School B, and 91% of teachers at School C agreed their school was a good place to work and learn (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016); however, only 71% of teachers at School D and 68% of teachers at School E agreed their school was a good place to work and learn (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016).

Table 1

2016 NCTWC Survey Question 10.6

Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
Strongly Disagree	6%	7%	7%	7%	11%
Disagree	0%	0%	2%	29%	21%
Total Disagree	6%	7%	9%	33%	32%
Agree	40%	10%	33%	57%	34%
Strongly Agree	54%	83%	58%	14%	34%
Total Agree	94%	93%	91%	71%	68%

As noted in Table 3, 89% of teachers at School A and 88% of teachers at School B indicated they plan to remain at their current school following the 2016 NCTWC

Survey (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016); although only 79% of teachers at School C, 75% of teachers at School D, and 80% of teachers at School E indicated they planned to remain at their current school following the 2016 NCTWC Survey (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016). Of the 25% of teachers desiring to leave School D, 15% indicated they planned on remaining in the school district but leaving the school. Of the 21% of teachers desiring to leave School C, 8% indicated a desire to leave the teaching profession altogether. Of the 20% of teachers desiring to leave School E, 12% indicated a desire to leave the school district.

Table 2

2016 NCTWC Survey Question 10.1

Which of the following best describes your immediate professional plans?

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	Average
Continue teaching at my school	89%	88%	79%	75%	80%	80.2%
Continue teaching in this district but leave this school	4%	4%	5%	15%	2%	6%
Continue teaching in this state but leave this district	0%	0%	5%	4%	12%	4.2%
Continue working in education but pursue an administrative position	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0.8%
Continue working in education but pursue a non-administrative position	7%	4%	3%	0%	0%	2.8%
Leave education entirely	0%	4%	8%	2%	6%	4%

Three of the six responses from the survey resulted in teachers leaving the classroom. Leaving education entirely, continuing to work in education but pursue a

non-administrative position, and continuing to work in education but pursue an administrative position all resulted in teachers leaving the classroom. Table 4 presented the interpretation and end result of each response choice from the survey item.

Table 3

Interpretation and End Result of Answer Choices from NCTWC Survey Item 10.1

Survey Item Response	End Result
Continue teaching at my school	Happy with school, state and district
Continue teaching in this district but leave this school	Happy with district, unhappy with school
Continue teaching in this state but leave this district	Happy with state, unhappy with district and school
Continue working in education but pursue an administrative position	Unhappy with classroom
Continue working in education but pursue a non-administrative position	Unhappy with classroom
Leave education entirely	Unhappy with education system

Table 5 contains the number of teachers represented for each percentage in parenthesis. School A had 89% of teachers (31 teachers) who desired to return to the school. Of those not desiring to return to the school, 4% wanted to remain in the district and 7% wanted to pursue a non-administrative position (leave the classroom). School B had 88% of teachers who desired to return to the school. Of those not desiring to return to the school, 4% wanted to remain in the district, 4% wanted to pursue a non-administrative position (leave the classroom), and 4% wanted to leave education altogether (leave the classroom). School C had 79% of teachers who desired to return to the school. Of those not desiring to return to the school, 5% wanted to remain in the

district, 5% wanted to leave the district but remain in the state, 3% wanted to pursue a non-administrative position (leave the classroom), and 8% wanted to leave education altogether (leave the classroom). School D had 75% of teachers who desired to return to the school. Of those not desiring to return to the school, 15% wanted to remain in the district, 4% wanted to leave the district but remain in the state, 4% wanted to pursue an administrative role (leave the classroom), and 2% wanted to leave education altogether (leave the classroom). School E had 80% of teachers who desired to return to the school. Of those not desiring to return to the school, 2% wanted to remain in the district, 12% wanted to leave the district but remain in the state, and 6% wanted to leave education altogether (leave the classroom).

Table 4

Number of Teachers Represented by Percentages

Survey Item Response	School A (n=35)	School B (n=29)	School C (n=41)	School D (n=60)	School E (n=58)
Continue teaching at my school	89% (31)	88% (25)	79% (32)	75% (45)	80% (46)
Continue teaching in this district but leave this school	4% (1)	4% (1)	5% (2)	15% (9)	2% (1)
Continue teaching in this state but leave this district	0% (0)	0% (0)	5% (2)	4% (2)	12% (6)
Continue working in education but pursue an administrative position	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (2)	0% (0)
Continue working in education but pursue a non-administrative position	7% (2)	4% (1)	3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Leave education entirely	0% (0)	4% (1)	8% (3)	2% (1)	6% (3)
Number of teachers lost to migration or attrition	(3)	(3)	(8)	(14)	(10)

As seen in Table 6, the desire to migrate to another school or school district ranged from 4% to 19% among the middle schools in the district. Retention of teachers in classroom positions ranged from 89% to 94% in the middle schools in the district.

Table 5

Intended Retention and Migration of Teachers at each School

Survey Item Response	School A (n=35)	School B (n=29)	School C (n=41)	School D (n=60)	School E (n=58)
Continue teaching at my school	89% (31)	88% (25)	79% (32)	75% (45)	80% (46)
Continue teaching in this district but leave this school	4% (1)	4% (1)	5% (2)	15% (9)	2% (1)
Continue teaching in this state but leave this district	0% (0)	0% (0)	5% (2)	4% (2)	12% (6)
Total teachers retained in classrooms	92.57% (32)	92% (26)	89% (36)	94% (56)	94% (53)
Total migration	4% (1)	4% (1)	10% (4)	19% (11)	14% (7)

The combined migration and attrition rates from classroom teaching positions ranged from 6% to 11%, as seen in Table 7. According to the 2016 NCTWC survey, the participating school district had 7% of teachers who desired to leave the middle school classroom. Schools with 80% or less of teachers who desired to return to the school after the 2016 NCTWC survey were School C, School D, and School E. Schools D and E had the largest percentages in two separate categories.

Table 6

Total Classroom Migration and Attrition

Survey Item Response	School A (n=35)	School B (n=29)	School C (n=41)	School D (n=60)	School E (n=58)	Total
Continue working in education but pursue an administrative position	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4% (2)	0% (0)	(2)
Continue working in education but pursue a non-administrative position	7% (2)	4% (1)	3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	(4)
Total migration from classrooms	7% (2)	4% (1)	3% (1)	4% (2)	0% (0)	(6)
Leave education entirely (attrition)	0% (0)	4% (1)	8% (3)	2% (1)	6% (3)	(8)
Total teachers lost from classrooms	7% (2)	8% (2)	11% (4)	6% (3)	6% (3)	(14)

Overall, school leadership was indicated as the most motivating factor to remain in a school in the 2016 NCTWC survey, as evidenced in Table 8 (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016). School leadership was selected by 43% of participants in middle schools in the participating school district followed by managing student discipline selected by 13.6% (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016). Teacher leadership was selected by 8.6% of middle school teachers followed by facilities and resources and instructional practices and support each selected by 8.4% of middle school teachers (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016). Community support and involvement was selected by 4.8% of middle school teachers as the condition most affecting willingness to keep teaching at a school

(NCTWC Survey Results, 2016). No middle school teachers selected professional development as a condition affecting their willingness to keep teaching at a school (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016).

Table 7

Motivating Factors to Remain at Current School

Survey Item	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	Mean
Time during day	14%	8%	24%	4%	19%	13.8%
Facilities and resources	18%	0%	5%	11%	8%	8.4%
Community support and involvement	11%	0%	3%	6%	4%	4.8%
Managing student discipline	11%	8%	3%	40%	6%	13.6%
Teacher leadership	4%	4%	8%	15%	12%	8.6%
School leadership	36%	68%	50%	15%	46%	43%
Professional development	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Instructional practices and support	7%	12%	8%	9%	6%	8.4%

In the majority of schools, school leadership had the greatest impact on whether or not a teacher was motivated to remain at the school. At School D, student discipline had the greatest impact, followed by teacher and school leadership. At School E, school leadership had the greatest impact followed by time during the day. No teacher in any school chose professional development as a motivating factor to remain at their school.

The participating school district reported higher than state average turnover rates in middle schools on a consistent basis. The reported turnover rate may not have included all migration from classroom teaching assignments. With increasing numbers of

teachers leaving education or migrating to new schools and/or districts, classrooms were left with low levels of continuity. In order to stabilize classroom teaching assignments, it was imperative to discover the factors motivating teachers to remain in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

In an effort to address the issue of teacher retention, this study attempted to identify specific factors keeping teachers in middle school classrooms. Identifying areas associated with the retention of middle grades teachers may provide schools and districts with knowledge to keep the educational personnel they hire. Without increased retention efforts, schools and classrooms will lack teachers to supply instruction and support needed not only by students but also by beginning teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Study Overview

This study addressed factors motivating teachers to remain in middle school classrooms. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was used, involving the collection of quantitative data first, followed by an in-depth qualitative data collection to further explore the quantitative results. In the first quantitative phase of the study, the NCTWC survey, an archival data source, was analyzed to gather quantitative data and used to determine possible factors encouraging teachers to remain in middle school classrooms.

Analysis of the NCTWC survey results was utilized by the researcher to create a survey to further explore factors motivating teachers in the participating middle schools to remain in the classroom. The survey created by the researcher contained quantitative and qualitative items. Information gathered from qualitative items on the survey was used to modify focus group questions. The survey requested participants to give a name and contact information if willing to participate in a focus group. The survey also

provided the email address and telephone number of the researcher in case there were participants who were willing to be focus group members but preferred their survey results remain anonymous. Information gathered from the focus groups was used to develop a deeper understanding of the factors motivating teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. Triangulation of data occurred through the results of the data analysis of the NCTWC survey, survey results from the researcher-designed survey, and information gathered from focus group participants.

Research Questions

The study centered on the following research question: “What factors are motivating teachers to remain in middle school classrooms?” In order to explore this central question, this study examined the following.

1. To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by
 - a. School climate,
 - b. Administrative support,
 - c. Individualized professional development,
 - d. Collegiality, and
 - e. Family and community support?
2. How do themes gathered from focus group participants and qualitative survey items explain the factors encouraging middle school teachers to remain in the classroom?

The study collected quantitative data by using an online survey created by the researcher. The survey was delivered to all current teachers in traditional middle schools (Grades 6-8) in the school district. All classroom teachers were requested to take the

survey. The survey measured specific factors that may have affected a teacher's desire to remain in the middle school classroom. Two focus groups of teachers who have remained in the middle school classroom were conducted using random sampling from a list of names generated from the analysis of the candidate-created survey results.

Definitions of Terms

Autonomy. The professional independence of teachers in schools, especially to make decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it (Ed Glossary, 2014).

Beginning teacher. A teacher in a public school who has been teaching less than 3 complete school years (US Legal, 2017).

Mentor teacher. A teacher, usually a veteran, who provides personal guidance to beginning teachers in schools (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Middle school. A school usually including Grades 5-8 or 6-8 (Merriam-Webster, 2016).

Mobility. Teachers leaving one school district to teach in another district (Ball, 2016).

NCTWC survey. A survey taken every 2 years by public school teachers in order to assess the needs, perceptions, and perspectives of teachers in their school environments (Hirsch, Sioberg, Robertson, & Church, 2010).

School climate. The feelings and attitudes that are elicited by a school's environment (Loukas, 2007).

Teacher attrition. Refers to teachers who have chosen to leave the teaching profession entirely through resignation or retirement. This is one component of teacher turnover (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

Teacher migration. Refers to teachers who remain in the teaching profession but transfer or move to another teaching assignment in another school. This is one component of teacher turnover (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

Teacher retention. Refers to teachers who continue to teach in their current assigned schools (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

Teacher turnover rate. The rate at which personnel, whose primary function is classroom teaching, leave or separate from the district or change from their classroom teaching assignment to another position. This rate is calculated from 1 school year to another and is expressed as a percentage (Colorado Department of Education, n.d.).

Veteran teacher. A teacher who typically has more than 3 years of full-time classroom experience and is no longer a novice to the teaching profession (IGI Global, n.d.).

Related Literature

The highest attrition rates for teachers were during years 1-5 or years 25-30 in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2001; Reid, 2008). These examples of teacher attrition have caused local school districts to lose millions of dollars per year in recruitment and training costs (Hofstetter, 2014; Kraft & Marinell, 2016; Morrison, 2012; Schaffhauser, 2014).

Recent studies have sought to determine the factors that contributed most to teacher attrition (Ingersoll et al., 2014). A lack of support from school administration was deemed to be a major factor in teacher attrition (Cox, 2009; Morrison, 2012; Ramere, 2006) and occurred most often from miscommunication or no communication (Morrison, 2012; Schaffhauser, 2014) and/or the absence of empowerment opportunities (Ramere, 2006). Lack of support from parents (Reid, 2008) and state legislatures, felt through the

absence of salary increases, was additionally reported (Brenneman, 2015).

Another factor for teacher attrition was the school climate (Kraft & Marinell, 2016). A lack of trust within the school, perceived between the staff and administration or between staff members, was a major contributor (Reid, 2008). School climates were also negatively affected by lack of collaborative planning time (Morrison, 2012; Smollin, 2011) and feelings of isolation (Schaffhauser, 2014).

In addition, classroom support was determined to affect teacher desires to remain in education. A lack of classroom or instructional resources (Smollin, 2011) or a lack of planning time to develop lessons (Kang & Berliner, 2012; Ramere, 2006) led to feelings of inadequacy and stress and pushed some teachers out of education. Furthermore, a perceived absence of teacher autonomy was shown to be a factor in teacher decisions to change career fields or to enter retirement (Ingersoll et al., 2016).

Deficiencies in the Literature

The research for teacher attrition did not take professional migration into consideration. Many veteran teachers were migrating to new positions within the school district or into new school districts. This migration was from one position in the classroom to another position in the classroom or from a position in the classroom to a position outside of the classroom. Regardless, classroom positions must be filled, and additional strains were placed on district budgets for teacher recruitment and training. This trend seemed to be impacting middle schools more than elementary and high schools (Cramer, 2011).

Summary

The increasing teacher turnover rate has become a national epidemic. This trend of attrition began with novice teachers exiting the teaching profession within their first 5

years of teaching and spread to teachers with 25 or more years of experience who began taking early retirement with reduced benefits.

With too many years invested in the state educational system but not enough years invested to retire, veteran teachers were left stuck in the middle. These teachers began moving from one school district to another, from classroom positions to administrative or district-level positions or to private and charter schools in search of better working conditions. This migration and attrition has cost school districts millions of dollars per year to recruit and train new teachers to fill these classrooms (Hofstetter, 2014; Morrison, 2012; Schaffhauser, 2014).

Teacher turnover had the greatest impact on middle schools (Cramer, 2011). Many middle school teachers left the middle school classroom to join the elementary or high school setting. It is imperative for the teaching profession to determine the causes of the increased teacher turnover rate in middle schools in order to develop policies and practices to provide additional supports to encourage these teachers to remain in the middle school classroom.

The following chapters include a review of the literature, the methodology, the analysis and findings, and the conclusions of the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of literature relative to factors of teacher migration and attrition. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and the specific research methods used in the study. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the data collected. Last, Chapter 5 provides a discussion on the findings and implications of the results of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

To correct the problem of increasing teacher turnover, a full understanding of the factors leading to vacant classroom teaching assignments occurred. Previous data findings indicated the supply of teachers was more than ample to fill classrooms; therefore, the issues of teacher turnover resulted from a “revolving door” where large numbers of teachers left the profession for reasons other than retirement (Ingersoll, 2001). Further investigation, however, showed the number of potential teaching candidates also declined due to decreased enrollment in teacher preparation programs across North Carolina. The decline in teacher preparation program enrollment, coupled with migration and attrition from classrooms, caused the supply of teachers to dwindle further.

As stated by Bonner (2016), “Enrollment at the 15 UNC schools of education has plummeted 30 percent since 2010” (para. 1). North Carolina’s teacher preparation programs are a major source for providing classroom teachers to local school systems (Bonner, 2016). The decline in enrollments in teacher preparation programs is also occurring in states where North Carolina school systems frequently recruit new teachers. June Atkinson, former state Superintendent of Public Instruction, as cited by Bonner, reported salary, lack of respect, and lack of professional development as major reasons for declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs. The elimination of teacher benefits in retirement and healthcare, the loss of pay for advanced degrees, and the elimination of teacher tenure and the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program have also been reported as factors decreasing teacher preparation program enrollments (McDermed, 2017). Due to increased salary rates, the reinstatement of the North Carolina Teaching

Fellows Program and alternative licensure programs, the University of North Carolina's Teacher Education programs reported a 6% increase in 2017; however, although enrollment numbers increased during 2017, they are still well below previous years' enrollment numbers (McDermed, 2017). Factors leading to decreased enrollment in teacher preparation programs and factors leading to increased teacher turnover are similar, if not the same.

Teacher turnover can be divided into involuntary and voluntary attrition from the profession. Involuntary turnover occurs when a teacher does not choose to change teaching assignments (Kang & Berliner, 2012). Dismissal by another person such as a principal, layoffs due to budget deficits, and transfer due to decreasing student enrollment are examples of involuntary turnover (Kang & Berliner, 2012).

Voluntary turnover occurs when a teacher chooses to transfer to another school or school system or to exit the teaching profession altogether (Kang & Berliner, 2012). Voluntary teacher turnover can be further divided into unavoidable and avoidable turnover. "Unavoidable voluntary turnover assumes the decision to leave was beyond the control of the school enterprise, and has to do with personal or family reasons" (Kang & Berliner, 2012, p. 270). Instances of avoidable voluntary turnover are often driven by job satisfaction, job-induced stress, and organizational vision (Kang & Berliner, 2012). Levels of job satisfaction and the perception of organizational vision were found to be lower, and levels of job-induced stress were found to be higher in occurrences of avoidable voluntary turnover (Kang & Berliner, 2012).

Researchers have found connections between organizational conditions such as the level of administrative support, degree of input regarding school-wide policies, and school climate and motivation, commitment, and turnover rates of teachers (Ingersoll,

2001). “Teachers move because of job dissatisfaction, including inadequate administrative support, isolated working conditions, poor student discipline, lower salaries and lack of collective teacher influence over school decisions” (Schaffhauser, 2014, para. 4). School climates are stronger in schools with lower teacher turnover (Kraft & Marinell, 2016); therefore, strengthening school climates will result in the increased likelihood of teachers remaining in schools (Kraft & Marinell, 2016). Taking the reasons for teachers leaving the classroom into consideration and pairing them with reasons teachers reportedly remain in the classroom will create opportunities to lower the teacher turnover rate.

Organization of this Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to review current research on factors affecting teacher motivation to leave or remain in the classroom. Pertinent background information is provided followed by research on key reasons for teacher turnover including lack of principal, legislative, family and community support, lack of empowerment opportunities, and negative school climates created by lack of trust and collaboration. Finally, research on key factors influencing teachers to make the decision to remain in the classroom including school climate, leadership opportunities, collective data-informed decision-making, the presence of trust, collegiality and collaborative time, empowerment opportunities, individualized professional development, and support from families and the community are presented.

Background

Most teachers who leave education altogether do so during years 1-5 of teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2014; Reid, 2008; Smollin, 2011) or years 25-30 of teaching (Curtis, 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Reid, 2008). As the baby boomer generation continues to

retire from education during years 25-30 of teaching, classrooms are being filled with younger teachers (Curtis, 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Reid, 2008). To fill the void of retiring teachers, a majority of beginning teachers are young, recent college graduates (Ingersoll et al., 2014); however, many of these young beginning teachers, especially the better ones, are leaving the profession within a few years (Kang & Berliner, 2012).

According to Kang and Berliner (2012),

Two approaches have been used to help overcome the possibility of school staffing shortages: (a) recruitment of new teachers from alternative licensing programs and through emergency teaching licensure (e.g. Teach for America) and (b) mentoring and induction programs to reduce the rates at which teachers leave the profession, especially early in their new careers. (p. 268)

Induction programs have proven to have a positive influence on the retention of beginning teachers, especially when the mentor teacher is from the same content field as the beginning teachers and provides collective induction activities (Kang & Berliner, 2012).

Many members of the new generation of classroom teachers are Generation Y, or Millennials (Wong & Wong, 2007). Many people from this generation “believe that education is the key to their success, and with their technical skills, they are prepared to be lifelong learners” (Reid, 2008, p. 22); however, according to Wong and Wong (2007), the current organization of most schools is not synonymous to the beliefs of this generation. Millennials typically learn best in a collaborative format, thus making the one-to-one mentor program ineffective for them (Wong & Wong, 2007). The ineffective support format may have contributed to the approximately 14% of teachers in the United States who left the teaching profession after only 1 year and the additional 46% who left

before the fifth year (Smollin, 2011).

Typically, young adults, ages 20-35, are “on an exciting search for status, comfort, and happiness in work, family, and friends.... In teaching, however, the young adulthood period, which should be one of romance, quickly becomes one of disillusionment” (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014, p. 69). This disillusionment often leads young teachers to realize their work life does not contain opportunities for advancement and lacks variety resulting in boredom and ultimately resignation (Glickman et al., 2014). The attrition of beginning teachers is extremely troubling due to the fact that “teachers perform best after being in the classroom for at least five years” (Smollin, 2011, para. 2).

Teacher turnover is a costly problem (Tierney, 2012). School districts spend approximately \$15,000 per recruit, totaling between \$1 billion to \$2.2 billion annually (Barnwell, 2015; Darling-Hammond & Ducommun, 2011; Schaffhauser, 2014; Stuit & Smith, 2010). According to Martinez, Frick, Kim, and Fried (2010), teacher turnover creates financial burdens on school districts due to a constant need to replace teachers and generalizes inconsistent instruction that negatively impacts student academic achievement. Unfortunately, more funds are spent on recruiting teachers than developing methods to retain veteran teachers (Darling-Hammond & Ducommun, 2011).

Administrators spend more time recruiting, interviewing, and hiring, when they could be focused on improving instruction. When many teachers resign each year, institutional memory is lost, and ties to the community weaken. There are few veterans around to show newbies the tricks of the trade. (Goldstein, 2014, p. 251)

In order to retain teachers in the profession, school systems must determine

factors causing teachers to leave the profession as well as factors motivating them to remain in the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond & Ducommun, 2011; Schaffhauser, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Martin Fishbein first proposed Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) in the 1970s. According to the theory, an individual's behavior is determined by the perceived value of a goal and by the anticipated level of success in attaining the goal (Fishbein & Aizen, 1975). The theory was originally designed to study the motivations of all individuals. Motivation has been viewed as “energy or drive that moves people to do something by nature” (Han & Yin, 2016, para. 6).

In 1964, Victor Vroom proposed the Expectancy Theory of Motivation (ETM) that assumed behavior was a result of conscious choices and was also affected by factors such as personality, skills, knowledge, experience, and abilities (Vroom's Expectancy Theory, n.d.). ETM promoted an individual's belief that increased effort led to higher performance and higher performance led to rewards that satisfy needs, thus making the effort meaningful (Vroom's Expectancy Theory, n.d.). Vroom's theory examined the belief that effort put forward would result in desired performance (expectancy) and achieving specific levels of performance would result in attainment of rewards (instrumentality; Expectancy Theory of Motivation-Victor Vroom, n.d.). According to ETM, the level of expectancy was multiplied by the level of instrumentality to determine the value of the reward (valence; Expectancy Theory of Motivation-Victor Vroom, n.d.). Motivational force was summarized by the following equation:

$$MF = \text{Expectancy} \times \text{Instrumentality} \times \sum (\text{Valence}(s))$$

Vroom contended, if at any point the individual perceived the attainment of the reward to

be impossible, levels of expectancy or instrumentality would be zero, resulting in a motivational force of zero due to the multiplication of the two factors (Expectancy Theory of Motivation-Victor Vroom, n.d.).

During the 1980s, the theory was altered to focus specifically on the levels of confidence felt by students regarding the completion of academic tasks (self-efficacy) and the perceived value of the academic task (task value) in order to determine academic outcomes for students (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). As noted by Watt and Richardson (2015), “In the last decade, theories, constructs, and concepts from the well-established student motivation literature have been extrapolated to the study of teacher motivation” (para. 1). The EVT model developed by Eccles (2009), as cited by Watt and Richardson, advised achievement-related choices regarding education and vocation are formed not only by an individual’s beliefs of ability and expectations for success but also by the value attached to the task. These constructs were drawn directly from Fishbein and Aizen’s (1975) EVT model. Watt and Richardson further deconstructed the Eccles EVT model and further examined individual levels of enjoyment of the task (intrinsic or interest value), the usefulness of the task (utility value), whether or not the task would aid in attaining achievement goals (attainment value), and the costliness of the task (opportunity cost) including any negative effects such as anxiety, stress, and time commitments.

Teacher shortages sparked a renewed interest in motivation research to address teacher motivation to remain in the teaching profession (Han & Yin, 2016). Motivation research indicated teacher shortages resulted from early attrition, the ageing of the teaching force, limited career opportunities, low job security, and low prestige (Han & Yin, 2016; Watt & Richardson, 2015). Motivation research regarding teacher motivation

to remain in the teaching profession has provided valuable knowledge for administrators to attract and retain teachers (Han & Yin, 2016).

Four integral components found to affect a potential teacher motivation to enter the teaching field and/or to remain in the teaching field were intrinsic motivation, social influences, feelings of commitment, and demotivating factors stemming from negative influences. Intrinsic motivations for teachers included the desire to make a difference in society and the ability to shape the future. Social influences motivating teachers were generated by the desire to work with other teachers and students. Working with students and teachers was found to foster a strong sense of commitment to the success of students and other teachers. Negative influences such as heavy workloads, anxiety, stress, and increased time commitments tend to demotivate, or lower motivation, in teachers. Demotivation does not mean all motivation is lost; however, lower levels of motivation can lead to increased teacher turnover (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Conceptual Framework

Positive teaching conditions have proven to increase student achievement and teacher retention. Positive school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support have been reported to create positive teaching conditions in schools. In an effort to increase both student achievement and teacher retention, the NCTWC survey attempts to determine if teachers have these necessary supports to create positive teaching conditions. Survey items throughout the NCTWC survey ask teachers to rate the perceived levels of support in these areas (NCTWC, n.d.).

EVT proposes an individual's behavior is determined by the perceived values of goals and the anticipated levels of success in attaining goals (Fishbein & Aizen, 1975),

whereas Vroom's ETM proposed individuals believe increased effort leads to increased performance and rewards. Vroom also asserted the possible attainment of rewards makes tasks valuable (Vroom's Expectancy Theory, n.d.).

The conceptual framework for this study utilizes findings from specific NCTWC survey items that correlate to the constructs of the study and measure perceived working conditions in schools. According to EVT and ETM, the better the perceived working conditions, the higher the anticipated level of success for teachers; and the higher the anticipated level of success, the higher the motivation to remain in education. NCTWC survey items measure anticipated levels of success. According to NCTWC (n.d.), higher ratings on the NCTWC survey correlate to higher levels of anticipated success and, therefore, to higher levels of teacher retention.

This study used results gathered from teachers in five middle schools to determine motivating factors for middle school classroom retention. The results of the study were compared with NCTWC survey results to determine the extent each motivating factor was found in these schools and possible ways to improve working conditions and increase retention.

Reasons for Turnover

Increases in student enrollment and increases in the number of retirements of the baby boomer generation has led to steady increases in the demand for teachers (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003). Declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs and the amount of teacher attrition and migration are lessening the supply of teachers for classrooms (Bonner, 2016; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003). According to Ingersoll (2003), a portion of the teaching supply is leaving education in record numbers due to reasons other than retirement. The data suggest that 13% of teachers move or leave every year, and between

40-50% of all beginning teachers leave teaching altogether (Ingersoll, 2003; Neason, 2014).

To increase the supply of teachers to meet the demands of students, alternative licensure programs have been used. Alternative licensing produces teachers, but these teachers may not be as prepared as teachers in traditional programs.

To fully understand the causes and consequences of these social problems it is necessary to examine them from the perspective of the organizations—the schools and districts—where these processes happen and within which teachers work. Employee supply, demand, and turnover are central issues in organizational theory and research. However, there have been few efforts to apply this theoretical perspective to understanding school staffing problems and policy. (Ingersoll, 2003, pp. 5-6)

The two types of turnover include teachers who move to a teaching job in another school (migration) and teachers who leave education altogether (attrition; Ingersoll, 2003). From the school-level point of view, both migration and attrition result in staff members leaving who must be replaced. Teacher attrition powers the “revolving door” and instigates school staffing problems (Ingersoll, 2003). “From the framework of supply and demand theory, the data show that the problem is not primarily shortages, in the sense of an insufficient supply of teachers being recruited and trained” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 17). Therefore, recruiting teachers will not solve the problem.

In short, recruiting more teachers will not solve the teacher crisis if 40 to 50% of such teachers then leave within five years. The image that comes to mind is a bucket rapidly losing water because of holes in the bottom. Pouring more water into the bucket will not be the answer if the holes are not first patched. (Ingersoll,

2003, p. 17)

Data suggest school staffing problems are embedded in the organization of the school and the perception of the teaching profession. To reduce teacher migration and attrition, school and/or district-wide organizational structures and policies may need to be improved (Ingersoll, 2003).

Lack of principal support. According to Ingersoll (2001), inadequate support from school administration, including limited faculty input into school-wide decision making, provoke one fourth of teachers to migrate to another school or district or leave the teaching profession altogether. The main reason many teachers report for leaving their job is specifically the principal (Tierney, 2012).

A McKinsey study shows that in choosing where to work, reporting to a better principal is just as motivating for top-third teachers as securing more pay. There is also evidence that teachers are more likely to respect and work productively with principals who have been teachers, especially in the same school or neighborhood. (Goldstein, 2014, p. 268)

The perception of how well the principal works with staff members is a stronger factor for attrition or mobility than availability of resources, workload, or professional development opportunities (Tierney, 2012). The perception of how well a principal works with the staff is presented through negative situations regarding school or district policies, teacher evaluations, and expectations of working beyond contractual obligations (Tierney, 2012). Ineffective principals do not increase teacher quality due to their lack of support and lack of feedback following classroom observations (Hull, 2012). “Teachers move because of job dissatisfaction, including inadequate administrative support, isolated working conditions, poor student discipline, lower salaries and lack of collective teacher

influence over school decisions” (Schaffhauser, 2014, para. 3).

Lack of legislative support. As the Baby Boomer generation ages and approaches retirement, the teaching field becomes “grayer” (Ingersoll et al., 2014, p. 8). The aging of many veteran teachers is costlier due to higher annual salaries and payouts for state pensions upon retirement. The retirements from the teaching field then lead to a “greener,” younger pool of teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2014, p. 11). A larger portion of the teaching field then remains at the lower, less expensive end of the pay scale (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The younger generation of teachers is also lessening the burden for the pension system, defraying some of the pension obligations for the state legislature (Ingersoll et al., 2014).

Despite legislative action to lower teacher turnover, the teacher turnover rate has continued to rise. In North Carolina, the teacher turnover rate was 11% in 2010 and, after the salary scale renovation of 2014, rose to 15% in 2015 (Brenneman, 2015). The salary scale of 2014 increased teacher pay an average of 7%, with the largest increases going to new teachers; veteran teachers only received an average increase of 1% (Brenneman, 2015). Before the pay increase, legislators ended tenure and ceased payment for master’s degrees (Brenneman, 2015).

Accountability measures were also implemented after the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was instated. Punitive sanctions were issued to underperforming schools and worsened the teacher turnover problem in low-performing schools (Ingersoll et al., 2016). According to research conducted by Ingersoll et al. (2016), “The data revealed two striking findings: (1) some steps in school accountability were strongly related to teacher turnover, and some were not. (2) The impact of accountability strongly depended on teachers' working conditions in their school” (para. 9). Providing positive

working conditions could “mitigate potential negative effects of accountability reforms” (Ingersoll et al., 2016, para. 7).

Lack of empowerment opportunities. The desire to have more influence over school policies was another reported frustration found to be compelling teachers to leave the classroom (Marinell & Coca, 2013). Teachers have expressed desires to have a voice in school-wide decision-making processes regarding operational and instructional issues (Marinell & Coca, 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2016). Some schools have reportedly afforded teachers the opportunity to contribute to instructional and curricular decisions; however, these types of decisions are less supportive of retention than organizational decisions (Marinell & Coca, 2013).

According to Creasman and Coquyt (2016), “Teacher leaders ... obtain power, authority, and respect through their empowerment of others” (p. xiv), and “Teacher leaders empower leadership through collaboration” (p. 10). In order for empowerment and collaboration to occur, the importance of collaboration and its role in the creation of a culture of high expectations must be communicated clearly (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016).

Lack of parent and community support. A lack of family and community support has been linked to higher teacher turnover rates (Ingersoll, 2001). According to Marinell and Coca (2013), “This turnover may compromise the continuity of the relationships between middle school teachers and administrators, students, parents, and the staff of organizations that partner with middle schools” (p. v). Ingersoll (2001) noted, “The presence of a sense of community and cohesion among families, teachers, and students is important to the success of the school” (p. 526). High levels of teacher turnover indicate school organizational issues that disrupt communities both inside and outside the school walls (Ingersoll, 2001).

Negative school climate. As defined by Gruenert and Whitaker (2015), “Climate is the culmination of the collective attitudes of the members of a group” (p. 18) or “the way we feel around here” (p. 10). Culture is based on the values and beliefs of the group or “the way we do things around here” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 10). A challenging school climate may increase teacher turnover; and consequently, high teacher turnover may create a challenging school climate (Marinell & Coca, 2013). High levels of teacher turnover make it difficult for school leaders to establish school-wide norms and a shared vision for the school (Marinell & Coca, 2013).

Teacher morale is reflective of the school culture and strongly affects school climate (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015); however, school climate is far easier to change and can occur instantly, but school culture evolves slowly (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). School-wide cultural change may take years to reflect new values and beliefs in the actions of the staff (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). High teacher turnover delays the process of cultural change. Continual recruitment and training of teachers seizes valuable funding and resources and hinders the establishment of a consistent and effective school culture (Marinell & Coca, 2013).

Trust. “Trust is essential for effective working relationships” (Reid, 2008, p. 8). Research shows trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders improves the routine work in schools and is crucial to school reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Teacher intentions to leave a school increase when the school is led by an administrator who does not create a supportive and trusting environment (Reid, 2008). When there are few ways for teachers to express disagreement with current school policies and low levels of trust between staff members and administrators, teachers who disagree with school policy are more likely to leave (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 538). The absence of trust stifles teacher

opportunities for creativity and innovation due to the lack of a safe environment to attempt new practices (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Principal actions play a key role in establishing and sustaining trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). In circumstances when teachers feel undermined by and untrusting of their principal, teacher intentions to remain at the school decrease (Marinell & Coca, 2013). In schools plagued with high levels of teacher turnover, students have been reported as having neither respect nor trust for incoming teachers due to the history of turnover at the school (Marinell & Coca, 2013).

Lack of collaboration. Exceptionally high teacher turnover has been associated with a lack of planning time (Ingersoll, 2001) and a lack of collegiality among teachers (Marinell & Coca, 2013). Effective teachers are not born being effective; they are grown through high-quality training and guidance (Goldstein, 2014). According to Creasman and Coquyt (2016),

For collaboration to occur, the school must have formalized structures and processes that are conducive to collaboration. For example, high-performing schools have regularly scheduled professional learning communities. By scheduling time for collaboration, school leaders provide the opportunity to work around everyone's schedule. More importantly, predetermined dates for professional learning communities signal the importance of the process. Keep in mind that this is only an example of a formal protocol for professional learning communities. Informal professional learning communities, collaboration that is not planned ahead, are just as important to creating a culture of collaboration. (p. 3)

Teachers are often isolated, rarely seeing other classrooms or being observed by

other teachers (Wong & Wong, 2007). This isolation causes the problems of younger teachers to be intensified (Wong & Wong, 2007). According to Glickman et al. (2014), “Beyond formal support programs, schools need to become the type of collegial, caring, growth-oriented communities that sustain teachers in times of transitions” (p. 71).

Lack of support. Multiple studies have shown teachers leave the profession due to a lack of support (Goldstein, 2014; Ingersoll, 2001; Marinell & Coca, 2013; Martin, 2011). A large percentage of teachers, beginning and veteran, do not receive the necessary constructive feedback needed to grow professionally (Goldstein, 2014). Teachers report “having too little time to think creatively and collaborate with colleagues, and they had no opportunity to take on additional responsibilities and grow as professionals” (Goldstein, 2014, p. 232). To refocus the efforts to reduce the teacher turnover rate, Goldstein (2014) suggested,

Education reformers today should learn from the mistakes of history. We must focus less on how to rank and fire teachers and more on how to make day-to-day teaching an attractive, challenging job that intelligent, creative, and ambitious people will gravitate toward. We must quiet the teacher wars and support ordinary teachers in improving their skills. (p. 11)

Reasons Teachers Remain in the Classroom

According to Inman and Marlow (2004),

While accurate measures of teacher attrition are important if school systems, administrators, and potential teachers are to effectively plan for the coming years, the need to identify factors which cause teachers to remain in the profession is perhaps of greater importance. (p. 605).

Recent research has indicated several factors motivating teachers to remain in the field of

education and specifically the classroom. The most influential motivating factor undoubtedly is students. Students are the reason teachers entered education and are rarely a reason for teachers leaving the field (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). The ability to work with children, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or disability, is extremely rewarding (Guarino et al., 2006).

Additional factors influencing teacher satisfaction are “the provision of ample time to collaborate during the school day, strong and supportive principals, and a common vision that’s shared and executed by teachers and staff” (Barnwell, 2015, p. 16). Some districts also give teachers a voice in policy decisions, ensure classroom autonomy, provide continual professional coaching, and offer opportunities for advancement to retain high-performing teachers (Mongeau, 2015). Supportive leadership, time for collaboration, and relevant professional development were found to be more important in the retention of teachers than higher salaries (Smollin, 2011). The greater the support teachers experience, the more likely they are to remain in their school (Guarino et al., 2006). Supports linked to higher teacher retention are a positive school culture containing opportunities for teacher leadership, data-informed decision-making, high levels of trust and collegiality developed through collaborative planning time, administrative support including opportunities for empowerment, individualized professional development, and support from families and the community.

School culture. In the same way that negative school culture can be a factor in teacher attrition, a positive school climate can lead to teacher retention. “Culture influences our values and beliefs; climate constitutes those values and beliefs in action. However, there are times when, by adjusting the climate, we can actually begin to change portions of the culture” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 22). Various actions such as

encouraging teacher leadership, collective decision-making, and promoting collaboration have been proven to create more effective school cultures.

Teacher leadership. Teacher leadership can improve the capacity of teachers and school administrators and improve the culture of the school (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016). By allowing teachers and teacher leaders to have a voice in molding the school's vision, school administrators increase school ownership of teachers. In turn, teachers with increased ownership feel a part of the school and want to witness the results of their work (Martinez et al., 2010). Increased ownership has been proven to increase teacher attendance and effectiveness, thus increasing teacher retention (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016).

Data-informed decision-making. “The use of data in decision-making processes has also been reported to create noticeable improvements in the school's culture and teacher morale” (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016, p. 41). Effective educational leaders use data to guide decision-making, define needs, form goals, plan interventions, and monitor progress (Goldring & Berends, 2009). Effective leaders also use data to engage teachers, parents, and students to promote school improvement and organizational learning (Goldring & Berends, 2009). According to Goldring and Berends (2009), “Organizational learning occurs when knowledge is distributed across individuals and is embedded in the culture, values and routines of the organization” and “data can serve as a catalyst to propel organizational learning” (p. 15).

Data-informed decision-making can be used by school leaders to develop a learning culture for teachers and students in the school (Goldring & Berends, 2009). Data sources used to inform decision-making stem not only from state-mandated standardized assessments but also from program evaluations, formative student

assessments such as student work and portfolios, and teacher observations (Goldring & Berends, 2009). Assessment results can be used to implement interventions to promote increased student achievement and a culture of data-driven improvement (Goldring & Berends, 2009). “Data that is dispersed and shared throughout the school will better facilitate the professional climate and organizational learning” (Goldring & Berends, 2009, p. 15).

Trust. Schools build trust through daily interactions of staff and students showing support and a sense of obligation for others through words and actions (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Showing respect and personal regard for others, acknowledging the vulnerabilities of others, and actively listening to others’ concerns assist in the creation of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). In schools where levels of trust are high, staff “members are confident that they can share their professional struggles with anyone else in the culture without invalidating their work” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 72). When trust between school administrators, teachers, and families is present, teachers feel secure and often experiment with new instructional strategies (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). High levels of trust in a school culture also prompt collective decision-making among administration and staff (Bryk & Schneider, 2003); therefore, high levels of trust lead to higher retention rates of teachers and increased student achievement.

Collaborative time. Collaboration was found to be more important to teachers than higher salaries (Morrison, 2012; Smollin, 2011). According to Creasman and Coquyt (2016), “Collaboration begins with a clearly communicated vision” (p. 10) and “effective communication is the first step to establishing a culture of collaboration” (p. 13) and increasing levels of “trust and respect” (p. 3). Increasing levels of trust and respect can lead to opportunities for teacher leadership. Teacher leaders then work more

closely with administrators and can encourage further opportunities for teacher collaboration (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016).

As teachers trust the process of collaboration, the more likely true needs from teachers will be identified. Have a true understanding of what teacher needs are assists the collaboration process because collaboration feels more like coordination, instead of something that they have to do (seen as compliance).

(Creasman & Coquyt, 2016, p. 10)

Addressing the true needs of teachers increases staff and teacher morale, produces higher test scores for students, and creates a more effective school (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016). Collaboration also leads to ownership for all stakeholders by providing them “a voice in the direction and vision of the school” (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016, p. 14). By emphasizing collaboration, schools also emphasize the value of diverse perspectives (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016). “As voices are heard and stakeholders feel valued, the school’s decision-making process become more united, open, transparent, and diverse” (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016, p. 19).

Collegiality. A study by Inman and Marlow (2004) concluded that 70% of teachers valued collegiality over daily working conditions and job security within their first 10 years of experience. Marinell and Coca (2013) also found,

The level of collegiality among teachers also had a modest influence on the likelihood that teachers remained in their schools. In middle schools where teachers reported average or high levels of support, rapport, trust and respect among their colleagues, rates of turnover were lower. (p. ix)

Strong relationships among teachers can promote stability in schools, including schools where the principal is perceived to be ineffective (Marinell & Coca, 2013). Collaboration

provides opportunities for teachers to provide emotional support as well as instructional support for one another (Guarino et al., 2006).

Collaborative cultures can increase teacher ownership of the school and promote creativity in lesson design. Increases in ownership and the freedom of creativity increases teacher morale and enables teachers to feel a part of a team (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016). Teachers feel empowered as they develop plans and solve problems together. Empowerment allows teachers to form strong collegial relationships and bonds with each other (Guarino et al., 2006).

Goldstein (2014) reported places such as Shanghai have reshaped teacher workdays to allow for increased collegial opportunities. Teachers no longer spend the entire day alone in a classroom in front of children; the teachers are spending more time planning lessons together, observing other teachers at work, and sharing best practices to improve instruction and classroom management (Goldstein, 2014). To improve collegiality, Goldstein also suggested,

Change the structure of teachers' workdays so all effective veterans spend some time watching novice teachers work and coaching them. Beginner teachers, in turn, should have time to observe veterans' classrooms and to work with colleagues to plan effective, engaging lessons. (p. 270)

Administrative support. Supportive administration was reported as being just as crucial to teacher retention as collegiality (Marinell & Coca, 2013). "Turnover was lower in schools where teachers reported that the principal was trusting and supportive of the teaching staff, a knowledgeable instructional leader, an efficient manager, and adept at forming partnerships with external organizations" (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p. 26). Strong leadership by administration was also conveyed to develop a stable group of

teachers dedicated to school improvement (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p.26). Effective principals reportedly “increase teacher quality through frequent classroom observations followed by immediate feedback” (Hull, 2012, para. 9).

A significant amount of learning occurs through the life experiences of adults (Glickman et al., 2014). “Administrators must identify and empathize with the harsh realities of the teacher/family balance” (Brown, 2016, para. 11). According to Glickman et al. (2014), “A teacher’s personal, family, and professional roles interact with and affect each other and need to be addressed holistically by supervision” (p. 72). School administrators must support teachers to encourage growth from turbulent professional and personal life experiences (Glickman et al., 2014).

Empowerment opportunities. As stated by Ingersoll et al. (2016), the quality of school leadership and the level of school-wide faculty influence over decision-making mattered most for retention (para. 17). “Teachers’ ability to influence certain policies and practices at their school (such as hiring other teachers, determining the school schedule, setting school discipline policy and designing faculty in-service)” were reported to be associated with high rates of teacher retention (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p. 35). Teachers with all levels of teaching experience can contribute to the improvement of organizational practice. Levine (1987), as quoted by Glickman et al. (2014), argued, “Activities that capitalize on young teachers’ enthusiasm might include opportunities to work on new teaching methods, to develop curricula, and to initiate projects” (p. 70). These types of activities foster the need for innovation and adventure while helping young teachers cultivate collegial relationships (Glickman et al., 2014). Activities to expand authority while retaining teachers in the classroom, such as decision-making committees and mentoring, were recommended for mid-career teachers (Glickman et al.,

2014).

“Developing new curricula is one of the most interesting, intellectually engaging aspects of schooling. It is a responsibility that, if granted to more teachers, could potentially help convince many well-educated, ambitious people to remain in the classroom” (Goldstein, 2014, pp. 260-261). In order to retain quality teachers, exciting and challenging opportunities for individual growth must be offered (Goldstein, 2014). These opportunities must include leading adults, not just children (Goldstein, 2014). In the Republic of Singapore, after 3 years, teachers select a leadership path in curriculum development, school administration, or instructional mentoring (Goldstein, 2014). Opportunities to lead colleagues during a portion of the day and instruct students for the remainder of the day are being offered in cities throughout the United States (Goldstein, 2014).

Individualized professional development. Strong teachers and teacher leaders understand much of their valuable professional development comes from collaboration with other teachers (Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004). Teachers place a high value on professional development and often go outside their system to get the individualized development they need (Patterson et al., 2004). Marinell and Coca (2013) suggested coupling “professional development for early-career teachers with incentives and other supports aimed at building long-term commitments” (p. viii).

This directly goes back to administrative leadership, because professional development opportunities should be individualized as possible. Professional Development... should be targeted, meaningful, and individualized, and should always come with a package of long-term support, ready to use resources, and collaboration. (Brown, 2016, para. 16)

Family and community support. The sense of community among teachers, students, families, and the community is an indicator of the success of a school (Ingersoll, 2001). “In a supportive community, teachers feel valued, wanted, and motivated, which in turn encourages teachers to remain in the profession” (Inman & Marlow, 2004, p. 613). A combined effort is needed on behalf of the school administration, teachers, and community members for communities to become more supportive of teachers and their teaching conditions (Inman & Marlow, 2004). In order for this larger community to be built, administrators must promote the success of their staff to families and the community in an effort to enhance the public perception of the teaching profession (Inman & Marlow, 2004).

Counties reporting lower turnover rates often have strong community support (Brenneman, 2015). When parents and the community support teachers, a wide variety of resources such as school supplies, professional knowledge, and health and dental care become available to teachers (Glickman et al., 2014). As a result of parent support and community engagement, teachers become invested and true members of the community (Brenneman, 2015).

NCTWC Survey

The NCTWC survey is a statewide, anonymous survey administered every 2 years to licensed school-based educators in an effort to determine if teachers have the supports necessary for effective teaching (NCTWC, n.d.). The survey was first administered in 2002 as a part of the Governor’s Teacher Working Conditions Initiative (NCTWC, n.d.). Schools and school districts use the results to “guide positive change and strengthen professional development, school improvement plans and teacher and administrator evaluations” (NCTWC, n.d.).

Research shows positive teaching conditions are associated with improved student achievement and teacher retention (NCTWC, n.d.). The survey provides schools with data focusing on community engagement and support, teacher leadership, school leadership, managing student conduct, use of time, professional development, facilities and resources, instructional practices and support, and new teacher support to promote school improvement efforts (NCTWC, n.d.).

Summary

In this chapter, current research was presented on factors affecting teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom. The actions of school administrators have a massive impact on teacher retention. Teachers desire autonomy, administrative support, and clear expectations (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). “By exerting strong and inclusive leadership, fostering high levels of order and teacher collegiality, and providing teachers with some professional control, principals may be able to retain more of their teachers over time” (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p. ix).

Assisting administrators in understanding their impact on teacher intentions and the value of building positive relationships and empowering teachers would increase teacher retention (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Collaborative relationships build positive school climates and lead to school improvement (Marinell & Coca, 2013). “At the system level, these findings suggest that training and professional development focusing on the areas described above for principals may be important strategies to improve teacher retention” (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p. ix).

This chapter focused on the research of factors motivating teachers to remain in the field of education. The next chapter will focus on this specific research study. It will investigate factors motivating teachers to remain in middle school classrooms. Chapter 3

will introduce the research methods, including data collection tools and how the data collected aligned to the research questions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The focus of this study was on factors motivating teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. The study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. First, archived, quantitative data from the NCTWC survey were analyzed in order to determine factors motivating teachers to remain in their current school. Next, quantitative data were collected from a survey instrument designed by the researcher to measure specific factors that may have affected a teacher's desire to remain in the middle school classroom. The survey was administered to teachers currently teaching in traditional middle school classrooms (Grades 6-8) and specifically focused on the extent the school climate, amount of administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support affected their desire to remain in the middle school classroom.

Two focus groups consisting of teachers who have remained in the middle school classroom were conducted by random sampling from a list of names compiled from the voluntary survey data. Questions for the focus group were designed to delve deeper to discover additional potential factors motivating teachers to remain in the middle school classroom.

Problem Addressed

Teacher turnover in the middle school classroom is continuing to increase and falls into one of three categories: teachers who remain in the same district but moved to a different school (stayers); teachers who left one school district for another (movers), referred to as migration; and teachers who left education altogether (leavers), referred to as attrition (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Teacher attrition has been in the spotlight; however,

teacher migration was overlooked due to the fact that it did not change the overall supply of teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Migration did, however, mean a teacher was leaving one classroom for another or for a position outside the classroom. This study focused on specific factors that may have motivated teachers to remain in the middle school classroom instead of migrating to positions outside of the middle school classroom.

Research Design and Rationale

The mixed-methods research design has become increasingly popular with researchers in the social science fields since the latter half of the 20th century (Creswell, 2014). In order to provide a deeper, more personalized understanding of the factors motivating teachers to remain in the middle school classroom, this study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design. In this study, a QUAN → QUAL research design was used. This study was considered explanatory because the initial quantitative data results were further explained by collecting qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). This two-phase study was considered sequential due to the quantitative phase being followed by the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2014).

During the first phase of the study, the researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data via the electronic survey created by the researcher. To begin this process, the researcher contacted the principal at each of the participating middle schools to request permission to administer the survey instrument. The researcher then forwarded the survey instrument and an explanation of the study to each principal and to all classroom teachers at the school. The explanation also contained the survey data collection window for responses. All classroom teachers were asked to complete the survey.

The survey contained quantitative survey items utilizing a Likert scale for

responses (QUAN). The survey also contained qualitative survey items used to gather additional motivating factors and contact information for potential focus group participants (QUAL). Following the data collection, quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software and qualitative data were coded for themes.

During the second phase of the study, the researcher conducted two focus groups. Focus group questions were modified based on data collected from the researcher-created survey. Participants for focus groups were gathered on a voluntary basis. Survey participants willing to participate in a focus group were asked to provide a name and contact information. The researcher's name, email, and phone number were also provided at the conclusion of the survey for participants willing to participate in a focus group but desiring to keep their survey responses anonymous.

Two focus groups were assembled to accommodate the needs of the participants. Focus groups were held in an off-campus location to protect the identity and responses of participants. The focus groups were held on different dates and met during afterschool hours. Each focus group contained no more than five participants to ensure all members were able to participate freely and actively (Clifford, 2012). Each focus group meeting was audio recorded. Following each focus group meeting, qualitative data for each focus group was coded for themes.

According to Creswell (2014), "The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone" (p. 4). The study collected quantitative data by using a survey created by the researcher to measure specific factors that may have affected a teacher's desire to remain in the middle school classroom. Survey results were triangulated using data collected from focus groups

comprised of voluntary participants from the researcher-created survey sample. Further explanation of data analysis will occur later in this chapter; however, it is important to note that quantitative and qualitative results were used to triangulate the data, as seen in Figure 1.

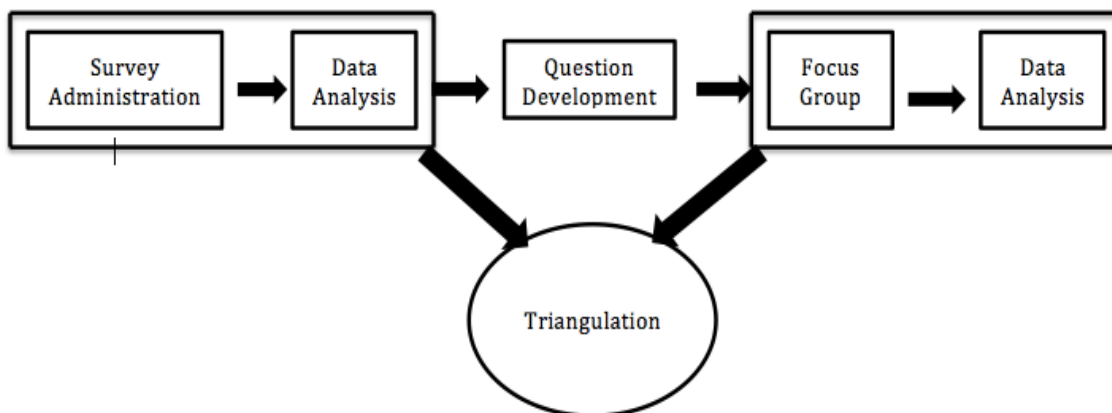


Figure 1. Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods Design Process. Adapted from Wu (2011).

Research Questions

Two research questions were designed to focus the study. The first question sought to measure the extent specific factors motivated teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. The second question was designed to triangulate survey data results and further explore factors motivating teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. The results were compared with themes found within the literature review and NCTWC survey data analysis. The following research questions were used to guide the study.

1. To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by
 - a. School climate,
 - b. Administrative support,

- c. Individualized professional development,
 - d. Collegiality, and
 - e. Family and community support?
2. How do themes gathered from focus group participants and qualitative survey items explain the factors encouraging middle school teachers to remain in the classroom?

The hypothesis for this study was, “Teachers will report positive school climate, administrative support, and collegiality to be factors motivating them to remain in the middle school classroom.” The null hypothesis for the study was, “There will be a slightly increased emphasis on the importance of administrative support; no significant difference between school climate, individualized professional development, and collegiality; and slightly less emphasis on the importance of family and community support.”

The dependent variable in the quantitative portion of the study was teacher motivations for remaining in the middle school classroom. The independent variables in the study were school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support.

Research Methodology

Setting. This research study was conducted in five traditional middle schools (schools containing only Grades 6-8) in a rural school district located in central North Carolina. In order to participate in the study, teachers must have been a classroom teacher in the middle school setting (Grades 6-8) during the current school year.

Population sample. The population for this study was middle school classroom teachers. The survey instrument was administered via email to all teachers who were

currently in the middle school classroom within the participating school district. The sample for this study was a convenience sample of 170 teachers. For this study, the goal of the researcher was a confidence level of 95% with a 10% margin of error. In order to meet these criteria, a sample population of 62 was necessary. The convenience sample was used intentionally in order to gather and analyze data in an efficient and timely manner. The sample was drawn only from middle schools located within one rural school district in central North Carolina. All middle school classroom teachers (Grades 6-8) were invited to participate in the survey in order to determine to what extent school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support had on their desire to stay or leave the middle school classroom.

Role of the researcher. The researcher is an employee in the subject school district. The researcher developed a survey instrument and compiled a group of teachers to pilot the survey instrument to aid the researcher with validation. The survey instrument was administered via the participating district's email system. The researcher compiled two focus groups by requesting participation during the survey implementation.

Survey Instrument

“Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2014, p. 155). To measure the factors, or attitudes, motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom, the researcher administered a cross-sectional survey created by the researcher. The use of a survey allowed the researcher to collect data in an economic and time-sensitive manner (Creswell, 2014). The results collected from the sample population may allow school districts with similar demographics to determine factors that

may encourage classroom retention among middle school teachers.

The survey, constructed using Survey Monkey Audience (2017), was delivered via email through the participating district's distribution system. Email administration allowed the researcher to gather as much data as possible in a cost-effective manner; however, this format did not allow for any control of the number of responses received by the researcher. Before administering the survey, the researcher contacted principals at each middle school in the district to seek permission to forward the survey to the principal and all classroom teachers. Once the principal granted permission, the researcher forwarded the survey instrument to all middle school classroom teachers using the email distribution system. The population for the survey was 170 teachers, distributed among five middle schools. All classroom teachers who were assigned to a traditional (Grades 6-8) middle school classroom teaching assignment were asked to complete the survey.

Survey development. This study began with an extensive literature review producing five main themes affecting teacher retention. The researcher used the five themes to develop the constructs for the study. The researcher then collected NCTWC survey results for each of the participating middle schools in the study. The researcher selected NCTWC survey items aligned with constructs determined from the literature review. The researcher analyzed data from each selected NCTWC survey item. The analysis allowed the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the factors potentially affecting teacher retention. Due to the fact that the NCTWC survey measured school conditions, or what teachers were experiencing, the researcher created the Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey (Appendix A) to measure specific factors within school conditions potentially motivating teachers to remain in the

classroom.

First, the researcher included demographic items to provide a description of the population. To measure teachers' overall motivation to remain in the middle school classroom, the researcher provided responses "of little importance, of average importance, very important, and absolutely essential" for participants to select. The researcher then created survey items directly from each research question. Next, the researcher developed survey items to measure each research question using specific examples of each factor. Finally, to ensure each survey item exuded high evidence of validity, the researcher created a table aligning survey items to research questions (Appendix B).

The researcher created a table aligning research questions, NCTWC survey items, and Motivation survey items for each construct of the study. For the school climate construct, as seen in Table 9, the researcher selected 10 NCTWC survey items to analyze. This analysis produced four Motivation Survey items focusing on school climate, being able to choose instructional practices for the classroom, being provided opportunities to be a leader in the school, and being given the opportunity to make decisions to improve school practices.

Table 8

Survey Item Alignment: School Climate Construct

Research Questions	TWC Survey Items	Motivation Survey Item Number
School Climate Construct	Items from TWC Survey Pertaining to School Climate:	Using a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 4 (absolutely essential), please rate to what extent the following motivates you to remain in the middle school classroom?
To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by school climate?	<p>6.1a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.</p> <p>6.1b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.</p> <p>6.1c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.</p> <p>6.1d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.</p> <p>6.1e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.</p> <p>6.1f. In this school, we take steps to solve problems.</p> <p>6.1g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.</p> <p>6.5. Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.</p> <p>7.1a. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.</p> <p>7.1b. Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.</p>	<p>4. School climate</p> <p>9. Being able to choose your own instructional practices for your classroom</p> <p>10. Being provided opportunities to be a leader in the school</p> <p>11. Being given the opportunity to make decisions to improve school practices</p>

For the administrative support construct, as seen in Table 10, the researcher selected eight NCTWC survey items to analyze. This analysis produced three Motivation Survey items focusing on school administration, being supported by school administration through student discipline practices, and being provided specific ways to improve classroom instruction by school administration.

Table 9

Survey Item Alignment: Administrative Support Construct

Research Questions	TWC Survey Items	Motivation Survey Item Number
Administrative Support Construct	Items from TWC Survey Pertaining to School Leadership:	Using a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 4 (absolutely essential), please rate to what extent the following motivates you to remain in the middle school classroom?
To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by administrative support?	5.1d. School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct. 5.1e. School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom. 7.1c. The school leadership consistently support teachers. 7.1f. Teacher performance is assessed objectively. 7.1g. Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching. 7.1h. The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent. 7.1j. The faculty are recognized for their accomplishments. 7.3a. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues.	5. School administration 13. Being supported by school administration through student discipline practices 14. Being provided specific ways to improve classroom instruction by school administration

For the professional development construct, as seen in Table 11, the researcher selected seven NCTWC survey items to analyze. This analysis produced three Motivation Survey items focusing on individualized professional development, being provided opportunities to choose professional development, and being provided support at the school or district level to implement professional development.

Table 10

Survey Item Alignment: Professional Development Construct

Research Questions	TWC Survey Items	Motivation Survey Item Number
Professional Development Construct	Items from TWC Survey Pertaining to Professional Development Conditions:	Using a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 4 (absolutely essential), please rate to what extent the following motivates you to remain in the middle school classroom?
To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by individualized professional development?	2.2b. In an average week, how much time do you devote to professional development during the school day? 6.2d. How much of a role do teachers have in determining the content of in-service professional development programs in your school? 7.3d. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about professional development. 8.1a. Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school. 8.1b. An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development. 8.1c. Professional development offerings are data driven. 8.1e. Professional development is differentiated to meet the individual needs of teachers.	6. Individualized professional development 16. Being provided opportunities to choose professional development 17. Being provided support at the school or district level to implement professional development

For the collegiality construct, as seen in Table 12, the researcher selected five NCTWC survey items to analyze. This analysis produced three Motivation Survey items focusing on the ability to collaborate with colleagues, being provided opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices, and being provided sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues.

Table 11

Survey Item Alignment: Collegiality Construct

Research Questions	TWC Survey Items	Motivation Survey Item Number
Collegiality Construct	Items from TWC Survey Pertaining to Instructional Practices and Support/Time:	Using a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 4 (absolutely essential), please rate to what extent the following motivates you to remain in the middle school classroom?
To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by collegiality?	2.1b. Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues. 2.2b. In an average week, how much time do you devote to the collaborative planning time during the school day? 8.1j. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices. 9.1g. Teachers collaborate to achieve consistency on how student work is assessed. 9.1i. Teachers have knowledge of the content covered and instructional methods used by other teachers at this school.	7. The ability to collaborate with colleagues 12. Being provided opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices 15. Being provided sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues.

For the family and community support construct, as seen in Table 13, the researcher selected nine NCTWC survey items to analyze. This analysis produced two Motivation Survey items focusing on support of student families and the community and family and community members being provided opportunities to participate in school activities.

Table 12

Survey Item Alignment: Family and Community Support Construct

Research Questions	TWC Survey Items	Motivation Survey Item Number
Family and Community Support Construct	Items from TWC Survey Pertaining to Community Engagement and Support:	Using a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 4 (absolutely essential), please rate to what extent the following motivates you to remain in the middle school classroom?
To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by family and community support?	<p>2.2f. In an average week, how much time do you devote to communicating with parents/guardians and/or the community during the school day?</p> <p>4.1a. Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.</p> <p>4.1b. This school maintains clear, two-way communication with the community.</p> <p>4.1c. This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.</p> <p>4.1d. Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.</p> <p>4.1e. Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school.</p> <p>4.1f. Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.</p> <p>4.1g. Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.</p> <p>4.1h. The community we serve is supportive of this school.</p>	<p>8. Support of student families and the community</p> <p>18. Family and community members being provided opportunities to participate in school activities</p>

The researcher used one question directly from the NCTWC survey. The survey items requests, “Which of the following best describes your professional plans in the near future?” In order to better align to the research, the answer choices were modified by the researcher to continue as a middle school teacher, move to an elementary school

classroom teacher, move to a high school classroom teacher, or move to a position outside the classroom (administration, support, etc.).

Two qualitative survey items were included on the Motivation Survey to gather additional data that were not specifically mentioned in the quantitative section: “Have you considered leaving (or previously left) the middle school classroom? Is so, what was the major reason? Why did you stay (or return)?” and “Please discuss any additional factors that have motivated you to remain in the middle school classroom.” Each of these questions contained a text box for responses.

In an attempt to increase the response rate of the survey instrument, the researcher limited the number of survey items to 20 and limited the time to complete the survey to 10 minutes. Research showed survey instruments requiring more than 15 minutes to complete had lower response rates (Improving Survey Response Rates: Four Tactics to Increase Participation, 2014). The researcher also designed the survey instrument to be administered through Survey Monkey (2017), an online format, and utilized a link in an email in order to make the instrument easily accessible (Zewei, 2017). The researcher used graphics sparingly (Improving Survey Response Rates: Four Tactics to Increase Participation, 2014) and included the most important items in the first half of the survey instrument to ensure those items were answered at a greater rate (Questionnaire Design Considerations, n.d.).

Contacting participants multiple times has also shown to increase survey response rates from 4% to 29% (Improving Survey Response Rates: Four Tactics to Increase Participation, 2014). The researcher emailed the survey to all teachers in the middle schools using the district email system explaining the purpose and timeframe of the survey. The researcher also contacted potential survey respondents on three separate

occasions in an effort to increase the survey response rate.

Pilot-testing of survey instrument. Seven teachers with middle school classroom experience were asked to pilot the survey instrument. The pilot test group was asked to complete the survey in order to provide feedback on how to improve the survey. Table 14 contains feedback and recommendations from the pilot test group.

Table 13

Pilot Test Group Feedback and Recommendations

Reviewer	Feedback and Recommendations
1	Question 19-answer choices are clear but their language could be more parallel. Maybe each choice could contain the word position [as in seek an elementary school classroom position]
2	Question 17-Suggestion for wording (implement new strategies learned in PD)
3	Questions 5, 13 and 14 all deal with administrative support. I'd put them together as questions 13, 14 and 15.
4	No changes
5	Question 1-I understand this question to mean "years completed" - some may question which box to check. Two things that you may want to consider whether you'd be interested in crafting a question about are: *Autonomy as an educator. *Data and/or testing. Some people may feel more comfortable emailing you somewhere other than school.
6	Looks great!
7	Question 6 -I was unsure about the phrase "individualized professional development". Question 7- Is this question asking about the social interactions among the teachers? In other words, "how well one gets along with the others on their team/hall/content area? It sounds very similar to # 12, but I think they are intended to have different meanings.

To ensure the validity of the survey instrument, feedback from the pilot test group was used to modify the survey items prior to the administration. Survey results of the pilot group were not included in the research data.

Data Collection

Archival data. The NCTWC survey was a statewide, anonymous survey administered every 2 years to licensed school-based educators in an effort to increase both student achievement and teacher retention. Research showed positive teaching conditions were associated with improved student achievement and teacher retention. The NCTWC survey attempted to determine if teachers have the necessary supports to create positive teaching conditions. Survey items throughout the NCTWC survey asked teachers to rate the perceived levels of support in various areas (NCTWC, n.d).

Results from the 2016 NCTWC survey were collected using the North Carolina Teaching Conditions website. The survey was analyzed by the researcher to determine items relating to the research questions (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016). Items from the 2016 NCTWC survey not answering a specific research question were not considered. Data from qualified NCTWC Survey Results (2016) items were organized into a table by research question (Appendix C). NCTWC Survey Results were then used to create the survey instrument for the research study. The NCTWC Survey Results were used to triangulate the data collected from the researcher's survey. NCTWC Survey Results encompassed results from all traditional (Grades 6-8) middle schools in the participating school district being surveyed by the researcher (NCTWC Survey Results, 2016).

Distribution of survey. All middle school classroom teachers in the school district (Grades 6-8) were emailed the Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey (Appendix D). The survey was used to measure to extent the effects of school

climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support have on teachers' desire to remain in the middle school classroom. Items such as "Please rate to what extent the following factors motivate you to remain in the middle school classroom" were included. Each item was measured using a Likert scale from 0 (of little importance) to 4 (absolutely essential).

Multiple questions were included to measure each construct. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using SPSS software to ensure the reliability of the questions to measure the desired construct (Urduan, 2010). Frequency tables were formed for each factor in question. A chi-square test of association was also performed to determine if the responses were proportional to what would be expected by chance (Urduan, 2010, p.161).

Results from each construct were compared to determine to what extent the data correlate. Data that correlated highly were considered for generalizability of the finding for the middle school setting of the entire district. Focus groups with teachers from middle school classrooms were also used to triangulate the data calculated from the surveys.

Focus group. Focus groups are used to explore "peoples' thoughts, ideas, attitudes, and experiences in relation to a particular topic" (Plummer, 2017, para. 3). Interactions and comments from participants can stimulate discussion and prompt elaboration on ideas. The researcher-developed survey instrument contained a section requesting contact information from participants willing to participate in a focus group. Teachers were invited from the pool of contact information. According to Rio-Roberts (2011),

The size of the focus groups is as important as its composition. . . . [F]ocus

groups should consist of six to twelve participants because less than six may not generate sufficient discussion and more than twelve participants may make it difficult to follow the discussion. (p. 313)

Teachers indicating a willingness to participate were contacted by email regarding participation in the focus group (Appendix E). Prior to the focus group meeting, all participants were provided the Informed Consent Form and were requested to return the Voluntary Consent by Participant form (Appendix F).

Teachers agreeing to participate in a focus group were forwarded the dates and times of each focus group meeting. Possible questions for the focus group were developed by the researcher to align with the research questions (Appendix G). Focus group questions were modified according to data collected from the results of the survey created by the researcher. Data gathered from the focus groups were also used to triangulate survey data.

To begin each focus group, the researcher thanked all in attendance and explained the purpose behind the focus group, the role of the moderator, and the audio recording methods. The researcher then reinforced to participants all information gathered would be anonymous and used for research purposes only. The researcher also reviewed the norms of the group that were on display during the meeting. Group members were encouraged to speak freely but to speak one at a time. Group members were reminded all opinions were important and there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. All group members were also assured they did not have to respond to a question if they felt uncomfortable and they could stop participating at any time with no consequence (Edmunds, 1999).

The researcher served as the moderator for the focus groups. The researcher asked

questions and ensured everyone had an opportunity to share. After conducting the focus groups, the researcher sent a summary and analysis of the session to each focus group participant (Rio-Roberts, 2011).

Data Analysis

Survey instrument. Data from the survey instrument were analyzed to determine the effect school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support had on middle school teachers' desire to remain in the classroom. The survey instrument contained quantitative and qualitative items.

Quantitative. This study used a chi-square of association, also known as Pearson's chi-square test or the chi-square test of independence, to analyze quantitative survey data. A chi-square of association was used to discover relationships between two categorical variables (Laerd Statistics, 2015). The chi-square of association was appropriate for the study due to the inclusion of one dependent variable (teacher motivations to remain in the classroom) being measured at the ordinal level and more than one independent nominal variable (school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support; Laerd Statistics, 2015). The chi-square of association test determines whether motivating factors in the sample fell into categories in proportions equal to what was expected by chance (Urdan, 2010). The chi-square test of association allowed the researcher to compare the quantitative data collected (known as the observed frequency) with the frequencies that would be expected to occur by chance alone (known as expected frequencies; Urdan, 2010).

To begin, the researcher constructed a contingency table, as seen in Table 15. The

contingency table allowed the researcher to determine if “the number of cases in one category of one variable were contingent upon (i.e., dependent or independent of) the other variable(s)” (Urdan, 2010, p. 162). To determine the expected frequency for each cell on the table, the researcher divided the total number of teachers with high motivation (5) by the total sample size, then divided the total number for each motivational factor by the total sample size. The product of the two fractions were then multiplied by the total sample (Urdan, 2010). This procedure was used to calculate the expected values for all remaining cells in the table.

Table 14

Factors for Remaining in the Middle School Classroom (Expected Values)

Level of Motivation	School Climate	School Administration	Individualized Professional Development	Collegiality	Family and Community Support	Row Totals
5 (high)						
4						
3						
2						
1 (low)						
Column Totals						

To compare the observed and expected frequencies and at the same time compute the chi-square value for each, the following formula was utilized by the researcher:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(o - e)^2}{e}$$

The expected value (e) was subtracted from the observed value (o). This number was squared, then divided by the expected value (e). This calculation was completed for each

cell in Table 15. The sum of all chi-square values was then completed to calculate the observed chi-square value of the table. The observed chi-square value was then compared to the critical chi-square value (Appendix H).

The degree of frequency (*df*) was calculated using $df=(R-1)(C-1)$ where R was the number of rows and C is the number of columns. Using an alpha level of 0.05 and 4 degrees of freedom, the critical chi-square value is 9.49. Using the observed chi-square value, the researcher was able to determine the level of statistical significance for each motivational factor according to the level of motivation using Appendix H.

CFA. CFA was used to determine how well survey items could measure corresponding factors. High factor loading indicated survey items were good measures for the corresponding factor. The model fit was also measured, using Mplus software, to express how well various models fit the data.

Qualitative. Qualitative survey items were analyzed by the researcher for common themes (Creswell, 2014). The themes were categorized according to the research questions. Any data collected that did not fit into a category created from the research questions were used to create additional categories. The additional categories were used to modify focus group questions to delve deeper into the additional motivating factors. If an additional category was reported by at least 10% of survey participants, the researcher added a question to the Focus Group Topic Guide to address the motivational factor with the focus group.

Following each focus group meeting, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings. The researcher read over all transcriptions in order to identify factors reported to motivate middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. Upon locating a factor reported to motivate middle school teachers to remain in the classroom, the

researcher placed the factor on a list. Once all factors were listed, the researcher sorted the factors and assembled them into like groups and utilized words to describe the factor as category headings. Factors that were closely related were compiled under the same heading. Upon completion of this process, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions again to ensure no factors were overlooked (Creswell, 2014).

According to Creswell (2014), codes fall into three categories: codes expected to be found, codes not expected at the beginning of the study, and codes that are unusual. The researcher began the coding process using the factors of school climate, school administration, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support as expected category headings. The researcher also allowed additional codes to emerge during the data analysis. Upon completion of data coding, the researcher had the coding cross-checked by a colleague who had recently obtained a doctorate degree and was familiar with qualitative research.

Reliability and Validity

In order to increase the reliability and validity of the study, the researcher used multiple procedures. To increase the reliability of the results, the researcher utilized inter-rater reliability by piloting the survey instrument with seven colleagues and collecting constructive feedback (Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, 2014). In order to strengthen reliability and minimize bias caused by perception, the researcher had data analysis and coding cross-checked by another colleague who had recently obtained a doctorate degree and was familiar with qualitative research (Creswell, 2014).

To ensure the validity of the study, the researcher triangulated the data collected from the survey instrument with results from the NCTWC survey (NCTWC Survey

Results, 2016). The researcher also utilized data obtained from focus groups to triangulate data. Focus group members were also given a summary from the focus group and asked to give feedback regarding themes and information discussed at the meeting. According to Creswell (2014), this process, referred to as member checking, increased validity by determining “accuracy of the qualitative findings” (p. 201).

Threats to Validity

Potential threats to validity may have arisen from limitations of this research study. Data collection stemming from a survey instrument may have led to a decreased number of results. The researcher being employed in one of the schools could also have affected the survey completion rate.

The population for the study was a convenience sample. Due to the rural setting of the study, the participants may have had factors motivating their decision to remain or exit the classroom that are specific to the region.

Ensuring the Quality of the Research

To ensure the quality of the research, confidentiality was given to all respondents. Multiple sources of data collection were used to enable the data to be as comprehensive as possible, while at the same time being as reliable as possible. Survey data, focus group interviews, and results from the 2016 Teacher Working Conditions Survey were used for triangulation to ensure the validity of the study.

Anticipated Outcomes

It was anticipated that this study would highlight factors that were most influential in the motivations of teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. Understanding the importance of these factors can be used to create a more positive and supportive working environment for teachers in the future, hopefully leading to an increase in the

retention rate in middle school classrooms.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation for this study was the restriction of only one school district in rural North Carolina. The researcher was also employed in the school district and used a convenience sample. It may be difficult to generalize the findings to other districts within or outside the state of North Carolina.

Delimitations of the Study

The sample population of the study was a convenience sample of middle school teachers in a rural school district of North Carolina. This method of sampling was used to ensure efficient data collection in a timely manner. Survey instruments were administered via school district email. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that motivate middle school teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. Multiple sources of data were used in the study. A survey instrument was administered to current middle school teachers who served in traditional middle school classroom teaching assignments (Grades 6-8) to determine the importance of specific factors on their motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. Focus groups were used to obtain information from a randomly selected group of teachers in order to clarify and extend the results of the survey. Results from the 2016 Teacher Working Conditions Survey were used to create a survey for the study and to triangulate the collected data. All data were analyzed and used for triangulation to ensure reliable and valid results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Fifty-five percent of middle school teachers leave their schools within 3 years of beginning employment, and some leave education altogether (Cramer, 2011; Marinell & Coca, 2013). The attrition rate of middle school teachers is higher than both elementary and high school attrition rates (Cramer, 2011; Kraft & Marinell, 2016; Marinell & Coca, 2013). In an effort to increase middle school classroom teacher retention, the purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods research study was to explore factors motivating teachers to remain in the middle school classroom.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter presents quantitative and qualitative data collected from the motivation survey administered to teachers in five traditional middle schools (Grades 6-8) in a rural school district of central North Carolina. The chapter also presents qualitative data gathered through two focus groups compiled of teachers who volunteered after participating in the survey instrument. The research questions are provided, followed by data collection procedures and data analysis for all quantitative and qualitative data.

Research Questions

To determine specific factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom, the study used the following research questions as a guide.

1. To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by
 - a. School climate,
 - b. Administrative support,

- c. Individualized professional development,
 - d. Collegiality, and
 - e. Family and community support?
2. How do themes gathered from focus group participants and qualitative survey items explain the factors encouraging middle school teachers to remain in the classroom?

Data Collection

Research Question 1: “To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support?” For each subsection of Research Question 1, quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The collection processes are provided in the sections below.

Research Question 2: “How do themes gathered from focus group participants and qualitative survey items explain the factors encouraging middle school teachers to remain in the classroom?” Research Question 2 was designed to collect additional qualitative data to further explain results gathered from Research Question 1.

Motivation survey. All current middle school classroom teachers (Grades 6-8) in traditional middle schools in the district were asked to participate in the Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey. The survey instrument contained two demographic survey items, 18 quantitative data items, and three qualitative data items.

Data collection. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to 170 potential respondents via email. The survey was created and administered through Survey Monkey. To participate in the survey, respondents clicked a link in the email. In

an effort to obtain the highest survey completion rate, the researcher launched the survey on a Monday morning (Zheng, n.d.). The researcher launched the survey after classes began for the day, so teachers would receive the email during planning periods. In an effort to increase the response rate, follow-up emails were sent on the following Saturday morning and during a teacher workday of the following week (Fryrear, 2015). The emails thanked the teachers who had already participated in the survey and encouraged others who had not participated to complete the survey. A final email was sent 3 weeks after the survey administration thanking those who had participated in the survey and encouraging those who had not completed the survey to participate before the window closed at midnight. After the survey period ended, the results were analyzed using Survey Monkey.

Using the survey instrument population size of 170 teachers and a confidence level of 95%, the researcher calculated a margin of error of 8, and a sample size of 80 was needed to produce statistical significance (Survey Monkey, n.d.). Of the 170 potential respondents, 82 responses were received producing a response rate of 48%. Creswell (2014) suggested a response rate of at least 10% is needed to accurately analyze survey data. With a response rate of 48% and a sample size of 82, the sample size produced was statistically significant. Demographics for survey participants are shown in Table 16.

Table 15

Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Teaching Experience	# of Teachers (N=82)	Percent
1-5 years	20	24%
6-10 years	18	22%
11-15 years	16	20%
16-20 years	13	16%
21-25 years	6	7%
26-30+ years	9	11%

As seen in Table 16, the majority of survey participants (24%) had 5 years or less of teaching experience. The second largest category of teaching experience was represented in the 6-10 years of teaching experience category (22%). The 21-25 years of teaching experience was the lowest represented category with 7%.

Table 17 shows the percentages of advanced degrees held by participants. The majority of survey participants held a master's degree (51%), while 46% of participants held a bachelor's degree. Only 3% of survey participants held a specialist degree, and 0% of survey participants held a doctorate degree.

Table 16

Highest Degree Obtained

Highest Degree Obtained	# of Teachers (N=82)	Percent
Bachelors	38	46%
Masters	42	51%
Specialist	2	3%
Doctorate	0	0%

Respondents were asked to rate their overall level of motivation to remain in the middle school classroom before beginning the quantitative or qualitative survey items.

The researcher hoped to gain the initial feelings of respondents before focusing on

specific topics that may evoke positive or negative feelings and bias further responses (Zucker, 2005). As seen in Table 18, 40% of survey respondents reported to be “motivated” to remain in the middle school classroom followed by 34% of respondents reporting to be “slightly motivated” to remain in the middle school classroom. “Very motivated” to remain in the middle school classroom was reported by 17% of respondents. Only 9% of survey respondents reported being “not at all motivated” to remain in the middle school classroom.

Table 17

Level of Motivation to Remain in the Middle School Classroom

Motivation to Remain in the Middle School Classroom	# of Teachers (N=82)	Percent
Not at all motivated	7	9%
Slightly motivated	28	34%
Motivated	33	40%
Very motivated	14	17%

Survey items 4-18 requested respondents to rate to what extent specific factors motivated them to remain in the middle school classroom. Each survey item correlated to specific factors measured in Research Question 1, as seen in Table 19.

Table 18

Survey Item Alignment to Potential Motivating Factor

Potential Motivating Factor	Motivating Factors Survey Item
School Climate	4, 9, 10, 11
Administrative Support	5, 13, 14
Individualized Professional Development	6, 16, 17
Collegiality	7, 12, 15
Family and Community Support	8, 18

Multiple survey items were included to measure each construct. The school

climate construct included four quantitative survey items. Administrative support, individualized professional development, and collegiality each included three survey items. The family and community support contained two survey items.

The final survey item requested respondents to select a response best describing their plans in the near future. As seen in Table 20, the majority of respondents (66%) reported plans to continue in the middle school classroom. No respondents reported plans to seek an elementary classroom position, and 6% of respondents reported plans to seek a high school position. A total of 28% of respondents reported plans to leave the classroom either to seek a position outside of the classroom (12%) or leave education entirely (16%).

Table 19

Respondent Plans in the Near Future

Respondent Plans in the Near Future	# of Teachers (N=82)	Percent
Continue in a middle school classroom position	53	66%
Seek an elementary school classroom position	0	0%
Seek a high school classroom position	5	6%
Seek a position outside of the classroom (administration, support, etc.)	10	12%
Leave education entirely	13	16%

The survey instrument concluded with two open-ended survey items. Survey item 20 requested respondents who had previously considered leaving the middle school classroom to provide reasons for leaving and reasons for returning to the middle school classroom, if they had previously left and then returned. Survey item 21 allowed respondents to provide any additional factors that have motivated them to remain in the

middle school classroom.

Research Question 1

To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support?

(Quantitative). Data from the survey instrument were analyzed to determine the effect school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support may have on middle school teachers' desire to remain in the classroom. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed for the sample.

Data Analysis

Respondents were provided with quantitative survey items to address specific examples of potential motivational factors to assess each of the five parts of Research Question 1. The data were analyzed using a chi-square of association (χ^2) and CFA. The results for each of the five parts of Research Question 1 can found within the analysis of each section.

Chi-square of association. A chi-square of association, also known as Pearson's chi-square test or the chi-square test of independence, was used to analyze quantitative survey data for each potential motivational factor. A chi-square of association was used to discover relationships between two categorical variables (Laerd Statistics, 2015). The chi-square of association test was used to determine whether motivating factors in the sample fell into categories in proportions equal to what was expected by chance (Urdan, 2010). The chi-square test of association allowed the researcher to compare the quantitative data collected (known as the observed frequency) with the frequencies that

would be expected to occur by chance alone (known as expected frequencies; Urdan, 2010).

An analysis of each categorical variable was conducted to determine whether or not a relationship was present between the specific variable (school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, family and community support) and the motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. For each potential motivational factor, a chi-square of association was performed. The p value for each survey item was calculated using the chi-square with 4 degrees of freedom. P values for each survey item were compared to a significance level of 0.05 to determine whether or not a relationship may be present (Chi-Square Test for Independence, n.d.).

CFA. CFA was used to determine how well survey items could measure corresponding factors. High factor loading indicated survey items were good measures for the corresponding factor. The model fit was also measured, using Mplus software, to express how well various models fit the data (root mean square of approximation [RMSEA] 0.098; Bentler's comparative fit index [CFI] 0.931; Tucker-Lewis index [TLI] 0.910). In order to fit the model, all factors and all items fitted in a single model based on the proposed relationship in Mplus. Good model fit, as seen in Table 21, indicated factor structures represented the data well (L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

Table 20

Model Fit

RMSEA	CFI	TLI
.098	.931	.910

RMSEA was measured using the following formula to indicate the size of covariance portion in the original data:

$$RMSEA = \sqrt{\max\left(\frac{(\chi^2_{model} - df_{model})}{df_{model}(n-1)}, 0\right)}$$

Considering a threshold of $> .05$ for good fit, the dataset had moderate fit. CFI and TLI were also used to measure how the tested model fit the model better than a baseline null model. A baseline null model assumes there is no relationship among variables.

Considering a threshold for CFI and TLI of $> .9$, the current models both contained good fit indices on CFI and TLI using the following equations (L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017):

$$CFI = 1 - \frac{\chi^2_{model} - df_{model}}{\chi^2_{null} - df_{null}}$$

$$TLI = \frac{(\chi^2_{null} / df_{null}) - (\chi^2_{model} / df_{model})}{(\chi^2_{null} / df_{null}) - 1}$$

Research Question 1a. As seen in Table 22, 95% of respondents rated school climate (item 4) as very important or absolutely essential as a motivational factor to remain in the middle school classroom, whereas 0% rated school climate as of little importance or not important at all. Survey item 9, “Being able to choose your own instructional practices for your classroom,” was rated as very important or absolutely essential by 93% of respondents as a motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. “Being given the opportunity to make decisions to improve school practices” was rated as very important or absolutely essential by 70% of respondents, as seen in

survey item 11. Survey item 10, “Being provided opportunities to be a leader in the school,” was rated as very important or absolutely essential by 45% of respondents.

Table 21

Extent School Climate Motivates Middle School Classroom Retention

Response	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	Sum
Item 4	0	0	4	34	44	82
Item 9	0	0	6	41	35	82
Item10	2	7	36	31	6	82
Item 11	0	3	22	48	9	82
Overall School Climate	2	10	68	154	94	328

Chi-square analysis. For school climate, results for survey items 4, 9, 10, and 11 were analyzed. Comparing each item response to the expected proportion for school climate in survey item 4 resulted in a $\chi^2=31.20$, $df=4$, p value= $2.79e-06$. Survey item 4 had a significantly different response pattern from the expected proportion for school climate. A significantly different response pattern from the expected proportion for school climate was also reported for survey item 9 ($\chi^2=15.79$, $df=4$, p value= 0.003314), item 10 ($\chi^2=48.87$, $df=4$, p value= $6.22e-10$), and item 11 ($\chi^2=48.87$, $df=4$, p value= $6.22e-10$; L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

CFA. Factor loading for school climate, as seen in Table 23, indicated survey item 11, “Being given the opportunity to make decisions to improve school practices,” had the largest factor loading. Thus, item 11 represented a good measure for school climate. Item 10, “Being provided opportunities to be a leader in the school,” had the second largest factor loading followed by item 4, “Please rate to what extent the school

climate-the feelings and attitudes that are produced by a school’s environment-motivate you to remain in the middle school classroom.” Item 9, “Being able to choose your own instructional practices for your classroom,” had the lowest factor loading, indicating a weaker measure for school climate (L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

Table 22

School Climate CFA

Item	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate/ Standard Error	Two-Tailed P Value
4	0.51	0.11	4.57	0.00
9	0.32	0.13	2.53	0.01
10	0.62	0.08	7.63	0.00
11	0.92	0.07	12.57	0.00

Research Question 1b. Table 24 shows 94% of respondents rated administrative support (item 5) as very important or absolutely essential as a motivational factor to remain in the middle school classroom, whereas 0% rated administrative support as of little importance or not important at all. Survey item 13, “Being supported by school administration through student discipline practices,” was reported by 94% of respondents as very important or absolutely essential, as seen in Table 25. “Being provided specific ways to improve classroom instruction by school administration,” survey item 14, was reported by 46% of respondents as very important or absolutely essential and by 42% of respondents as average importance.

Table 23

Extent Administrative Support Motivates Middle School Classroom Retention

Response	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	Sum
Item 5	0	0	4	30	47	81
Item 13	0	1	3	20	57	81
Item 14	1	9	34	28	10	82
Overall Administrative Support	1	10	41	78	114	244

Chi-square analysis. For administrative support, results for survey items 5, 13, and 14 were analyzed. A significantly different response pattern from the expected proportion for administrative support was also reported for survey item 5 ($\chi^2=13.30$, $df=4$, p value=0.009919), item 13 ($\chi^2=21.29$, $df=4$, p value=0.0002779), and item 14 ($\chi^2=61.55$, $df=4$, p value=1.37e-12; L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

CFA. Survey item 5, “Please rate to what extent administrative support motivates you to remain in the middle school classroom”; item 13, “Being supported by school administration through student discipline practices”; and item 14, “Being provided specific ways to improve classroom instruction by school administration,” measured a moderate size of factor loading for administrative support, as seen in Table 25, indicating all items were a moderate measure of administrative support (L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

Table 24

Administrative Support CFA

Item	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate/ Standard Error	Two-Tailed P Value
5	0.49	0.14	3.60	0.00
13	0.40	0.14	2.96	0.00
14	0.69	0.13	5.19	0.00

Research Question 1c. Individual professional development (item 6) was rated as very important or absolutely essential by 35% of respondents, and 22% of respondents rated individualized professional development as of little importance or not important at all.

As seen in Table 26, survey item 16, “Being provided opportunities to choose professional development,” was reported by 56% of respondents as very important or absolutely essential and by 37% as average importance. “Being provided support at the school or district level to implement new strategies learned in professional development,” survey item 17, was reported by 59% of respondents as very important or absolutely essential and by 35% of respondents as average importance.

Table 25

Extent Individual Professional Development Motivates Classroom Retention

Response	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	Sum
Item 6	2	16	34	21	8	81
Item 16	1	4	30	34	12	81
Item 17	0	5	29	41	7	82
Overall PD	3	25	93	96	27	244

Chi-square analysis. Survey items 6, 16, and 17 were analyzed for individualized professional development. A significantly different response pattern from

the expected proportion for individualized professional development was reported for survey item 6 ($\chi^2=12.43$, $df=4$, p value=0.01441). A significantly different response pattern was not reported for item 16 ($\chi^2=3.38$, $df=4$, p value=0.50) or item 17 ($\chi^2=5.38$, $df=4$, p value=0.25; L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

CFA. Factor loading for item 6, “Please rate to what extent individualized professional development motivates you to remain in the middle school classroom”; item 16, “Being provided opportunities to choose professional development”; and item 17, “Being provided support at the school or district level to implement new strategies learned in professional development,” are reported in Table 27. All items for individualized professional development had high factor loading. The high levels of factor loading confirm the survey items measure individualized professional development well (L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

Table 26

Individualized Professional Development CFA

Item	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate/ Standard Error	Two-Tailed P Value
6	0.81	0.05	16.07	0.00
16	0.86	0.04	21.97	0.00
17	0.90	0.04	20.72	0.00

Research Question 1d. Sixty-three percent of respondents rated collegiality (item 7) as very important or absolutely essential as a motivational factor to remain in the middle school classroom, whereas 5% rated collegiality as of little importance or not important at all. Survey item 12, “Being provided opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices,” was reported by 66% of respondents as very important or absolutely essential to remain in the middle school classroom, as seen in Table 28.

“Being provided sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues,” survey item 15, was reported by 35% of respondents as very important or absolutely essential and by 21% of respondents as average importance.

Table 27

Extent Collegiality Motivates Middle School Classroom Retention

Response	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	Sum
Item 7	1	3	26	37	15	82
Item 12	0	0	28	41	13	82
Item 15	0	1	17	3	26	82
Overall Collegiality	1	4	71	116	54	246

Chi-square analysis. For collegiality, results for survey items 7, 12, and 15 were analyzed. A significantly different response pattern from the expected proportion for individualized professional development was not reported for survey item 7 ($\chi^2=8.87$, $df=4$, p value=0.06). A significantly different response pattern was reported for item 12 ($\chi^2=13.76$, $df=4$, p value=0.01) and item 15 ($\chi^2=46.42$, $df=4$, p value=2.01e-09; L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

CFA. For collegiality, item 7, “The ability to collaborate with colleagues for a common goal or task,” as seen in Table 29, had high factor loading. Item 12, “Being provided opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices,” and item 15, “Being provided sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues,” also both had relatively high factor loading indicating all survey items were good measures of collegiality (L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

Table 28

Collegiality CFA

Item	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate/ Standard Error	Two-Tailed P Value
7	0.94	0.05	19.67	0.00
12	0.73	0.05	13.81	0.00
15	0.73	0.07	11.05	0.00

Research Question 1e. Family and community support (item 8) was rated as very important or absolutely essential by 65% of respondents, and 1% of respondents rated family and community support as of little importance or not important at all. As seen in Table 30, survey item 18, “Family and community members being provided opportunities to participate in the school activities,” was reported by 48% of respondents as very important or absolutely essential and by 45% as average importance to remain in the middle school classroom.

Table 29

Extent Family and Community Support Motivates Classroom Retention

Response	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	Sum
Item 8	1	0	27	35	18	81
Item 18	0	6	37	30	9	82
Overall Fam/Com Support	1	6	64	65	27	163

Chi-square analysis. Survey items 8 and 18 were analyzed for family and community support. A significantly different response pattern from the expected proportion for family and community support was reported for survey item 8 ($\chi^2=18.11$, $df=4$, p value=0.001176). A significantly different response pattern was not reported for item 18 ($\chi^2=2.84$, $df=4$, p value=0.59; L. Jun, personal communication, November 30,

2017).

CFA. As seen in Table 31, both item 8, “The support of student families and the community,” and item 18, “Family and community members being provided opportunities to participate in the school activities,” measured family and community support and had high factor loading. Both items measured family and community support well (L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017).

Table 30

Family and Community Support CFA

Item	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate/ Standard Error	Two-Tailed P Value
8	0.76	0.07	11.47	0.00
18	0.89	0.05	16.48	0.00

Summary. P values were greater than the significance level of 0.05 for survey items 6, 7, 16, 17, and 18. These survey items contained the following specific factors:

- Professional development opportunities provided;
- The ability to collaborate with colleagues for a common goal or task;
- Being provided opportunities to choose professional development;
- Being provided support at the school or district level to implement new strategies learned in professional development; and
- Family and community members being provided opportunities to participate in the school activities.

Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted for those survey items indicating no relationship between these specific factors and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom (Chi-Square Test for Independence, n.d.).

All remaining survey items (items 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) had p

values less than the significance level of 0.05. These survey items contained the following specific factors:

- The school climate (the feelings and attitudes that are produced by a school's environment;
- The support of school administration;
- The support of student families and the community;
- Being able to choose your own instructional practices for your classroom;
- Being provided opportunities to be a leader in the school;
- Being given the opportunity to make decisions to improve school practices;
- Being provided opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices;
- Being supported by school administration through student discipline practices;
- Being provided specific ways to improve classroom instruction by school administration; and
- Being provided sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues.

The null hypothesis for these survey items was not accepted, thus indicating a relationship existed between these specific factors and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom (Chi-Square Test for Independence, n.d.).

Considering the sample size of 82 respondents, a measure of at least 0.6 was needed for a moderate level of factor loading (MRC CBU Wiki, n.d). Survey items 10, "Being provided opportunities to be a leader in the school," and 11, "Being given the opportunity to make decisions to improve school practices," were determined to be good measures for school climate. Survey item 14, "Being provided specific ways to improve

classroom instruction by school administration,” was determined to be a good measure for administrative support. All survey items for individualized professional development, “Professional development opportunities provided”; “Being provided opportunities to choose professional development”; and “Being provided support at the school and district level to implement new strategies learned in professional development,” concluded to be good measures. All survey items for collegiality, “The ability to collaborate with colleagues for a common goal or task”; “Being provided opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices”; and “Being provided sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues,” were determined to be good measures. All survey items for family and community support, “The support of student families and the community” and “Family and community members being provided opportunities to participate in the school activities,” were also determined to be good measures.

The correlation among factors show that some factors had high correlations with each other, as seen in Figure 2.

AS WITH

Factor	Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-Tailed P-Value
SC	0.32	0.15	2.10	0.04

IPD WITH

Factor	Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-Tailed P-Value
SC	0.70	0.08	8.90	0.00
AS	0.71	0.15	4.74	0.00

COL WITH

Factor	Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-Tailed P-Value
SC	0.68	0.09	7.62	0.00
AS	0.64	0.15	4.32	0.00
IPD	0.72	0.09	8.63	0.00

FCS WITH

Factor	Estimate	S.E.	Est./S.E.	Two-Tailed P-Value
SC	0.57	0.10	5.95	0.00
AS	0.61	0.14	4.52	0.00
IPD	0.72	0.08	9.32	0.00
COL	0.60	0.09	6.88	0.00

Figure 2. Correlation Among Factors.

Note: SC=School Climate; AS=Administrative Support; IPD=Individualized Professional Development; COL=Collegiality; FCS=Family and Community Support.

Individualized professional development had a high correlation with school climate and administrative support. Collegiality had a high correlation with individualized professional development. Family and community support had a high correlation with individualized professional development. High correlations indicated possible overlapping of factors (L. Jun, personal communication, November 30, 2017). As seen in Figure 3, high correlations were present between individualized professional development and collegiality, family and community support, school climate, and administrative support; therefore, the potential overlapping of these factors was likely to

have occurred.

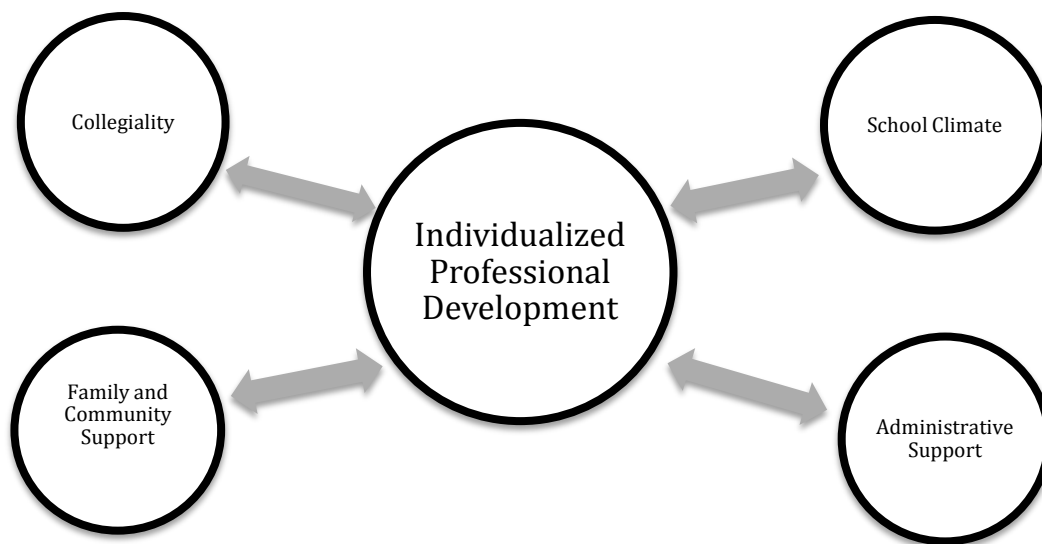


Figure 3. Possible Overlap of Factors.

Research Question 2

How do themes gathered from focus group participants and qualitative survey items explain the factors encouraging middle school teachers to remain in the classroom? (Qualitative). Data collection for Research Question 2 were collected through survey data and two focus group meetings.

Survey item 20, “Have you considered leaving (or have you previously left) the middle school classroom? If so, what was the major reason(s)? Why did you stay (or return),” was included in an attempt to gather additional factors motivating teachers to leave or remain in the middle school classroom. Survey item 21 requested respondents to discuss any additional factors that have motivated them to remain in the middle school classroom. Data collected from survey items 20 and 21 were analyzed for themes.

Themes gathered from the analysis are presented in Figure 4.

Survey Item 20			Survey Item 21
<p><i>“Have you considered leaving (or have you previously left) the middle school classroom? If so, what was the major reason(s)? Why did you stay (or return)?”</i></p>			<p><i>“Please discuss any additional factors that have motivated you to remain in the middle school classroom.”</i></p>
Reason for Leaving	Reason for Staying	Reason for Returning	
Administration	Administration	Administration	Lower class size
Career advancement	Autonomy	Teaming	Colleagues
Class size	Middle school concept		Content
Demands/workload	School climate		Fun
Elementary school	Impact on student lives		Relationships
Family reasons	Support		Salary
High school	Teaming		Impact on student lives
Salary			
School climate			
Testing			

Figure 4. Themes Gathered from Survey Instrument Qualitative Data Analysis.

A number of themes outside of the constructs measured in Research Question 1 were identified. These themes were quantified, as seen in Table 32, in an effort to determine their impact on teacher motivation to remain in the middle school classroom.

Table 31

Quantified Themes

Theme	Number of Occurrences in Survey Items 20 and 21
Impact on students' lives	32
Demands/workload	9
Career (salary) advancement	7
Content (subject matter)	5
Autonomy	4
Pressures of testing	4
Student accountability	2

Focus Groups

To further explore factors affecting teacher motivation to remain in the middle school classroom, two focus groups were held. Data collected from focus group meetings were also used for data triangulation.

Focus group question development. Data from the Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey were analyzed to develop the focus group questions. A warm-up question, "What factors do you believe motivate most teachers to remain in the middle school classroom," was developed to begin conversation in an effort to make everyone feel comfortable and to glean any additional motivational factors before the discussion became focused on specific factors determined from survey data. Questions were also constructed to address all specific motivational factors (school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support) of Research Question 1. To collect additional qualitative data not addressed in Research Question 1, the researcher developed the following questions to address Research Question 2.

- What do you feel was the most important factor we discussed today?

- Is there anything we have missed or you would like to add?
- If you could communicate anything to the district office or the state of North Carolina regarding factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom, what would they be?
- Does anyone have any closing remarks?

Focus group participants. The last survey item on the Motivational Factors for Middle School Retention Survey requested contact information for teachers who were willing to participate in a focus group. Eighteen teachers volunteered to participate in a focus group. The researcher contacted volunteers with potential dates and times for focus group meetings. Based on the responses, the researcher scheduled meeting dates in an effort to obtain teachers from as many different schools as possible at each focus group meeting. The researcher also attempted to have at least one teacher from each grade level (6-8) and Encore (teachers who teach one specialty subject for Grades 6, 7, and 8). Focus group meetings were set at an off-school location to ensure confidentiality of participants and their responses. Invitations were emailed to focus group participants. Five teachers attended the first focus group meeting, and four teachers attended the second focus group meeting. The demographics for each meeting are displayed in Table 33.

Table 32

Focus Group Demographics

Teacher	School	Gender	Grade Level	Subject Area	Years of Exp.
Focus Group 1					
1	E	F	8	Social Studies	6-10
2	C	F	Encore	AIG	16-20
3	D	F	Encore	Chorus	1-5
4	E	F	7	Math	6-10
5	D	F	Encore	AIG	1-5
Focus Group 2					
1	C	F	7	ELA	16-20
2	E	F	7	Social Studies	6-10
3	D	F	Encore	PE	1-5
4	D	F	7	Math	1-5

Note: AIG=Academically/Intellectually Gifted; ELA=English Language Arts; PE=Physical Education.

Data collection. Focus group meetings were held after school at an off-school location. To begin the meetings, participants were informed of the purpose of the meeting and that data would be used only for research purposes. Focus group meetings were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Data analysis. After transcribing both focus group meetings, the researcher coded the data for themes. In an effort to increase validity, a summary and analysis of the focus group meetings was forwarded to each focus group participant to establish agreement and collect feedback (Butin, 2010; Rio-Roberts, 2011). A colleague of the researcher who had recently obtained a doctorate degree and was familiar with qualitative research also cross-checked themes (Creswell, 2014). Themes identified from focus group discussions are displayed in Figure 5.

Focus Group Question	Themes
What factors do you believe motivate most teachers to remain in the middle school classroom?	Fun Last chance to save students Collaboration Relationships
What factors motivated you to remain in the classroom for the current school year?	Teaming Collaboration Autonomy Relationships
A majority of teachers reported being supported by school administration through student discipline practices to be a factor in whether or not they remained in the classroom. Why do you think that is?	Supports teacher authority Creates safe environment
Is the climate (the feelings and attitudes that are produced by a school's environment) of the school a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?	Collegiality Making everyone feel welcome Feeling like you belong
Is the school administration a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?	Making everyone feel welcome Sets the tone for school climate Creates a sense of family Needed to be in the school
Is individualized professional development a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?	Ends up being a waste of time Time to collaborate is better Too generic Not going to make me leave
Is collegiality, or time spent working collaboratively with your peers, a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?	Collaboration Peer observations Time to collaborate is needed
Is family and community support a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?	Makes teachers feel supported Makes school more welcoming
What do you feel was the most important factor we discussed today?	Teaming Collaboration Administrative support School climate
Is there anything we have missed or you would like to add?	Salary Trust teachers more
If you could communicate anything to the district office or to the state of North Carolina regarding factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom, what would they be?	Salary Teachers feel disrespected Lower class sizes Pressures of testing is too much

Figure 5. Focus Group Question Themes.

School climate. Focus group members felt school climate was an “extremely important” motivational factor to retain middle school teachers in classrooms. Focus group members also felt school climate was directly affected by administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support. When asked, “What do you feel was the most important factor we discussed today,” one focus group participant responded, “Personally, I’d say school climate because that affects everything all the way down to students.”

Respondents then discussed how administrative support directly affects school climate. Another respondent stated, “I think the administrator really creates the feeling of family or not. They set the tone.” All respondents agreed school administration positively affected school climate by creating a welcoming environment where everyone felt like they were a part of a family. Continuing the conversation, a third respondent stated,

I feel like it is part of that collaboration piece. If you don’t feel welcome in a place where you are, it’s also very easy to leave. If you don’t feel welcome here, you feel like you aren’t vested and everybody’s replaceable, [then] you will leave. But, if you feel like somehow you have some sort of value in a place where you are, then you will stay.

The group then discussed the importance of collaboration to support collegiality and relationship building as a support for the creation and sustainment of a positive school climate.

Administrative support. One respondent felt “administration and collaboration are important . . . most important.” This respondent went on to explain how administrative support made her feel welcome and gave her a sense of belonging. She

also discussed the importance of administration supporting her as a professional in and out of the classroom. She concluded this support allowed teachers to feel safe (physically and emotionally) in the school.

Another respondent discussed feelings of being uplifted in a school and how this fueled motivation to remain in the classroom. “Last year they were calling me a rock star and telling me I was amazing. I felt like I wanted to do another year because I liked it and I . . . knew the curriculum more.” She described feeling successful and how this made her feel she could do an even better job the next year.

Individualized professional development. When asked the question, “Is individualized professional development a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom,” most participants responded in the negative:

“Not really.”

“To me, it doesn’t really matter. As long as I get what I need for my CEUs.”

“It ends up being a waste of time.”

“We do the same things over and over again. It’s so generic.”

“I feel like it could be really good, but it’s not enough to make me walk away.”

“PD isn’t going to make me walk away. There are so many other things that are more important.”

A conversation ensued regarding the potential benefits of individualized professional development. The groups as a whole felt they were not receiving individualized professional development. A respondent shared the view, “Collaboration with your peers . . . would be far more helpful [than professional development].” One respondent felt it could help with retention in the classroom. The respondent stated, “I feel like it would be more helpful to have some of the time, energy [and] funding . . . put

into looking at . . . specialized [professional development]. I think that would really help retain people.” The group then discussed using district specialists and district funding to provide individualized professional development “especially for new teachers who could really benefit from it.”

Collegiality. The groups discussed collegiality and collaboration as motivating factors to remain in the classroom. One respondent felt collaboration was a “key element for retention as long as the teachers do not feel like they are being forced to collaborate.” A second participant summed up her observation of various collaborative efforts by responding, “Some people like collaboration as long as it is more team collaboration instead of subject collaboration. They [teachers] like working together for the same child, but they don’t like working together on the same topic.”

Respondents felt collegiality, or building relationships with others, was more of a motivational factor for classroom retention than collaboration alone. A respondent explained, “I think the whole collaboration aspect helps build a sense of community. Collaboration helps me meet other people and get invested in their classroom.” The discussion circled back around to the importance of school climate and the impact that collegiality and collaboration have on climate.

Family and community support. When asked, “Is family and community support a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom,” an Encore teacher responded, “I would say that the community support is really important on the performing arts side because that’s what either makes it thrive or die.” Another respondent answered, “But I feel like that’s true everywhere. If you don’t have parent and community support, your school is not a great place to work, which for whatever reasons those present, calls for people to leave.” Another participant echoed, “I feel like community support is a huge

factor in retention.”

One focus group had a conversation about family and community support showing a value for education within families and within the community. One participant stated, “Family support of education shows those families value education. Those students tend to do better in school.” Another respondent urged the group to show “pride in where you work, like going out into the community and being proud to say I teach here.”

Positive impact on student lives. An additional theme outside of the specific factors from Research Question 1 also emerged during focus group discussions. During both focus group meetings, teachers discussed having an impact on the lives of students. Responses such as “I stay for the kids” and “I love working with the students” were frequently shared. When prompted to elaborate, one respondent specified,

I feel like people remain [in the middle school classroom] because it’s the last chance to save them [students]. Once students leave eighth grade, they have already made up their mind whether they are going to continue their education through high school or whether 16 is going to be it. So, I feel like that’s my last chance to save kids, really. Regardless of what their homes are like, if you can create a relationship with a kid who’s a 14 year old, you stand a chance of them surviving to make it to high school.

Summary

This study used a researcher-designed survey instrument and two focus groups to explore potential motivational factors for middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. Themes for potential motivational factors discovered from qualitative data included school climate, administrative support, collegiality, family and community

support, and positive impact on student lives. Individualized professional development was not supported by data as a potential motivational factor for middle school classroom retention. The lack of motivation provided by professional development was attributed by focus groups to be caused by only offering generic professional development intended to support beginning teachers and a lack of professional development intended to support teachers on a more individualized basis.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The impact of decreased teacher continuity in classrooms has been linked to decreases in student achievement. Teacher turnover results in a loss of institutional memory and a loss of resources on recruitment and hiring processes. This result drains resources that might otherwise be spent on program improvement or working conditions (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2012). Teacher turnover has occurred more frequently in middle schools than in elementary and high schools (Cramer, 2011; Kraft & Marinell, 2016; Marinell & Coca, 2013). The increased turnover rate in middle schools coupled with the “severe shortage for . . . middle school teachers” (The Facts on NC’s Teacher Pipeline, n.d., para. 2) to fill these vacant classrooms demonstrated the need to determine factors motivating teachers to remain in middle school classrooms.

Summary of the Study

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods research study investigated factors motivating teachers to remain in middle school classrooms. The study was conducted in a rural school district in central North Carolina. The study began with the administration of the Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey. This survey instrument collected quantitative and qualitative data. Eighty-two participants completed the survey. Survey responses were used to create questions to collect additional qualitative data during two focus group meetings. Themes were generated from qualitative data and triangulated with quantitative data.

Overview of Chapter 5

This chapter summarizes the research study, provides the research questions and theoretical framework, analyzes the data gathered from the survey and both focus groups,

discusses the findings related to the research questions, provides recommendations, and identifies possible future research topics.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study.

1. To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by
 - a. School climate,
 - b. Administrative support,
 - c. Individualized professional development,
 - d. Collegiality, and
 - e. Family and community support (Quantitative)?
2. How do themes gathered from focus group participants and qualitative survey items explain the factors encouraging middle school teachers to remain in the classroom (Qualitative)?

Research Question 1 contained five subsections to measure the potential impact specific factors had on teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom. To gather a more in-depth understanding, participants were questioned about specific examples for each factor in an effort to hone in on specific practices and procedures for school implementation.

Research Question 2 was designed to gather qualitative data based on results gathered from Research Question 1. Focus group questions were constructed to promote discussion in an effort to explain the factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. The findings for each specific factor and possible explanations provided by focus group conversations are discussed in the next section. These findings

are a result of data collected from 82 survey participants and two focus group meetings with nine total participants.

Data Analysis

Results from the Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey were analyzed to validate the survey instrument and to determine the impact associated with specific examples of each factor. Survey results were used to construct focus group questions in an effort to better explain the survey results. Survey and focus group results for each potential motivating factor are described below.

Research Question 1a: To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by school climate? Data for Research Question 1a was collected from survey items 4, 9, 10, and 11. Using a chi-square analysis, all survey items indicated a relationship between school climate and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. Ninety-five percent of respondents rated school climate as either an absolutely essential or a very important factor motivating them to remain in the classroom.

Being able to choose instructional practices in the classroom was an absolutely essential or very important factor motivating 93% of respondents to remain in the classroom. Respondents in the focus groups felt being able to choose instructional practices in the classroom showed trust in the abilities and professionalism of teachers. Being provided opportunities to be a leader in the school was reported as an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor by 70% of respondents, whereas only 45% of respondents believed being provided opportunities to make decisions to improve school practices was an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor. One participant in a focus group thought teachers needed to be given leadership opportunities

to provide professional challenges without leaving the classroom.

Results indicated study participants believed school climate was affected by administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support. Focus group respondents felt the school administration set the tone for the climate of the school. Group members described a positive school climate as a family that encouraged a sense of belonging for all staff members. Numerous focus group participants thought school administrators should create a family environment within the school to encourage a positive school climate. Collegiality was felt to also be encouraged by a family atmosphere within the school. Finally, family and community support were believed to create a family atmosphere within and outside of the school.

Implications for findings of Research Question 1a. School climate is an essential factor in middle school classroom retention. Strengthening school climates will result in the increased likelihood of teachers remaining in schools (Kraft & Marinell, 2016). The ability to choose instructional practices used in the classroom serves to promote a positive school climate by showing trust in the abilities and professional judgment of classroom teachers. Choice in instructional practices is more important to teachers than leadership opportunities and school-wide decision-making opportunities.

Many teachers also desire professional challenges. Professional challenges that do not require a teacher to leave the classroom can be provided. Allowing teachers to choose instructional practices and operate a model classroom for other teachers to observe may provide professional challenges while maintaining the teacher in the classroom.

Other factors such as administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support affect school climate. These factors can be used to increase positive

school climate by creating a sense of belonging and a family atmosphere for all staff members. A challenging school climate may increase teacher turnover; and consequently, high teacher turnover may create a challenging school climate (Marinell & Coca, 2013). Feelings of support create a positive school climate, and a positive school climate creates feelings of support. Support can be obtained from administration, colleagues, and family and community members.

Research Question 1b: To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by administrative support? Data for Research Question 1b was collected from survey items 5, 13, and 14. Using a chi-square analysis, all survey items indicated a relationship between administrative support and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. Ninety-four percent of respondents rated administrative support as either an absolutely essential or a very important factor motivating them to remain in the classroom.

Being supported by school administration through student discipline practices was an absolutely essential or very important factor for motivation to remain in the middle school classroom by 94% of survey respondents. During focus group discussions, one participant expressed the importance of discipline practices to ensure the safety of all staff and students in the school. Another focus group participant explained that administration supporting teachers through disciplinary practices supports and validates teacher authority for students.

The focus group again discussed the direct correlation between administrative support and school climate. Administrative support helps create a supportive family atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and safe. One focus group participant pointed out for administration to create and sustain a positive school climate, the administrators

must be present and visible throughout the school.

Implications for findings of Research Question 1b. Administrative support is an essential factor in middle school classroom retention. Studies have shown that in choosing where to work, reporting to a better principal is just as motivating for teachers as higher salary (Goldstein, 2014). The perception of how well the principal works with staff members is a stronger factor for retention than availability of resources, workload, or professional development opportunities (Tierney, 2012).

School administration can support teachers in various ways. Supporting teachers through discipline practices creates not only a safe work environment for teachers and students but also strengthens teachers' abilities to deliver classroom instruction and maintain discipline themselves. These practices also support a positive school culture by modeling the value of teachers in the school. Feeling valued as an integral part of a school creates a sense of belonging for the teacher and increases the desire to remain in the classroom.

Administrators also have an effect on the school climate. By showing they truly care for teachers, administrators can create and maintain a positive school climate. Teachers should feel as if they belong and that they have a vested interest in a school. The creation of a family atmosphere establishes a support network for teachers.

Research Question 1c: To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by individualized professional development?

Data for Research Question 1c were collected from survey items 6, 16, and 17. Using a chi-square analysis, the survey items did not indicate a relationship between individualized professional development and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. Only 35% of respondents rated individualized professional development as

either an absolutely essential or a very important factor motivating them to remain in the classroom.

Being provided opportunities to choose professional development was an absolutely essential or very important factor for motivation to remain in the middle school classroom by 56% of respondents. One focus group participant felt professional development was not individualized but generic. The group discussed current professional developments as routine and a waste of time. Another participant shared professional development could be used to retain teachers in classrooms; however, the process would need to be revamped.

Being provided support at the school or district level to implement new strategies learned in professional development was an absolutely essential or very important factor for motivation to remain in the middle school classroom by 59% of respondents. Focus group participants shared support to implement strategies learned in professional development would help to individualize the professional development.

Implications for findings of Research Question 1c. Individualized professional development was not found to be a factor in middle school classroom retention. Data results and discussion indicated teachers were receiving professional development but not receiving individualized professional development. Teachers felt the professional development they were receiving was generic and not a good use of time. “Professional Development . . . should be targeted, meaningful, and individualized, and should always come with a package of long-term support, ready to use resources, and collaboration” (Brown, 2016, para. 16).

Teachers did feel professional development would be beneficial to improve classroom instruction if it were truly individualized to support teacher needs, and

opportunities to choose professional development was a motivating factor to increase classroom retention. Strong teachers and teacher leaders understand much of their valuable professional development comes from collaboration with other teachers (Patterson et al., 2004). As stated earlier, the value of professional development is intensified by the high correlation between collegiality and individualized professional development. Support to implement strategies learned in professional development was also indicated to increase middle school classroom retention. This support can be obtained through school or district procedures or through collaborative activities with peers.

Research Question 1d: To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by collegiality? Data for Research Question 1d were collected from survey items 7, 12, and 15. Using a chi-square analysis, survey item 7 did not indicate a relationship between collegiality and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. A chi-square analysis for survey items 12 and 15 did indicate a relationship between collegiality and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. Sixty-three percent of respondents rated collegiality (the ability to collaborate with colleagues for a common goal or task) as either an absolutely essential or a very important factor motivating them to remain in the classroom.

Being provided opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices was an absolutely essential or very important motivation factor to remain in the middle school classroom by 66% of respondents. One focus group participant felt this number was lower due to the fact that many teachers feel they are forced to collaborate. Another focus group member described documentation required as proof of each collaborative meeting.

Focus group participants felt the freedom to collaborate and build collegial relationships would produce better results and boost school climate. An additional concern expressed by numerous participants was dedicated time to collaborate. One respondent stated collaboration was expected, but time was not always provided for collaboration to occur. Another participant offered peer observations with opportunities for feedback and discussion would improve teaching practices and encourage teachers to invest in classrooms other than their own.

Implications for findings of Research Question 1d. Collegiality was determined to have a positive impact on classroom retention. A study by Inman and Marlow (2004) concluded that 70% of teachers valued collegiality over daily working conditions and job security within their first 10 years of experience. Collegiality did not have as much of an impact as school climate or administrative support. In middle schools where teachers reported average or high levels of support, rapport, trust, and respect among their colleagues, rates of turnover were lower (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p. ix).

Collegiality was found to have an impact on school climate. Many respondents reported a reason for their retention to be colleagues. Relationships with colleagues and opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices were described as supports. Collaboration was found to be more important to teachers than higher salaries (Morrison, 2012; Smollin, 2011). Collegial supports were described as having a positive impact on school climate.

Providing protected time for teachers to collaborate may help increase collegial relationships and support the creation and sustainment of a positive school climate. Predetermined dates and times for professional learning communities indicate the importance of the process (Creasman & Coquyt, 2016). Strong relationships among

teachers can promote stability in schools, including schools where the principal is perceived to be ineffective (Marinell & Coca, 2013).

Research Question 1e: To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by family and community support? Data for Research Question 1e were collected from survey items 8 and 18. Using a chi-square analysis, survey item 18 did not indicate a relationship between family and community support and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. A chi-square analysis for survey item 8 did indicate a relationship between family and community support and motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. Sixty-five percent of respondents rated family and community support as either an absolutely essential or a very important factor motivating them to remain in the classroom.

Family and community members being provided opportunities to participate in the school activities was an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor to remain in the middle school classroom by 48% of respondents. One focus group participant expressed the dire need for families and the community to become involved in the school. Family and community involvement creates pride in the school for family members, community members, teachers, and students. The discussion revolved back to school climate and the correlation between increased family and community support and improvements in school climate.

Implications for findings of Research Question 1e. Family and community support was not indicated as a motivating factor for classroom retention in this study; however, a lack of family and community support has been linked to higher teacher turnover rates (Ingersoll, 2001). According to Marinell and Coca (2013), “This turnover may compromise the continuity of the relationships between middle school teachers and

administrators, students, parents, and the staff of organizations that partner with middle schools” (p. v).

Family and community support was indicated to support a positive school climate. Family and community member involvement in schools promotes a sense of community within the school. This sense of community can be increased through interactions between school personnel and community members within the school and the community. A combined effort is needed on behalf of the school administration, teachers, and community members for communities to become more supportive of teachers and their teaching conditions (Inman & Marlow, 2004).

Comparison to NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey Results

The NCTWC survey instrument was used to gain a better understanding of the turnover rates at each traditional middle school used in the study. The NCTWC Survey Results (2016) display the percentage of teachers who believed the specific conditions being measured are present in their school. In an effort to increase reliability of the data gathered in this study, the researcher used NCTWCS survey items that were determined to correlate with the Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey items to triangulate data.

Various survey items from the NCTWC survey were used to measure the conditions for each potential motivating factor for classroom retention in the five middle schools in the study. The NCTWC survey items and the Motivation Survey items correlated for each potential motivating factor are shown in Table 34.

Table 33

Motivational Factor Survey Item Correlations

Motivating Factor for Classroom Retention	Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey	NCTWC Survey
School Climate	4, 9, 10, 11	6.1a, 6.1b, 6.1c, 6.1d, 6.1e, 6.1f, 6.1g, 6.5, 7.1a, 7.1b
Administrative Support	5, 13, 14	5.1d, 5.1e, 7.1c, 7.1f, 7.1g, 7.1h, 7.1j, 7.3a
Individualized Professional Development	6, 16, 17	2.2b, 6.2d, 7.3d, 8.1a, 8.1b, 8.1c, 8.1e
Collegiality	7, 12, 15	2.1b, 2.2b, 8.1j, 9.1g, 9.1i
Family and Community Support	8, 18	2.2f, 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.1c, 4.1d, 4.1e, 4.1f, 4.1g, 4.1h

NCTWC survey results from each of the five middle schools in the study were sorted by the researcher into groups by potential motivational factor. Each NCTWC survey item reported the percentages of teachers who agreed or disagreed that certain conditions were present in their school. The percentages of teachers who agreed conditions were present in their school were used to calculate an overall mean for the specific condition. The mean for each specific condition was then used to determine the over mean percentage for potential motivation factors (school climate, administrative support, individualized professional development, collegiality, and family and community support). Table 35 shows the mean percentage for each motivational factor obtained from the NCTWC survey results. The percentages of teachers who reported each factor as an absolutely essential or very important factor for middle school classroom retention are also presented in Table 35.

Table 34

Comparison of Conditions Present and Factors for Retention

Motivational Factor for Classroom Retention	Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey	NCTWC survey items
School Climate	95%	84%
Administrative Support	94%	84%
Individualized Professional Development	35%	77%
Collegiality	63%	85%
Family and Community Support	65%	88%

Note: Motivating Factors Survey=% of teachers who believed factor was an absolutely essential or very important factor for retention; NCTWCS Survey=the mean % of teachers who agreed conditions for motivational factors were present in their school.

Table 35 displays the fact that 95% of teachers from the study felt school climate was an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor for middle school classroom retention. NCTWC Survey Results (2016) reported 84% of teachers felt the conditions for a positive school climate were present in their school. Specific conditions reported with mean scores below 80% on the NCTWC Survey instrument were “Teachers have an influence on decision making” (73%), “The faculty has an effective process for making decisions to solve problems” (78%), “There is an atmosphere of trust and respect” (79%), and “Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them” (79%).

Administrative support was felt by 94% of research study respondents to be an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor for middle school classroom retention. According to NCTWC Survey Results (2016), 84% of teachers felt conditions of administrative support were present in their school. Specific conditions with mean scores below 80% on the NCTWC Survey Results (2016) were “School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct” (69%) and “School administrators support teacher efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom” (78%).

Individualized professional development was reported in the research study by only 35% of respondents to be an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor to remain in the middle school classroom. NCTWC Survey Results (2016) reported 77% of respondents felt individualized professional development conditions were present in their school. Specific conditions reported with mean scores below 80% were “Teachers have a role in determining the content of in-service professional development programs in your school” (54%) and “Professional development is differentiated to meet the individual needs of teachers” (68%).

Sixty-three percent of teachers from the study felt collegiality was an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor for middle school classroom retention. NCTWC Survey Results (2016) reported 85% of teachers felt the conditions for collegiality were present in their school. Three were no specific conditions reported with mean scores below 80% on the NCTWC Survey instrument; however, “Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues” and “Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices” were reported with mean scores of 81%.

Family and community support was felt by 65% of research study respondents to be an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor for middle school classroom retention. According to NCTWC Survey Results (2016), 88% of teachers felt conditions of family and community support were present in their school. One specific condition with a mean score below 80% on the NCTWC Survey Results (2016) was “Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students” (75%).

Implications of comparison to NCTWC survey results. School climate was reported by 95% of respondents to be a motivational factor to remain in the classroom;

however, only 84% of respondents on the NCTWC survey reported conditions of a positive school climate. Teacher influence on decision-making in the school and feelings of trust and mutual respect received low ratings, indicating those conditions are not present overall in these schools. Addressing these conditions may improve the school climate in these schools.

Administrative support was reported by 94% of survey respondents as a motivational factor for classroom retention. Eighty-four percent of NCTWC survey participants reported administrative support conditions in the schools. Improvements in disciplinary policies may lead to improvements in the perception of administrative support. Specifically, enforcing rules of student conduct and supporting teacher efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom may increase feelings of support.

Individualized professional development was only reported by 35% of survey respondents as a motivational factor for classroom retention; however, 77% of NCTWC survey participants reported professional development conditions were present in their schools. In order to increase the motivational value of professional development, the professional development must allow teachers to determine the content in an effort to differentiate based on the needs of teachers.

Collegiality was reported by 63% of survey participants as a motivational factor to remain in the classroom. Eighty-five percent of NCTWC survey respondents indicated conditions for collegiality were present in their school. To increase the motivational value of collegiality in classroom retention, collaborative time to refine teaching practices must be provided.

Family and community support was reported by 65% of survey respondents as a motivational factor for classroom retention. Eighty-eight percent of NCTWC survey

participants reported conditions of family and community support in their school. The creation of a family atmosphere to include families and community members may increase feelings of support and therefore increase student success.

Theoretical Framework

EVT, first constructed by Fishbein and Aizen (1975), proposed that individual behaviors were determined by the perceived value of a goal as well as the anticipated level of success of that goal. This study focused on teacher motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. The study found school climate, administrative support, collegiality, family and community support, and impact on student lives to be motivating factors for teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. Positive school climate, administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support all increase feelings of success in teachers. The perceived value of a goal can be attained through the impact a teacher has on student lives.

Victor Vroom modified EVT in 1964 to ETM. ETM assumed behavior was a result of conscious choices and was also affected by factors such as personality, skills, knowledge, experience, and abilities. ETM promoted an individual's belief that increased effort led to higher performance and higher performance led to rewards that satisfy needs, thus making the effort meaningful. Vroom's theory examined the belief that effort put forward would result in desired performance (expectancy) and achieving specific levels of performance would result in attainment of rewards (instrumentality; Expectancy Theory of Motivation-Victor Vroom, n.d.). The efforts put forward by classroom teachers resulted in successful performance by students and therefore led to a positive impact on the student lives.

ETM was altered during the 1980s to specifically focus on levels of student

confidence to complete tasks and the perceived value of the academic task (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Teacher shortages sparked a renewed interest in motivation research to address teacher motivations to remain in the teaching profession (Han & Yin, 2016). Four components (intrinsic motivation, social influences, feelings of commitment, and demotivating factors) were found to affect the motivation of teachers to enter into the profession and remain in the profession (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). These four components were found within the results of this study. Teachers' intrinsic motivation to make a difference in society and to shape the future was documented in survey and focus group results. Social influences affecting teacher motivation to remain in the middle school classroom were documented in data collected for school climate, administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support. Feelings of commitment were reported through data collection for school climate, collegiality, and family and community support. Feelings of commitment were also observed from qualitative data collection and used to create the additional theme of impacting student lives. Demotivating factors such as time constraints, increased workload, pressures of testing, and salary were also observed in qualitative data. The purpose of this study was to determine factors motivating teachers to remain in middle school classrooms to lessen or overcome demotivating factors.

Interpretation of Findings

The main theme documented through qualitative data analysis was the fact that middle school teachers are motivated to remain in the classroom in order to have an impact on student lives. The ability of a teacher to impact student lives is affected by factors throughout the school. School climate, administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support all affect the ability of a teacher to impact the lives of

students.

School climate (the feelings and attitudes that are produced by a school's environment) was shown by 95% of survey respondents to be an absolutely essential or very important motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. Focus group participants felt school climate was directly affected by administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support. Respondents also felt every aspect of the school, including students, was affected by the school climate. To ensure teachers have the ability to positively impact student lives, schools must have a positive school climate. Increases in administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support can positively affect school climate.

Ninety-four percent of survey respondents felt administrative support was an absolutely essential or very important motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. Supports through discipline and feedback on instruction were believed by survey and focus group respondents to increase motivation to remain in the classroom. Disciplinary supports and instructional feedback help teachers positively impact student lives. These supports also encourage a positive school climate.

To a lesser extent, collegiality was reported by 63% of survey respondents as an absolutely essential or very important motivation to remain in the middle school classroom. A discrepancy appeared in focus group discussions between the terms collegiality and collaboration. Responses to the term collegiality (or collegial) elicited a more positive response than the term collaborate. Focus group members reported "being forced to collaborate" and "required forms to complete" during collaborative meetings. Collegial relationships were reported by survey and focus group responses as a motivational factor to remain in a school. Relationships with colleagues, including

content areas and teams, were stated as motivational factors to remain in the classroom. Collegial relationships were also described during focus group discussions to have an impact on school climate. Collegiality was seen to aid teachers in positively impacting student lives.

Family and community support was reported by 65% of survey respondents as an absolutely essential or very important motivational factor to remain in the middle school classroom. Focus group respondents felt family and community support had a direct effect on school climate. Feelings of pride in the school felt by teachers, students, families, and community members were reported by focus group respondents to build a sense of community within and outside of the school. Family and community support was also reported to give students additional resources and opportunities that enable teachers to positively impact student lives.

In summary, school climate, administrative support, collegiality, and family and community support are all interwoven factors that motivate middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. All factors are necessary for teachers to have a positive impact on the lives of students. By working together to create optimal conditions for the success of all students, school personnel can also create optimal conditions for teacher retention.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions. The purpose of the study was to determine possible factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. It was assumed that all teachers participating in the survey and focus groups did so voluntarily. It was also assumed all teachers clearly understood survey items and focus group questions.

Limitations of the study. The researcher was employed by one of the middle schools in the school district used for this study. It is possible that her employment in the

school district could have led to bias in the data collection process. Her employment could also have affected the survey completion rate. In addition, focus group respondents may not have felt free to respond honestly to all focus group questions due to the knowledge that the researcher was employed by the school district.

Delimitations. The researcher chose the location of the study for the convenience of the location. Due to the size of the school district chosen by the researcher, the population size for the study was 170 teachers located in a small rural school district in central North Carolina. Due to the size of the sample (n=82) and the rural location, the results of this study may not be used to describe a larger or urban population.

Threats to Validity and Reliability

Although results from the survey appeared to align with results gathered from focus group questions, external factors such as time constraints and job stressors may have impacted the results. The survey was administered at the end of October at a time when teachers and students had not had a break for over 7 weeks. This time frame could have affected the responses of some teachers.

In an effort to strengthen validity and reliability of the study, focus group transcripts were checked to ensure accurate transcription. A summary and analysis of the focus group meetings was also forwarded to each focus group participant to establish agreement and collect feedback (Butin, 2010; Rio-Roberts, 2011). A colleague of the researcher who had recently obtained a doctorate degree and was familiar with qualitative research cross-checked the coding of themes (Creswell, 2014).

Recommendations

The focus of this study was on factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. Recommendations to improve current conditions in the schools

can be taken from the NCTWC Survey Results (2016) and data gathered from both focus group meetings. Using the analysis of the factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom, the following recommendations can be made to improve conditions within the five middle schools of the study and possibly increase classroom retention.

Increase teacher influence on decision-making. “Teachers’ ability to influence certain policies and practices at their school (such as hiring other teachers)” were reported to be associated with high rates of teacher retention (Marinell & Coca, 2013, p. 35). One focus group discussed using interview questions to prompt discussion to get insight into whether or not the job candidate was a good fit for middle school. Potential candidates could be given a description of a common middle school scenario and asked how they would handle it.

The group also felt principals should take teacher preference into consideration as much as possible when placing teachers in teaching assignments. One participant shared, I feel like there are a lot of principals who just like to stir the pot and mix around. And there are some people . . . who are going to be pushed out of their comfort zone, and they are going to end up flourishing, and that’s awesome. But, I think you have to be careful how you do that because that drives people out of middle school. Sixth, seventh and eighth grades are very different, and the administrators have to get to know teachers to know where they would flourish.

Make school-wide decisions regarding discipline. According to Ingersoll (2001), inadequate support from school administration, including limited faculty input into school-wide decision-making, provoke one fourth of teachers to migrate to another school or district or leave the teaching profession altogether. One focus group member

suggested using a professional development day to categorize disciplinary infractions and determine the consequences of each as a staff. The group felt school-wide disciplinary decisions would promote ownership and continuity of disciplinary procedures. The group also felt school-wide decision-making would encourage sense of belonging and improvements to school climate.

Individualized professional development. In an effort to provide true individualized professional development, a focus group participant suggested district-level specialists be available to provide professional development to individuals or small groups on an as-needed basis. The group felt teachers should be encouraged to contact specialists to address their instructional needs. The group also felt the specialists should not be used in an evaluative manner in order for teachers to feel safe in contacting them.

Another focus group participant recommended a county-supported professional development fund. The participant shared, “I feel like it would be more helpful to have some of that time, energy and funding used for generic county-wide PD put into . . . specialized PD.” The participant went on to describe funding teachers could use to obtain individualized professional development from outside sources. Teachers place a high value on professional development and often go outside their system to get the individualized development they need (Patterson et al., 2004).

Collegiality to improve instruction. Collegial relationships are often just a positive side effect of mandated collaboration. Focus group participants felt more purposeful collaborative opportunities may result in stronger collegial relationships that improve instruction. “Beyond formal support programs, schools need to become the type of collegial, caring, growth-oriented communities that sustain teachers” (Glickman et al., 2014, p. 71). Collaboration provides opportunities for teachers to provide emotional

support as well as instructional support for one another (Guarino et al., 2006).

Teachers, especially Encore teachers, are often observed by peers who are not in the same subject area or field. To build collegial relationships and provide sound constructive feedback, it is recommended that a teacher within the same subject area or field should complete peer observations. A focus group participant who was a seventh grade ELA teacher noted,

I was observed as a BT [beginning teacher], and it was a 6th grade science teacher. We were having a pre-lesson talk and she [the 6th grade science teacher] was asking, “What’s this?” and “What’s that?” I would rather the school get a sub and have another 7th grade ELA teacher observe me. She’s someone in my field who could give me real advice.

It is also suggested teachers could be given the opportunity to observe other teachers in order to find their own peer observer. Selecting peer observers would allow teachers to find a peer observer who could give specific feedback to target areas determined by the teacher being observed. The teachers felt this would also help build connections throughout the school. Goldstein (2014) suggested schools “change the structure of teachers’ workdays so all effective veterans spend some time watching novice teachers work and coaching them” (p. 270).

An Encore teacher presented another recommendation: “I prefer the chance to meet with the elementary and high school choir directors. Then I could understand where my students should be when they get to me and when they leave for high school.” The Encore teacher also felt building collegial relationships between elementary, middle, and high school teachers would encourage the teachers to become more vested in each other’s programs.

Encourage teachers to remain in the classroom. Both focus groups felt teachers were not encouraged to remain in the classroom. Salary constraints often push teachers to seek positions outside of the classroom to provide professional challenges and to obtain a raise in salary. One focus group member stated, “It’s like we feel disrespected with how much we get paid.” Disrespect of teachers was mentioned by another participant to be felt in the community. Summarizing the conversation, another participant stated, “I feel like we take a lot of good teachers out of the classroom and make them administrators. We really need to do things to encourage teachers to stay teachers. It’s okay to be a teacher your whole career.” In order to retain quality teachers, exciting and challenging opportunities for individual growth must be offered (Goldstein, 2014).

Better teacher preparation at the college level. A focus group participant reported, “I don’t think universities adequately prepare middle school teachers. We are considered secondary, but most of the college classes prepare secondary teachers for high school.” This participant described the need for prospective middle school teachers to have training in classroom management to deal with middle school students. Novice teachers who feel well prepared to teach are more likely to remain in the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002).

Another participant responded, “Teachers need to know what they are getting into, so spending time in a middle school with middle school students is important.” Another participant suggested, “I feel like we needed a little bit of sixth grade experience, a little bit of seventh grade experience and a little eighth grade experience. That may help teachers find a niche in a way.”

Implications for Future Research

A study of factors motivating teachers to remain in middle school classrooms in an area where low salary is not an issue would give further credibility to the results of this study. Low salary was mentioned in both the survey results and focus group discussions. Low salary has been attributed to increased attrition and migration from the classroom to district and administrative positions (Hofstetter, 2014; Morrison, 2012; Schaffhauser, 2014).

Further investigation of student teaching experiences used to prepare middle school teachers for the classroom would be useful to eliminate poor preparation from reasons teachers leave or remain in the classroom. It was recommended by the focus group for prospective teachers to spend time during student teaching in Grades 6, 7, and 8 to get a feel for each grade and to find their niche. Adequate teacher preparation may also be a factor in middle school classroom retention.

Chapter 5 Summary

This chapter discussed findings from the mixed-methods study on factors motivating teachers to remain in the middle school classroom. The chapter also provided recommendations to improve middle school classroom retention and recommendations for further study on this topic.

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Appendix A

Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey

Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention Survey

As an educator, your opinions and experiences are very important. Please help me discover factors that motivate middle school teachers to remain in the classroom by completing a survey that will take less than 10 minutes to complete. If you are currently a middle school classroom teacher, please click the link to participate in the survey.

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30+ years

2. What is the highest degree you have obtained?

- Bachelors
- Masters
- Specialist
- Doctorate

3. Please rate how motivated you are to remain in the middle school classroom.

- Not at all motivated
- Slightly motivated
- Motivated
- Very motivated

Please rate to what extent the following factors motivate you to remain in the middle school classroom:

4. The school climate (the feelings and attitudes that are produced by a school's environment)

- 0-Not important at all
- 1-Of little importance
- 2-Of average importance
- 3-Very important
- 4-Absolutely essential

5. The support of school administration

- 0-Not important at all
- 1-Of little importance
- 2-Of average importance
- 3-Very important
- 4-Absolutely essential

6. Individualized professional development
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

7. The ability to collaborate with colleagues
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

8. The support of students' families and the community
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

9. Being able to choose your own instructional practices for your classroom.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

10. Being provided opportunities to be a leader in the school.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

11. Being given the opportunity to make decisions to improve school practices.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

12. Being provided opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

13. Being supported by school administration through student discipline practices.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

14. Being provided specific ways to improve classroom instruction by school administration.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

15. Being provided sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

16. Being provided opportunities to choose professional development.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

17. Being provided support at the school or district level to implement professional development.
 - 0-Not important at all
 - 1-Of little importance
 - 2-Of average importance
 - 3-Very important
 - 4-Absolutely essential

18. Family and community members being provided opportunities to participate in the school activities.

- 0-Not important at all
- 1-Of little importance
- 2-Of average importance
- 3-Very important
- 4-Absolutely essential

19. Which of the following best describes your professional plans in the near future?

- Continue as a middle school classroom teacher
- Move to an elementary school classroom teacher
- Move to a high school classroom teacher
- Move to a position outside of the classroom (administration, support, etc.)
- Leave education entirely

20. Have you considered leaving (or have you previously left) the middle school classroom? If so, what was the major reason? Why did you stay (or return)?

[TEXT BOX]

21. Please discuss any additional factors that have motivated you to remain in the middle school classroom.

[TEXT BOX]

If you are willing to participate in a focus group to discuss this topic and possibly discover ways to increase teacher retention in middle schools, please enter your email address and/or phone number in the space below. You can also contact me directly at XXXXXXXXXXXX. Thank you for your assistance!

[TEXT BOX]

Appendix B

Survey Item to Research Question Alignment Table

Survey Item to Research Question Alignment Table

Research Question	Survey Item	Data Collection	Analysis Method
To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by school climate?	3. The school climate (culture) 8. Being trusted to make professional decisions about instruction or other educational issues. 9. Being encouraged to participate in a leadership role. 10. Having an appropriate amount of influence on decision-making.	Quantitative 4 Survey items total	Motivating Factors Survey
To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by administrative support?	4. The support of school administration 12. School leadership consistently supporting teachers. 13. Receiving feedback to help improve your instruction.	Quantitative 3 Survey items total	Motivating Factors Survey
To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by individualized professional development?	5. Individualized professional development 15. Having an appropriate amount of time provided for professional development. 16. Having professional development that provides opportunities to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	Quantitative 3 Survey items total	Motivating Factors Survey

<p>To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by collegiality?</p>	<p>6. The ability to collaborate with colleagues 11. Collaborating with colleagues to address issues and concerns in the school. 14. Being provided sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues.</p>	<p>Quantitative 3 Survey items total</p>	<p>Motivating Factors Survey</p>
<p>To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by family and community support?</p>	<p>7. The support of students' families and the community 17. Families being influential decision makers in the school.</p>	<p>Quantitative 2 Survey items total</p>	<p>Motivating Factors Survey</p>
<p>1. To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. School climate b. Administrative support c. Individualized Professional Development d. Collegiality e. Family and Community Support 	<p>18. Which of the following best describes your professional plans in the near future? Continue as a middle school classroom teacher Move to an elementary school classroom teacher Move to a high school classroom teacher Move to a position outside of the classroom (administration, support, etc.) Leave education entirely</p>	<p>Quantitative 1 Survey item total</p>	<p>Motivating Factors Survey</p>

<p>To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by</p> <p>School climate Administrative support Individualized Professional Development Collegiality Family and Community Support</p>	<p>19. Have you considered leaving (or previously left) the middle school classroom? Is so, what was the major reason? Why did you stay (or return)?</p>	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>1 Survey item total</p>	<p>Motivating Factors Survey</p>
<p>To what extent are teacher motivations to remain in the middle school classroom affected by</p> <p>School climate Administrative support Individualized Professional Development Collegiality Family and Community Support</p>	<p>20. Please discuss any additional factors that have motivated you to remain in the middle school classroom.</p>	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>1 Survey item total</p>	<p>Motivating Factors Survey</p>

Appendix C

2016 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Data Analysis

2016 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Data Analysis

Climate	School	School	School	School	School	Mean % A
	A	B	C	D	E	
	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	
6.1a Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	3 96	3 97	5 95	28 72	28 71	86
6.1b Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	0 100	3 97	7 93	16 84	27 73	93
6.1c Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	3 97	7 93	8 92	18 82	28 71	87
6.1d Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	9 91	0 100	5 94	9 91	15 85	92
6.1e The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	13 87	0 100	7 92	38 62	52 48	78
6.1f In this school, we take steps to solve problems.	6 93	0 100	2 98	21 79	45 54	85
6.1g Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	3 97	0 100	2 97	21 79	23 77	90
6.5 Teachers have an influence on decision making in this school.	15 85	3 97	24 76	43 57	48 52	73
7.1a There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	9 91	0 100	7 93	33 66	56 44	79
7.1b Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	6 94	0 100	9 90	39 61	48 52	79
Sum	7 93	2 98	8 92	27 73	37 63	84

% D equals the percentage of teachers who disagreed with the statement

% A equals the percentage of teachers who agreed with the statement

Administrative Support	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	Mean %A
	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	
5.1d School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct	21 78	0 100	17 82	47 53	68 32	69
5.1e School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.	6 94	0 100	10 90	39 61	54 47	78
7.1c The school leadership consistently support teachers.	6 94	0 100	5 95	32 68	53 48	81
7.1f Teacher performance is assessed objectively	3 97	0 100	5 95	16 84	10 90	93
7.1 g . Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching	6 94	0 100	0 100	15 85	15 85	93
7.1h . The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.	3 97	0 100	2 98	12 88	17 83	93
7.1j The faculty are recognized for their accomplishments.	9 91	3 96	12 88	34 66	18 82	85
7.3a. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues.	0 100	0 100	11 90	30 70	47 53	83
Sum	7 93	0 100	8 92	28 72	35 65	84

% D equals the percentage of teachers who disagreed with the statement

% A equals the percentage of teachers who agreed with the statement

Individualized Professional Development	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	Mean % A
	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	
6.2d. How much of a role do teachers have in determining the content of in-service professional development programs in your school?	43 57	23 77	31 69	64 37	69 31	54
7.3d. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about professional development.	3 97	0 100	4 94	30 69	39 61	84
8.1a. Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school.	19 81	3 96	12 87	19 82	21 78	85
8.1b. An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.	21 79	3 96	5 95	20 80	17 82	86
8.1c. Professional development offerings are data driven.	11 89	0 100	0 100	45 54	32 67	82
8.1e. Professional development is differentiated to meet the individual needs of teachers.	29 71	7 93	27 72	50 50	46 53	68
Sum	21 79	6 94	14 86	38 62	38 62	77

% D equals the percentage of teachers who disagreed with the statement

% A equals the percentage of teachers who agreed with the statement

Collegiality	School	School	School	School	School	Mean % A
	A %D %A	B %D %A	C %D %A	D %D %A	E %D %A	
2.1b. Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	9 91	20 79	12 88	27 73	26 73	81
8.1j. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	17 83	7 93	12 87	27 73	28 71	81
9.1g. Teachers collaborate to achieve consistency on how student work is assessed.	16 83	4 96	14 87	15 85	10 90	88
9.1i. Teachers have knowledge of the content covered and instructional methods used by other teachers at this school.	12 88	7 93	13 87	19 81	9 91	88
Sum	14 86	10 90	13 87	22 78	18 82	85

% D equals the percentage of teachers who disagreed with the statement

% A equals the percentage of teachers who agreed with the statement

Family and Community Support	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	Mean % A
	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	%D %A	
4.1a. Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.	18 82	19 81	12 88	37 63	6 94	82
4.1b. This school maintains clear, two-way communication with the community.	7 93	0 100	3 97	20 80	25 75	89
4.1c. This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.	12 88	0 100	2 97	18 82	16 84	90
4.1d. Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.	3 97	0 100	0 100	9 91	0 100	98
4.1e. Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school.	9 90	0 100	5 94	13 87	27 73	89
4.1f. Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	16 84	24 75	15 85	46 53	22 78	75
4.1g. Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	3 97	7 93	14 87	19 80	15 85	88
4.1h. The community we serve is supportive of this school.	0 100	3 96	0 100	27 73	7 93	92
Sum	9 91	7 93	6 94	24 76	15 85	88

% D equals the percentage of teachers who disagreed with the statement

% A equals the percentage of teachers who agreed with the statement

10.1. Which of the following best describes your immediate professional plans?

	Continue teaching at my school	Continue teaching in this district but leave this school	Continue teaching in this state but leave this district	Continue working in education but pursue an administrative position	Continue working in education but pursue a non-administrative position	Leave education entirely
School A	89%	4%	0%	0%	7%	0%
School B	88%	4%	0%	0%	4%	4%
School C	79%	5%	5%	0%	3%	8%
School D	75%	15%	4%	4%	0%	2%
School E	80%	2%	12%	0%	0%	6%
Mean	82.2%	6%	4.2%	0.8%	2.8%	4%

10.3. Which aspect of your teaching conditions most affects your willingness to keep teaching at your school?

	Time during the day	Facilities and resources	Community support and involvement	Managing student discipline	Teacher leadership	School leadership	Professional development	Instructional practices and support
School A	14%	18%	11%	11%	4%	36%	0%	7%
School B	8%	0%	0%	8%	4%	68%	0%	12%
School C	24%	5%	3%	3%	8%	50%	0%	8%
School D	4%	11%	6%	40%	15%	15%	0%	9%
School E	19%	8%	4%	6%	12%	46%	0%	6%
Mean	13.8 %	8.4%	4.8%	13.6%	8.6%	43%	0%	8.4%

10.6. Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Agree
School A	6%	0%	6%	40%	54%	94%
School B	7%	0%	7%	10%	83%	93%
School C	7%	2%	9%	33%	58%	91%
School D	7%	22%	29%	57%	14%	71%
School E	11%	21%	32%	34%	34%	68%

Appendix D

Email Invitation for Teacher Survey Administration

Dear Colleagues,

I am currently working on a research study that focuses on increasing teacher retention in middle school classrooms. I would appreciate you taking the time to complete the Motivating Factors for Middle School Retention survey.

The survey should take less than 10 minutes of your time. Your responses are voluntary and will be confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group. Neither your choice to participate nor your responses to this survey have any impact on you as a teacher and employee of the school district or your individual school. The survey can be accessed by using the link below. By clicking the link, you are consenting to taking the survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5JK8P7Q>

The informed consent information for participation in the survey is found below.

Thank you for your time and for advocating for our profession.

Respectfully,
Kim Coleman

Gardner-Webb University IRB

Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Factors Increasing Teacher Retention in Middle School Classrooms

Researcher: Kim Coleman, EDCI candidate

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to investigate the factors increasing retention of teachers in middle school classrooms. The purpose of the study is to find out what trends were identified using a survey regarding factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom.

Procedure:

What will you do in this study: Participate in a to investigate the factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. The survey will be a forwarded to all middle school teachers in the district.

Time Required: It is anticipated that the survey will take less than 10 minutes.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

Confidentiality: The survey will not collect any identifying information. Survey data (without identifying factors) will be stored in a secure location for five years.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us to understand effective practices associated with inclusion and co-teaching at the secondary level.

The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw from the Study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to Withdraw from the Study

- If you want to withdraw from the study, please tell the researcher. There is no penalty for withdrawing.
- If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact Kim Coleman
XXXXXXXXXXXX

If you have questions about the study, contact the following individuals:

Kim Coleman
School of Education
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Dr. Jennifer Putnam
School of Education
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
704-406-2015
jputnam@gardner-webb.edu

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have

questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Rogers
IRB Institutional Administrator
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
704-406-4724
jrogers3@gardner-webb.edu

Appendix E

Email Invitation for Teacher Focus Group Participants

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for participating in my survey and volunteering to contribute additional information through a focus group. The teacher turnover rate in middle school classrooms has continued to increase over that past few years. The increasing turnover may have had a negative effect on school climate and student achievement.

In order to address the increasing turnover, this research study will utilize focus groups to gather information on motivating factors to remain in the classroom. I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group on _____, 2017 at 4:30 pm with four to seven other middle school classroom teachers. The focus group should last no more than 90 minutes and refreshments will be served.

In October, a survey was sent to all classroom teachers serving in middle school teaching assignments. The purpose of this focus group is to find more about trends that were identified from this survey. Participation in this focus group is voluntary and has no impact on your future employment. The focus group conversation will be audiotaped in order to accurately capture the conversation; however, no personal information will be recorded. If you are willing to participate in this focus group, please respond to Kim Coleman (XXXXXXXXXXXX) by November 5, 2017.

Thank you for your assistance!
Kim Coleman

Appendix F

Informed Consent for Participation in the Focus Group

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Factors Increasing Teacher Retention in Middle School Classrooms

Researcher: Kim Coleman, EDCI candidate

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to investigate the factors increasing retention of teachers in middle school classrooms. In October, a survey was sent to all classroom teachers in middle schools in the participating district. The purpose of the study is to find out what trends were identified from the survey regarding factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom.

Procedure:

What will you do in this study: Participate in a focus group with four to seven other middle school classroom teachers to investigate the factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. The focus group will be audio taped; however, no personal identifying information will be recorded for the participants.

Time Required: The focus group will last no longer than 90 minutes.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request to have any of your data destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

Confidentiality: Survey data collected will be anonymous. Because the nature of a focus group, I cannot guarantee data collected during focus group meetings will be confidential, and it may be possible that others will know what you have reported. The focus group will be audio recorded and then transcribed. That data will be coded for themes of factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom. No identifying factors of participants will be recorded. At the end of the research study, all audio recordings and transcripts of recordings will be shredded.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us understand the factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom in the participating school district. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses _____ risk to participants.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw from the Study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

1. If you would like to withdraw from the study, tell the researcher and leave the room. There is no penalty for withdrawing.
2. If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact Kim Coleman, (XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX)

If you have any questions about this study, contact the following individuals:

Kim Coleman
School of Education
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dr. Jennifer Putnam
School of Education
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
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If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Rogers
IRB Institutional Administrator
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
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Voluntary Consent by Participant

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me.

_____ I agree to participate in the focus group. I understand that this interview may be audio recorded for purposes of accuracy. The audio recording will be transcribed and destroyed.

_____ I do not agree to participate in the focus group.

Participant Printed Name

Date: _____

Participant Signature

Date: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix G
Focus Group Topic Guide

- I. Introduction (5 mins)
 - a. Thank all in attendance
 - b. Purpose of the Group
 - c. Meeting details-Audio taped, research purposes only, anonymous
 - d. Norms-On display
 - i. The moderator's role
 - ii. You should speak freely and one at a time
 - iii. Your opinions are important.
 - iv. There are no right or wrong answers.
 - v. Please ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak.
 - vi. You do not have to respond to any question that makes you uncomfortable.
 - vii. You are free to stop participating at any time with no consequences.

- II. Opening Questions (15 mins)
 - a. Participant introductions (State your first name and teaching assignment)
 - b. How long have you taught middle school?

- III. Warm-Up Discussion
 - a. What factors do you believe motivate most teachers to remain in the middle school classroom?
 - i. Can you elaborate on that point?
 - ii. Please give me an example.

- IV. Key Questions-depend on survey results (45 mins)
 - a. What factors motivated you to remain in the classroom for the current school year?
 - i. Can you elaborate on that point?
 - ii. Please give me an example.
 - b. A majority of teachers reported being supported by school administration through student discipline practices to be a factor in whether or not they remained in the classroom. Why do you think that is?
 - i. Can you elaborate on that point?
 - ii. Please give me an example.
 - iii. Do you agree or disagree?
 - c. Is the climate, or culture, of the school a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?
 - i. Can you elaborate on that point?
 - ii. Please give me an example.
 - iii. Do you agree or disagree?
 - d. Is the school administration a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?
 - i. Can you elaborate on that point?
 - ii. Please give me an example.
 - iii. Do you agree or disagree?

- e. Is individualize professional development a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?
 - i. Can you elaborate on that point?
 - ii. Please give me an example.
 - iii. Do you agree or disagree?
- f. Is collegiality, or time spent working collaboratively with your peers a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?
 - i. Can you elaborate on that point?
 - ii. Please give an example.
 - iii. Do you agree or disagree?
- g. Is family and community support a motivating factor for you to remain in the classroom? Why or why not?
 - i. Can you elaborate on that point?
 - ii. Please give me an example.
 - iii. Do you agree or disagree?

V. Final Questions (15 mins)

- a. What do you feel was the most important factor we discussed today?
- b. Is there anything we have missed or you would like to add?
- c. If you could communicate anything to the district office or the state of North Carolina regarding factors motivating middle school teachers to remain in the classroom, what would they be?
- d. Does anyone have any closing remarks?

VI. Closing (5 mins)

- a. Thank you for participating
- b. All comments are anonymous and for research purposes only

Kim will send a follow-up summary of the focus group via email to gather feedback

Appendix H

Critical Values of the X^2 Distributions

df	α Levels				
	.10	.05	.02	.01	.001
1	2.71	3.84	5.41	6.64	10.83
2	4.60	5.99	7.82	9.21	13.82
3	6.25	7.82	9.84	11.34	16.27
4	7.78	9.49	11.67	13.28	18.46
5	9.24	11.07	13.39	15.09	20.52
6	10.64	12.59	15.03	16.81	22.46
7	12.02	14.07	16.62	18.48	24.32
8	13.36	15.51	18.17	20.09	26.12
9	14.68	16.92	19.68	21.67	27.88
10	15.99	18.31	21.16	23.21	29.59
11	17.28	19.68	22.62	24.72	31.26
12	18.55	21.03	24.05	26.22	32.91
13	19.81	22.36	25.47	27.69	34.53
14	21.06	23.68	26.87	29.14	36.12
15	22.31	25.00	28.26	30.58	37.70
16	23.54	26.30	29.63	32.00	39.25
17	24.77	27.59	31.00	33.41	40.79
18	25.99	28.87	32.35	34.80	42.31
19	27.20	30.14	33.69	36.19	43.82
20	28.41	31.41	35.02	37.57	45.32
21	29.62	32.67	36.34	38.93	46.80
22	30.81	33.92	37.66	40.29	48.27
23	32.01	35.17	38.97	41.64	49.73
24	33.20	36.42	40.27	42.98	51.18
25	34.38	37.65	41.57	44.31	52.62
26	35.56	38.88	42.86	45.64	54.05
27	36.74	40.11	44.14	46.96	55.48
28	37.92	41.34	45.42	48.28	56.89
29	39.09	42.56	46.69	49.59	58.30
30	40.26	43.77	47.96	50.89	59.70

(Urdan, 2010, p. 199)