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Educators' Perceptions of Student Mobility During the Intermediate Elementary Grades in Two Rural Counties in Missouri

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Educators' Perceptions of Student Mobility During the Intermediate

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in Missouri

by

Landon S. Gray

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in

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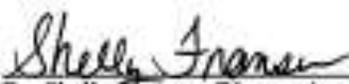
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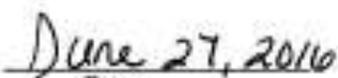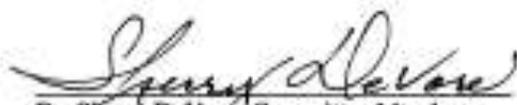
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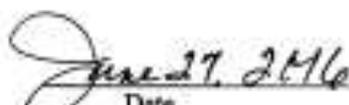
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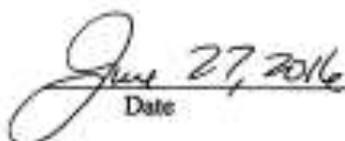
Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Landon S. Gray

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Abstract

Student mobility is "students moving from one school to another for reasons other than being promoted to the next school level" (Rumberger, 2002, p. 1). In this qualitative study, the researcher detailed how student mobility impacted four rural intermediate elementary schools in two select counties in southwest Missouri. Four principals, four counselors, and four classroom teachers were interviewed to learn how high student mobility impacted these participants, mobile and non-mobile students, and schools overall. There has been ample research on student mobility in the primary grades and in high school, but very little research exists dealing with intermediate elementary students. Many common perceptions among those interviewed arose after data were analyzed. Participants agreed highly mobile students were more likely to struggle academically and socially than stably enrolled peers. In addition, interviewees felt highly mobile student populations presented more difficulties for teachers and administrators to successfully educate all children. The need for more effective enrollment and new student orientation practices surfaced as means to minimize the negative effects of high student mobility in the studied schools. Also, the need for more efficient communication with parents of mobile students was highlighted. Schools in this area must find ways to streamline curriculum and procedures to provide shared mobile students the opportunity to find academic and behavioral success. Conclusions from this study may help school leaders better address the needs presented by a highly mobile student population.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Student mobility has been shown to negatively impact student achievement (Beesley, Moore, & Gopalani, 2010). Rural schools encountering high rates of student mobility experience hardships unique to an often-moving student population (Beesley et al., 2010). According to Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011), high rates of student mobility can have negative effects on classrooms as well. However, highly mobile students are at the greatest risk of failure themselves (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). This negative impact can have a greater effect in urban and rural schools, and rural schools often do not have the needed resources to combat high student mobility like larger districts (Beesley et al., 2010). Beesley et al. (2010) also pointed out rural districts' academic scores are more significantly impacted by a single mobile student due to sheer enrollment numbers. Research on rural schools and mobility is important to this study, because southwest Missouri has many rural districts (Beesley et al., 2010).

Within this chapter, a historical perspective of student mobility is covered. A theoretical framework, statement of the problem, and purpose for the study are provided. Research questions to guide the study are highlighted. In addition, key terms are defined, while limitations and assumptions of the study are mentioned.

Background of the Study

Many children will change schools during their public education (Knox, 2011). Oftentimes, natural transitions such as elementary to middle school and middle school to high school necessitate school moves (Knox, 2011). Other frequent reasons for student moves can include a parent securing a new job or purchasing a new home (Rumberger, 2002). A project sponsored by the National Research Council (NRC) and Institute of

Medicine (IOM) (2010) suggested school mobility can be caused by special education placement needs, natural disasters forcing families to relocate, or families searching for safer environments for their children. Students may also change schools due to discipline problems (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine [NRC & IOM], 2010). Some schools may not be equipped to handle severe misbehaviors which require intensive counseling (NRC & IOM, 2010).

Rumberger (2002) pointed out between 30% and 40% of school moves are not caused by changes in residence. Factors such as school climate and academic prowess, suspension and expulsion policies, overcrowding, and class sizes can also contribute to student mobility (Rumberger, 2002). Finally, Rumberger (2002) cited the No Child Left Behind legislation may also be a factor in student mobility. Schools not meeting federal academic expectations in the past were required to allow parents the option of school choice if achievement scores stagnated and declined continually (Rumberger, 2002).

Student mobility became a focal point at the national level due to a 1994 report from the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) which highlighted concerns about the academic achievement of students who made frequent school moves. The report showed one in six third graders changed schools regularly, attending at least three different schools since the start of their first-grade year (GAO, 1994). These highly mobile students were more likely to repeat a grade and had low math and reading test scores (GAO, 1994). Since the issue of this report, the educational achievement of all students has remained a focal point for policymakers (GAO, 2010).

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 brought a renewed emphasis on various school reform measures including student mobility (Thompson, Meyers, & Oshima, 2011). The ultimate goal of this act was to ensure all American students would be academically proficient by the end of the 2014 school year (Thompson et al., 2011). Thompson et al. (2011) discussed how the passage of this act caused a shift in emphasis from effective classroom instruction to test performance. Districts were forced to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) measures in accordance with federal criteria within the legislation (Thompson et al., 2011). This led to a debate of fairness among schools with favorable student and area demographics versus schools with high rates of poverty, diversity, and mobility (Thompson et al., 2011).

The GAO again released a collective report in 2010 on the effects of frequent school changes on students and their achievement. The report summarized a longitudinal study of kindergarten students from 1998 to 2007 (GAO, 2010). Researchers found about 70% of these students changed schools two times or fewer during the study (GAO, 2010). These students were considered "less mobile," whereas students who moved four or more times were labeled "more mobile" (GAO, 2010, p. 4). Researchers found statistically significant deficits in the achievement levels of more mobile students compared to less mobile students (GAO, 2010). In addition, more mobile students had some characteristics distinguishing them from their more stable peers (GAO, 2010). They were more predominantly African-American, below the poverty threshold, and eligible for free and reduced price meals (GAO, 2010). In addition, a higher percentage of more mobile students came from one-parent households (GAO, 2010).

Further research into student mobility has continued to show a negative relationship between student mobility and academic achievement (GAO, 2010; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Scherrer, 2013). In the GAO (2010) report, teachers cited highly mobile students suffer due to inconsistencies in curriculum taught in previous schools and the students' current schools. Another reason provided is students may enter school with incomplete or missing student records (GAO, 2010). This can make class placement tedious and can also interfere with expedient special education services if students qualify (GAO, 2010). The final problem posed is meeting the unique needs of highly mobile families (GAO, 2010).

Student mobility is often defined generally as "students moving from one school to another for reasons other than being promoted to the next school level" (Rumberger, 2002, p. 1). Rumberger (2003) acknowledged a significant amount of student mobility can be attributed to moving of residences. However, Rumberger, Larson, Ream, and Palardy (1999) found between 30% and 40% of school changes were not directly related to residential changes. School factors such as "overcrowding, class size reduction, suspension and expulsion policies, and the general academic and social climate also contribute to mobility" (Rumberger et al., 1999, p. 2). Nonetheless, no matter the reason for school change, researchers agree there is a correlation between school mobility and decreases in academic achievement (Beesley et al., 2010; GAO, 2010; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011; Scherrer, 2013).

High student mobility has also been shown to be related to increases in student disciplinary actions (Beesley et al., 2010). According to Gruman, Harachi, Abbott, Catalano, and Fleming (2008), high student mobility rates put often-moving students at

greater risk of behavior problems in and out of school. In addition, these same students are shown to have decreased levels of classroom participation when compared to their non-mobile peers (Gruman et al., 2008). Student mobility can affect more than just school achievement in a negative way (Gruman et al., 2008).

School change affects districts throughout the country (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). According to Beesley et al. (2010), districts in five of the seven Central Region states with high student mobility tend to be rural and have higher rates of students eligible for free or reduced price meals when compared to these states' averages of students receiving meal assistance. Beesley et al. (2010) did find "an association between high student mobility and weaker student performance" (p. 1). Furthermore, the report conveyed small rural schools struggle to overcome high student mobility (Beesley et al., 2010). A lack of financial and human resources contribute to this correlation (Beesley et al., 2010). Other reasons provided for the struggles rural schools face when addressing high student mobility include the following: small enrollments impacted more statistically by the addition of mobile students to enrollments, smaller administrative staffs, and fewer financial resources (Beesley et al., 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Interpretivism was the theoretical framework used for this study. According to Butin (2010), this framework assumes "reality is intersubjective in that it is socially constructed, such that it can be described and represented through diverse perspectives" (p. 60). This research framework was created based on the premise "all one can do is accurately and thoroughly document the perspective being investigated" (Butin, 2010, p. 60). Educational researchers in this framework try to detail the thoughts and beliefs of

involved parties to help find significant patterns of meaning (Butin, 2010). The researcher strived to find commonalities among those interviewed to detail what ramifications student mobility has on two southwest Missouri counties' intermediate elementary schools.

The main goal of this study was to analyze student mobility perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and fifth-grade teachers in the schools selected in two southwest Missouri counties. The researcher looked at what unique characteristics mobile students may share according to the perceptions of certified school employees. In addition, the researcher wanted to see how school personnel perceive mobility impacts other students and buildings as a whole. Findings indicated what unique problems are encountered in rural schools with higher-than-normal student mobility. In addition, an emphasis was placed on finding what methods are used to help acclimate new students and to expedite the transfer process. The professionals interviewed agreed intermediate elementary schools should implement practices that effectively help highly mobile students adjust to new educational environments. A detailed account revealed the different realities high student mobility presents to intermediate elementary schools in select rural counties in southwest Missouri.

Statement of the Problem

In 2005, Senate Bill 287 passed and became law in Missouri, which transitioned public school funding from an equity-based to an adequacy-based system (Missouri School Boards Association [MSBA], 2014). According to the MSBA (2014), the Missouri legislature conceded equality in funding was not realistic and moved to a focus

ensuring schools have adequate funding to provide a quality education for students. This meant districts could vary in the amount of dollars spent per pupil to provide a legal and quality education (MSBA, 2014). Under this funding system, school districts with high levels of local wealth often spend more per pupil than districts with little assessed valuation, such as rural districts (MSBA, 2014).

Beesley et al. (2010) stated a majority of Missouri school districts are rural, and this pattern holds true in the southwest portion of the state. Beesley et al. (2010) also reported the average student mobility rate for Missouri schools in 2008 was 24.9%. Unfortunately, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) does not tabulate a student mobility rate for public dissemination, so this was the most current statewide data available. Four rural school districts in two select Missouri counties produced three-year mobility rate averages significantly higher than the 2008 state average. The 2012-2014 three year mobility rates for the studied school districts were as follows: School A (43.0%), School B (53.1%), School C (42.9%), and School D (47.0%) (MODESE, 2014c). The information collected in this study highlighted possible solutions to help rural school administrators shape school reform measures and make educated decisions on how to combat high student mobility.

Purpose of the Study

Students need stability to learn at optimal rates (Costley, 2012). Costley (2012) recognized "continuity in instruction, learner outcomes, emotional stability, and social relationships prevail" (para. 1) when students attend the same district for an extended period of time. Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) asserted the more a student changes schools, the greater threat to his or her academic achievement. The authors also

reiterated student mobility is not just an urban issue (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011).

Almost half a million children in the rural Midwest live under or just above the poverty

line (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). These children are much more at risk of frequent

school moves and academic struggles (Paik & Phillips, 2002).

The perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and fifth-grade

teachers on the influence of student mobility in their buildings were examined. Previous

research had shown certain types of student mobility can be related to negative student or

school outcomes (GAO, 2010; Knox, 2011; Rumberger, 2002). The researcher conveyed

through the study how higher-than-average student mobility rates holistically impact

schools according to interview participants. The interview sample was selected from

schools in two southwest Missouri counties with perennially higher-than-state-average

rates of student mobility. Four school districts in the selected counties met this criteria.

Research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals in select rural

counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on students and staff?

2. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary teachers in select rural

counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on classrooms?

3. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary counselors in select rural

counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on students and staff?

4. What, if any, common approaches are used in intermediate elementary

buildings in select rural counties in Missouri to help mobile students find success?

Significance of the Study

Beesley et al. (2010) pointed out most Missouri school districts are rural, and this is also true in the southwest part of the state. Because rural schools are held to the same academic standards as urban and suburban schools, it was important to discover what unique challenges rural schools encounter in regard to higher-than-average student mobility. Most school mobility and school transition research has focused upon the impact of student mobility upon adolescents and kindergarten students, whereas this study involved an analysis of mobility's effects on intermediate elementary students.

According to Gruman et al. (2008), struggles with mobility in the elementary years was strongly related to long-term measures of school success, such as high school completion. Gruman et al. (2008) also explained elementary students can face immediate negative outcomes due to mobility. Information gleaned from this study will help intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and teachers in similar areas shape effective programs and/or interventions for highly mobile student populations. In addition, these key stakeholders will have a better understanding of the problems created by student mobility in the studied schools.

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Free and reduced price meals. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2013), "Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which students can be

charged no more than 40 cents" (para. 5). In addition, "Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals" (USDA, 2013, para. 5).

      Intermediate elementary. According to Combs et al. (2011), an intermediate elementary contains the fifth grade apart from younger elementary grade levels and older grade levels typically found in a junior high, such as seventh and eighth grades. In addition, most intermediate elementary schools contain grades five and six but can also contain the fourth grade as well (Combs et al., 2011).

      Missouri assessment program (MAP) grade-level assessments. The MAP grade-level assessment program "assesses students' progress toward mastery of the Show-Me Standards which are the educational standards in Missouri. The Grade-Level Assessment is a yearly standards-based test that measures specific skills defined for each grade by the state of Missouri" (MODESE, 2014a, para. 1). Students in grades three, four, six, and seven take summative assessments in math and English-language arts (MODESE, 2014a). Students in grades five and eight take summative assessments in math, English-language arts, and science (MODESE, 2014a).

      Social capital. Social capital is "the ability, through social ties, to gain access to and make use of resources to effect change" (Scherrer, 2013, p. 3). In relation to schools, social capital can be taking advantage "of such things like school counselors, parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings, academic tutoring, knowing which teachers to 'fight' for, magnet school applications, gifted programs, special education resources, college admission information, and so on" (Scherrer, 2013, p. 3).

Student mobility. Student mobility is "students moving from one school to another for reasons other than being promoted to the next school level" (Rumberger, 2002, p. 1).

Student mobility rate. Any child who enters or leaves school between the last Friday in September and the last day of school is counted in the mobility rate (MODESE, 2014b). An individual child is counted only once (MODESE, 2014b). This number is divided by the K-12 fall membership taken the last Friday in September (MODESE, 2014b).

Limitations and Assumptions

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample demographics. The sample represents only selected personnel (principals, counselors, and fifth-grade teachers) within school districts in select southwest Missouri counties. The selected schools may not be representative of districts in other regions of the state. Also, the schools selected had diverse grade configurations within buildings. In addition, all studied schools were public schools governed by the MODESE regulations. Private, parochial, and home-schooled students were not examined in this study.

Interview questions. The questions chosen for this particular study were written by the researcher.

Interviews. Interview consent was purely voluntary in this study. Participants' answers varied in detail and length.

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. School personnel interviewed for this study provided honest and detailed correspondence when answering questions from the researcher.

2. School personnel interviewed for this study had direct job experience dealing with the impacts student mobility may pose in their buildings.

3. The involved school districts in the study accurately reported all student and school mobility data to the MODESE.

4. Selected schools were indicative of intermediate elementary buildings despite their differences in grade-level configurations.

Summary

Much of school mobility and school transition research has focused upon the impact of student mobility with adolescents and kindergarten students, whereas this study included an analysis of mobility's effects on upper-elementary students. According to Gruman et al. (2008), struggles with mobility during the early school years are strongly related to lasting measures of school success, such as finishing high school. Gruman et al. (2008) also explained elementary students can face immediate negative outcomes due to mobility.

Unscheduled school changes cause deterioration in elementary students' sense of belonging and commitment to school (Gruman et al., 2008). This deterioration is magnified when orientation programs do not exist at the new school (Gruman et al., 2008). Unexpected school moves also cause decreases in math and reading achievement due to inconsistent curriculum (Gruman et al., 2008).

Chapter Two of this study includes an in-depth literature review of student mobility. A priority was to find how high rates of student mobility have influenced students and schools in past studies. The literature review also allowed the researcher to better understand how the number of moves students make can impact their education. Student mobility is researched thoroughly in the coming chapter.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

It is well-documented school mobility is not an urban-only issue but is a problem for rural schools as well (Paik & Phillips, 2002). The need for continued qualitative studies dealing with mobility in schools is suggested (Beesley et al., 2010; NRC & IOM, 2010). This study involved eliciting the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and teachers on the topic of school mobility. This chapter highlights several pertinent topics found in school mobility research. The following topics are presented in this chapter: a theoretical framework, residential mobility and school mobility, types of school mobility, mobility effects on child development, student mobility and academic achievement, student mobility and student discipline, characteristics of students most likely to move, student mobility effects on schools, and methods used to combat student mobility.

The literature review includes relevant research about school mobility and its influence on students, staff members, and schools. Past studies showing negative and positive outcomes related to school moves are included to provide a thorough understanding of mobility. Special attention was given to studies of rural schools, since the population being studied was primarily rural (Beesley et al., 2010). However, there is a limited research base of mobility in rural-only schools. With this in mind, urban and suburban school studies are also included. Research used in this section can help readers see the need for further studies around student mobility. Expanding the qualitative research base on this topic will help school leaders in the represented area identify effective interventions and strategies to address the unique challenges presented by high student mobility rates in their schools.

Theoretical Framework

Qualitative research was used to gain unique perspectives of principals, counselors, and teachers toward school mobility. Snider (2010) argued numbers impress but do not reveal the whole picture of a studied topic. The basic premise of qualitative research is to truly understand a particular situation or phenomenon, one must experience the reality of that situation or phenomenon (Suter, 2012). Answers to common problems are found in the people who experience these same problems (Suter, 2012).

An interpretivist approach was used to gain a better understanding of mobility and how it impacts schools. This orientation acknowledges the true sense of a whole phenomenon can only be gained by those experiencing it (Suter, 2012). Butin (2010) pointed out qualitative researchers are already part of the story being studied, so these researchers have a unique viewpoint from which to collect data. Butin (2010) recognized the interpretivist perspective can only draw meaning from the group being studied, so philosophies and beliefs can vary depending upon the people, groups, or cultures being researched.

Student mobility was a perceived problem in the studied schools, and study participants described the phenomenon from their own unique viewpoints. Interview data were analyzed to find emerging themes to help better understand how student mobility is perceived by school principals, counselors, and teachers. The ultimate goal of this study was to provide a more sound understanding of how student mobility influences rural schools and to shed light onto what current practices are helping schools overcome challenges presented by student mobility.

Residential Mobility and School Mobility

Residential mobility and school mobility are intertwined in the context of student welfare, because of the high percentage of student school moves precipitated by changes in residence (NRC & IOM, 2010). According to Ihrke (2014), 35.9 million people ages one year and over changed residences in the United States from 2012-2013. Approximately 48% (17.2 million people) of those changing residences cited a housing-related reason for moving (Ihrke, 2014). Ihrke (2014) indicated African Americans (52.7%) and Hispanics (49.3%) reported the highest housing-related reason for moves among races. Another finding from this report was 57.6% of intra-county (change of residences within a county) movers reported housing-related reasons as the main reason for moving (Ihrke, 2014). People who are upgrading housing or are moving due to economic pressures moved within county more often when compared to their peers making job-related moves outside of the current county (Ihrke, 2014). These data are reflective of trends found in mobility research.

Missouri moving trends from 2008-2012 showed 83.6% of people had lived in the same house over a year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). However, one of the southwest Missouri counties selected for this study showed a higher variation in residential mobility (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). From 2008-2012, only 77.5% of residents in this county reported living in the same house for longer than a year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

In addition, the largest town in the represented population for this study had only 67.6% of its residents cite they had lived in the same house for longer than a year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Unfortunately, the other towns within the represented school districts in the study did not have these same data available. Beesley et al. (2010) found

in their study of five Midwest states, including Missouri, schools with high student mobility are often rural.

Residential volatility is a recurring problem for low-income families (Anderson, Leventhal, Newman, & Dupèrè, 2014). The federal government reported almost 50% of all households including children have at least one significant housing problem (NRC & IOM, 2010). These problems range from physically inadequate or congested living conditions to overinflated rental fees and mortgages (NRC & IOM, 2010). Another example of unpredictable living conditions for children is homelessness (Cutuli et al., 2013). Thompson and Haskins (2014) claimed, "In 2010, more than half the children living in homeless shelters were under age six" (p. 2).

According to Berns, Briar-Lawson, and Kim (2013), housing instability can place children at increased risk for diminished cognitive supports. In addition, children can be faced with dilapidated living environments, which can introduce additional risk factors such as domestic violence or drug and/or alcohol abuse (Berns et al., 2013). These data on residential mobility directly impact school mobility for students in specific population groups (NRC & IOM, 2010). Anecdotal records from this same research conveyed swells in foreclosures and unemployment have driven up the number of homeless in individual counties where resources to assist may be lacking (NRC & IOM, 2010). This increasing mobility includes school-age children and strained systems put in place to help these children (NRC & IOM, 2010).

Residential mobility among children has been prevalent in the United States. (Anderson et al., 2014). According to Anderson et al. (2014), children under the age of 10 years have mobility rates exceeding 13%. Children from families who are living in

poverty or are of a racial or ethnic minority group often make multiple moves within the same year (Anderson et al., 2014). Growing research indicates mobility creates adverse consequences for students who constantly move (Voight, Shinn, & Nation, 2012). In a recent study, Coley, Leventhal, Lynch, and Kull (2012) found higher-than-average rates of residential mobility are associated with social withdrawal and acting-out behaviors in children and adolescents from poverty. Another finding from Voight et al. (2012) revealed residential mobility is associated with reduced achievement in elementary and middle schools.

Impoverished areas see higher rates of residential and student mobility (NRC & IOM, 2010). Decisions to move households or change schools can add to high rates of turnover in neighborhoods and schools (Theodos, Coulton, & Budde, 2014). Theodos et al. (2014) also conferred how increasing levels of residential mobility have been shown to be associated with crime and violence. Exposure to violence can also be a determining factor in discouraging the educational attainment of children (Theodos et al., 2014). Gibbons and Telhaj (2011) discussed how increased levels of mobile students are negatively associated with educational attainment. The literature supports residential mobility as an often-coinciding variable with student mobility (Theodos et al., 2014). Although the interplay between these two related variables may at times be the result of families moving for better jobs and schools, economically disadvantaged families and their children often experience negative consequences in a move (Theodos et al., 2014).

Studies have shown there is a relationship between residential mobility and student mobility (Voight et al., 2012). Voight et al. (2012) presented data showing residential mobility often leads to a school change, even when the move takes place

within the same metropolitan area. However, Voight et al. (2012) pointed out this is only a correlational relationship. Student mobility can be caused by many different factors (NRC & IOM, 2010). Sometimes these factors are structural in nature, meaning the school system itself precipitates a school change for students as they progress in grade level (NRC & IOM, 2010). Another factor may be community displacement due to dangerous living conditions or natural disasters (NRC & IOM, 2010). These phenomena may force parents to move out of the region to find educational opportunities for their children (NRC & IOM, 2010). Additionally, the increase in home foreclosures in the United States has also contributed to higher student mobility rates (Been, Ellen, Schwartz, Stiefel, & Weinstein, 2011).

The NRC and IOM (2010) asserted other factors leading to student mobility can be brought about by unique characteristics of students. Special education needs, behavioral concerns, and specialized academic programming may lead parents to move their children to another school (NRC & IOM, 2010). Robers, Zhang, and Truman (2012) found 86,760 students from all U.S. public schools during the 2009-2010 school year were transferred to alternative placements due to serious behavior infractions such as drug- and/or weapon-related offenses. It is necessary for school and community leaders to understand the various reasons for school moves to shape meaningful and lasting reforms for highly mobile youth (NRC & IOM, 2010).

Types of School Mobility

School changes can be precipitated by many diverse factors. According to Fiel, Haskins, and Lopez (2013), some changes are more prevalent than others, some may be more likely to produce adverse consequences, and some can be handled by schools while

others cannot. Fiel et al. (2013) recognized the importance of better understanding reasons for school moves along the following dimensions: when the move takes place; voluntary or non-voluntary move; and if voluntary, did a negative life event cause the move.

First, the timing of a school move is paramount, because moving during the academic year has been shown to create more disruption than a move between school years (Fiel et al., 2013). Engec (2006) agreed both within-school-year mobility and year-to-year mobility can pose academic setbacks for mobile students. Students' ages and grade levels are also significant factors in dissecting the impact of a school move (Fiel et al., 2013). According to a NRC and IOM (2010) report, researchers determined moves made during elementary school are related to negative outcomes more so than moves made later in a student's school career. This is especially true for those students who experience frequent school moves (NRC & IOM, 2010).

Secondly, researchers have also studied the impact compulsory school changes have on students (Fiel et al., 2013). Sometimes these mandatory school changes are referred to as structural or normative school mobility, as students must attend a new building due to grade promotion (NRC & IOM, 2010). Structural school moves are typically less disruptive, because all students experience the move together (Grigg, 2012). However, compulsory moves can still bring about negative consequences as students deal with transitioning to new buildings (Grigg, 2012).

Finally, voluntary (non-compulsory) school changes can be categorized as strategic or reactive (Fiel et al., 2013). Strategic moves have historically been associated more often with white and financially comfortable families (Fiel et al., 2013). Fiel et al.

(2013) suggested families making strategic school moves predicate their decisions upon finding a more prestigious or better-accommodating school. Enhanced academic programming and language immersion are two common reasons provided by parents for intentional school moves (NRC & IOM, 2010).

In contrast, reactive moves occur in response to negative life events and are most often associated with minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations (Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Chen, Rouse, & Culhane, 2012). According to a NRC and IOM (2010) report, "Job loss, a family breakup, domestic violence, eviction, foreclosure, condemnation of housing, or other disruptions" (p. 4) are all possible reasons leading to a reactive school or residential move. With the high rates of mobility among American children and evidence linking unstable living conditions to unfavorable outcomes, it is important to determine how residential moves impact a child's development (Thompson & Haskins, 2014).

Mobility Effects on Child Development

Young people who move often face many obstacles their non-moving counterparts do not (Rumberger, 2002). Beatty (2010) stated, "Frequent mobility in the context of high stress and few resources may pose serious threats to children's development" (p. 7). A NRC and IOM (2010) report stated, "Children who move may need to adjust to new curriculum, new teachers and peers, and a new physical environment" (p. 5). However, these highly mobile kids also face challenges away from school as well. Mobility can disturb a young person's consistency of child care and health care, as well as their neighborhood relationships (NRC & IOM, 2010). An additional stressor for those children who make international moves can be learning new

cultures, norms, and languages (NRC & IOM, 2010). Because of these and other

challenges created by mobility, it is critical to comprehend the implications of moving

during various stages of childhood (Anderson et al., 2014). The three areas of childhood

development Anderson et al. (2014) focused upon were early childhood, middle

childhood, and adolescence. For this study, special attention will be given to middle

childhood because the grade levels of four, five, and six fall primarily within this

developmental category (Anderson et al., 2014).

Childhood can be problematic for children who experience homelessness,

poverty, foster care, and/or chaotic and unpredictable lives (Thompson & Haskins, 2014).

Unfortunately, many young children live with these and/or other extreme stressors

(Thompson & Haskins, 2014). In 2012, over six million children (22%) in the United

States lived in poverty, which is the highest poverty rate of any age group (Thompson &

Haskins, 2014). Thompson and Haskins (2014) also revealed nearly 120,000 children

under age six entered the foster care system in the same year in America. Another

startling statistic is "more than half the children living with their families in homeless

shelters were under age six" in 2010 (Thompson & Haskins, 2014, p. 2). Even though

not all children will suffer long-range consequences from these unfortunate

characteristics, all are at an elevated risk of developmental hindrances (Thompson &

Haskins, 2014).

Thompson and Haskins (2014) showed high levels of stress in early environments

affect children biologically. During early childhood, chronic stress can change how the

nervous system adjusts to adversity and impairs immune system response (Thompson &

Haskins, 2014). Early childhood is considered to include children from birth to 54

months old (Anderson et al., 2014). During this period, children experience rapid growth in physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development and rely on their parents greatly (Anderson et al., 2014). Anderson et al. (2014) emphasized changes in the family, including regular moves due to stressors such as eviction or homelessness, can have permanent repercussions on a young child's development. In addition, if families are constantly facing the possibility of moving, parents may relate to and respond to their young children less (Smetana, 2011). This can result in declining socioemotional development in early childhood (Smetana, 2011).

Researchers from a NRC and IOM report (2010) asserted, "Achieving developmental milestones in social, emotional, and cognitive functioning is fundamental for learning and adaptation, both providing the basis for future growth and development and preventing future problems" (p. 6). The importance of this developmental stage explains how children who are surrounded by competence and structure are more likely to make gains in the developmental progression of cognition (NRC & IOM, 2010). However, many highly mobile children do not experience competent and structured home environments (Evans & Kim, 2013).

Chaotic living conditions impact very young children biologically (Evans & Kim, 2013). According to Evans and Kim (2013), chronic stress in young children can cause high blood pressure, increased retention of body fat, imbalances in cortisol levels, and compromised immune functioning. Evans and Kim (2013) claimed spikes in cortisol can occur for disadvantaged kids as early as four months old. In addition, cortisol impacts brain structures responsible for memory creation from current experiences and motivational processes including emotion and self-regulation (Thompson & Haskins,

2014). Evans and Kim (2013) also revealed chronic stress can impact gene expression, which can help account for lasting effects of early stressful experience. These physiological responses in the early years can lead to behavioral, psychological, and further physical consequences in future years (Evans & Kim, 2013).

Middle childhood (ages 4½ to 11 years of age) is a time of transition in children's lives (Anderson et al., 2014). Children are beginning school and may be changing schools as they progress in age (Anderson et al., 2014). Families who move during middle childhood are likely to change schools, which can bring about unique challenges for kids (Voight et al., 2012). During this developmental period, parents remain a very critical context of their child's life, but school becomes critical as well (Anderson et al., 2014). School changes require children to adapt to new teachers and peers (Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, Houts, & Morrison, 2008). Children's adjustment to a new school environment and climate is critical during middle childhood as student-teacher relationships impact achievement (Pianta et al., 2008). School changes can also precipitate exposure to new curricula for students who move (NRC & IOM, 2010).

Moves have long been included in inventories of stressful life events (Evans & Wachs, 2010). Evans and Wachs (2010) claimed changes in household routines can disrupt development in school-age children. Uprooting children from their neighborhood disrupts relationships amongst families, resulting in loss of social capital (Voight et al., 2012). Relationships with other families and schools can elicit benefits for families who stay in place (Voight et al., 2012). Community resources that have been empirically linked to student achievement, such as webs of school-related information among parents, parental monitoring, and learning opportunities, can be cut off due to school

moves (Voight et al., 2012). Mobility of any kind can disrupt these relationships (NRC & IOM, 2010).

Apart from the socioemotional effects mobility can have on children, parents can also be impacted negatively (Voight et al., 2012). Parents who struggle financially in terms of housing have been shown to suffer from depression, social withdrawal, and increased responsibilities due to taking on additional jobs (Voight et al., 2012). These additional stressors may detract from parents' abilities to effectively monitor their children's educational development and take advantage of available social capital (Voight et al., 2012).

Social capital allows informed parents to find additional means to support their child's education (Scherrer, 2013). Scherrer (2013) lamented the fewer social relationships a family has with a school, the more likely they are to move. This unfortunate pattern can be cyclical in nature (Scherrer, 2013). Scherrer (2013) claimed when a family has just moved, they have very few social ties to the new environment. The lack of social ties is a good predictor families will soon move again, creating a mobility cycle (Scherrer, 2013). Student mobility during middle childhood can affect the social development of a child, but it also impacts a child behaviorally (Thompson & Haskins, 2014).

As mentioned before, children who often move are more likely to misbehave, as well as to be poor and less healthy than their non-moving counterparts (Thompson & Haskins, 2014). The biological influences from the negative effects of mobility can be manifested behaviorally in middle childhood (Thompson & Haskins, 2014). Children who encounter chronic threat and adversity early in life become "hypervigilant to signs of

danger and, when threatened, respond quickly and with strong emotion in self-defense"
(Thompson & Haskins, 2014, p. 3). This tendency is consistent with overstimulation of
certain brain regions due to stress and heightened cortisol responses over time
(Thompson & Haskins, 2014).

According to Ann Masten in a NRC and IOM (2010) report, children adapt to
these early environments and overstimulation out of necessity to survive. These skills
can help them cope in their hectic lives, but can be maladaptive to structured school
environments (NRC & IOM, 2010). These same students may struggle staying focused
or controlling impulses within the classroom setting which, in turn, may inhibit their
abilities to make meaningful relationships with peers and teachers (NRC & IOM, 2010;
Thompson & Haskins, 2014). These deficits show a definite difference from expected
brain development during the early school years (Thompson & Haskins, 2014).

During adolescence (approximately 11 to 18 years of age), children develop peer
social groups and are exposed to increasingly diverse situations as they prepare for
adulthood (Anderson et al., 2014). In conjunction, teenagers often have increased
opportunities to engage in risk-taking behaviors (Anderson et al., 2014). When moving
to high-poverty areas, Anderson et al. (2014) discussed the likelihood of mobile children
affiliating with negative peer groups is more likely. Another negative outcome
associated with mobility within this developmental period is dropping out of school.
Gasper, DeLuca, and Estacion (2012) used data from the 1997 National Longitudinal
Study of Youth to show a positive correlation between switching schools and dropping
out of high school. This result is supported by another study where the probability of not

finishing high school increases with the number of school moves made, even when controlling for other variables (Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

Student Mobility and Academic Achievement

Research has suggested school mobility has a negative association with student academic performance (Han, 2014). Gruman et al. (2008) investigated how student mobility impacted 1,003 second- through fifth-grade students in a longitudinal study. The number of school changes students made was negatively associated with student performance in language arts, math, and reading as measured on a five-point teacher rating scale (Gruman et al., 2008). Also, Gruman et al. (2008) discovered mobility led to decreases in students' participation in class, and the negative effects grew with the increasing number of student moves.

Cutuli et al. (2013) examined how homelessness and high residential mobility (HHM) influenced third- through eighth-grade students' math and reading achievement. Cutuli et al. (2013) longitudinally tracked achievement data of students classified as HHM in a large urban school district. The authors found HHM students underperformed their more stable peers in both reading and math; however, HHM students also underperformed students classified as low income but not HHM (Cutuli et al., 2013). Cutuli et al. (2013) asserted HHM status puts students at a disadvantage for academic learning compared to poverty alone. Other studies of urban districts have found similar achievement patterns for highly mobile students (Eadie, Eisner, Miller, & Wolf, 2013; Fantuzzo et al., 2012; Herbers et al., 2012; Voight et al., 2012).

A study of the five largest school districts in Wisconsin yielded similar results when analyzing student mobility patterns and academic achievement (Eadie et al., 2013).

Eadie et al. (2013) investigated a cohort of students in Wisconsin public schools from September 2006 to May 2011. Students who left one of the studied public schools for a private or out-of-state school or who dropped out were not included in the cohort (Eadie et al., 2013). Eadie et al. (2013) suggested student mobility can predict a decrease in math and reading achievement on end-of-year summative tests for high school sophomores. The researchers found additional moves caused an exponential decrease in test scores with four or more moves leading to a 10.2-point decrease on reading tests and a 5.2-point decrease on math tests (Eadie et al., 2013).

Herbers et al. (2012) conveyed the increasing negative effects of student mobility in a study of Minneapolis schools. The authors demonstrated HHM students' performance on an elementary oral reading assessment was lower than the achievement of students who were from low-income families but were not HHM (Herbers et al., 2012). Herbers et al. (2012) also showed math and reading achievement trajectories in third and eighth grades were lower for HHM students versus low-income students when based upon performance on the same oral reading assessment.

Voight et al. (2012) put forward additional evidence showing mobility in the early elementary years (K-2) may set urban students back when looking at their first math and reading achievement testing in the third grade. Trajectories for learning over time with highly mobile students show detrimental effects with each subsequent move in later math and reading achievement (Voight et al., 2012). However, reading progress was interrupted more significantly in the primary years for mobile students, which led the researchers to suggest a greater impairment in future achievement in both reading and

math (Voight et al., 2012). Similar results across grade levels have been found in suburban and rural schools (Beesley et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2011).

Thompson et al. (2011) extrapolated achievement test data for elementary students in a southeastern state. The researchers wanted to know if a negative correlation existed between mobile students in grades one through five and their test scores in reading, math, and language arts (Thompson et al., 2011). A negative relationship between mobility and achievement test performance was found in all five grade levels and in each subject area (Thompson et al., 2011). Thompson et al. (2011) also found reading was the subject most impacted by mobility, and school size did not have a significant role in determining mobile students' achievement. This study included 1,062 elementary schools in urban, suburban, and rural districts (Thompson et al., 2011). Rural schools have also shown similar results for researchers looking at the effects of student mobility upon achievement (Beesley et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2011).

Although research has shown student mobility tends to be more prevalent in urban schools (Han, 2014), rural schools can be just as, if not more, influenced by mobile students (Beesley et al., 2010). Beesley et al. (2010) reported rural schools' enrollments are impacted more by an influx of new students due to their smaller enrollments and staffs when compared to urban districts. Beesley et al. (2010) also acknowledged rural districts often have fewer resources to alleviate the stress placed upon schools when student mobility is prevalent.

Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) analyzed student achievement performance in Nebraska schools because they wanted to focus on a primarily rural state. Criterion-referenced test data from 212 of 254 Nebraska districts were used to see how highly

mobile students performed compared to their more stable peers (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). High-mobility students consistently showed lower test scores than those students who did not move regularly (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) found 67% of highly mobile eighth-grade students scored at proficiency level or above on criterion-referenced science tests, whereas 88% of their non-mobile peers scored proficient or better on the same tests. In addition, "Eighth- and eleventh-grade highly mobile students in Nebraska performed an average of 10 to 15 percentile points below their non-highly mobile peers statewide in Reading, Math, Science, and Writing assessments" (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011, p. 19). Highly mobile fourth graders performed an average of five to 10 percentile points lower than non-moving students statewide as well (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011).

A NRC and IOM (2010) report alleged disadvantaged children from rural areas may experience mobility differently than children in urban settings due to the geographic characteristics in their surroundings. The report indicated a lack of suitable and affordable housing as well as social and economic uncertainty as driving forces behind a mobility cycle in impoverished rural areas (NRC & IOM, 2010). According to Schafft, Killeen, and Morrissey (2010), chronic mobility and poverty are often isolated to rural towns with high levels of unemployment, poverty, and available low-income rental housing. Students who graduate from local rural schools leave the area for better job or educational opportunities, which leads to a downturn in local communities' economies (Schafft et al., 2010). In turn, housing prices devalue and are made into rental properties, while low-income families remain to fill the residential void (Schafft et al., 2010). Schafft et al. (2010) interviewed 22 parents of students who made unscheduled moves in

a rural upstate New York county. He revealed these families made 109 total moves

among them, and almost all moves were reactive instead of planned (Schafft et al., 2010).

Student transience has been found in both urban and rural settings (NRC & IOC,

2010). Schafft et al. (2010) argued student mobility in rural settings has often been

overlooked by researchers and policymakers. Limited research has detailed the academic

impact student mobility can have on highly mobile children in rural areas (Beesley et al.,

2010; Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). The impact student mobility has on student discipline

and engagement has been investigated in many urban schools, but again not as much as in

rural districts (Engec, 2006; Gruman et al., 2008; Han, 2014).

Student Mobility and Student Discipline

Schools face many challenges in meeting the social and emotional needs of highly

mobile students (GAO, 2010). Gruman et al. (2008) conducted growth curve analyses

utilizing data from 1,003 students in 10 public schools and found mobile students are

more likely to avoid classmates and to develop antisocial behaviors. These behaviors

include talking back to adults, exhibiting disrespectful behavior, and intentional social

isolation (Gruman et al., 2008). This study also depicted the negative influence mobility

plays on mobile students' attitudes toward school and their behavior in the classroom

(Gruman et al., 2008). Engec (2006) analyzed 1998-1999 behavioral data of 728,466

students in Louisiana public schools. Engec (2006) detailed how students who move

within the school year have higher suspension rates than students who do not move. In

addition, in-school suspension rates (14.65%) and out-of-school suspension rates

(23.14%) are highest among students who move schools four or more times compared to

their more stable peers (Engec, 2006).

Other studies have detailed the negative impact mobility can have on student behaviors at school (Fantuzzo et al., 2012; Han, 2014). Han (2014) examined how student mobility affects student behavior by utilizing the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). Han (2014) found highly mobile schools yield higher levels of student insubordination. Most of the schools involved in the SSOCS were high schools (50.75%), but elementary schools were represented, too (18.29%) (Han, 2014). Han (2014) also cited a positive relationship between minority students and insubordination using the SSOCS. In another study, Fantuzzo et al. (2012) posited a negative relationship between school mobility and classroom engagement in inner-city Philadelphia third graders. The findings supported school moves may also have a damaging effect on the ability to develop quality peer relationships (Fantuzzo et al., 2012). Fantuzzo et al. (2012) indicated the combination of instability in residential and school environments is associated with the poorest educational outcome measures among students.

Student misbehavior and school mobility may be linked due to the inconsistencies in social and behavioral norms and values created as a result of moving (Martinez, 2013). Students who are new to a building may behave in ways considered unsuitable, because they have not gotten accustomed to the new school's behavioral expectations (Martinez, 2013). Martinez (2013) also proposed when a school has a high student turnover rate, there is greater heterogeneity in norms and values. This can lead to less social cohesion between students as well as between students and teachers, which can make it more difficult for schools to promote behavioral expectations (Martinez, 2013). The diversity in norms and expectations can also make it more difficult for students to police themselves according to established rules (Martinez, 2013).

Student discipline problems can also force a school change (NRC & IOM, 2010).

School mobility can actually be the result of a child's behavior—sometimes even young

students who display extreme behaviors in a school setting can be dismissed or placed in

another intra-district school (NRC & IOM, 2010). Intra-district mandatory transfers due

to troublesome student behavior are often the result of schools not having the needed

emotional and social resources to help these students succeed (NRC & IOM, 2010).

Another pertinent factor in understanding student mobility is identifying what specific

student populations are most likely to be mobile, which helps researchers focus on which

students move most often (Eadie et al., 2013). Han (2014) added mobile students can

also experience more stress trying to catch up on schoolwork and building social

relationships. This can lead to a higher likelihood for mobile students to be involved in

problem behaviors (Han, 2014). Cornell and Mayer (2010) warned school administrators

must understand mobile students are more likely to show problem behaviors, which can

deter from creating order in a high-quality school.

Characteristics of Students Most Likely to Move

Many studies have documented an association between low-income students and

student mobility (GAO, 2010; Meyers, 2012; O'Donnell & Gazos, 2010; Voight et al.,

2012). The GAO (2010) report was an analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal

Study: Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K). Significant differences were found

among students who switched schools four or more times during this longitudinal study

(GAO, 2010). This highly mobile group had higher percentages of students from one-

parent families and were more likely to come from families with incomes below the

poverty threshold (GAO, 2010). In addition, highly mobile students in the ECLS-K were

more likely to receive government assistance through the National School Lunch

Program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (GAO, 2010). Morgan

intensely studied six Vermont schools and found mobile students were more likely to

qualify for free and reduced price meals and to live in low-income housing (as cited in

Meyers, 2012). Eadie et al. (2013) also observed similar findings in their study of

Wisconsin's five largest school districts. Students labeled "economically disadvantaged"

were much more mobile and were more likely to experience additional moves when

compared to the entire study cohort (Eadie et al., 2013, p. 12).

A NRC and IOM (2010) report supported the notion students from low-income

homes are more likely to move than their more well-off peers. Another supporting study

on Massachusetts schools found 53.1% of mobile students were from poor families

during the 2008-2009 school year (O'Donnell & Gazos, 2010). The NRC and IOM

report provided in detail a discussion led by Valerie Lee and David Burkam, who

collaborated together in an analysis of the ECLS-K to again study school mobility by

gender and race (NRC & IOM, 2010). Gender produced no substantial differences, but

race proved to be significantly related to school mobility (NRC & IOM, 2010). Lee and

Burkam discovered African American students had the highest mobility rates with only

45% still attending the same school from kindergarten through third grade (NRC & IOM,

2010). In comparison, 54% of Hispanic students and 60% of White and Asian students

stayed in the same school during the same grade span (NRC & IOM, 2010). Lee and

Burkam also asserted the earlier multiple moves took place in students' educational

careers, the more damaging outcomes were seen, especially in poor and minority students

(NRC & IOM, 2010).

Hispanic and African American students switch schools more often than do students from other racial and ethnic groups (Eadie et al., 2013). Cowen, Fleming, Witte, and Wolf (2012) investigated what racial groups moved most often in a large urban school district. Cowen et al. (2012) revealed 75% of frequent movers were African American in this inner-city district where half of all students enrolled are Black. Eadie et al. (2013) compared mobility among racial groups in Wisconsin's five largest school districts in a longitudinal study. Again, African American students made up the largest group of students who moved at least once during a six-year span in the cohort (Eadie et al., 2013). According to Eadie et al. (2013), 62.8% of black students moved at least once; whereas 28.6% of white students, 37.6% of Asian-American students, 43.7% of Hispanic students, and 43.5% of Native American students moved at least once in the same cohort.

As Eadie et al. (2013) investigated further, they wanted to find what racial groups were highly mobile, defined as "experiencing five or more moves" (p. 10). Among the student cohort, 1.8% was the statistical mean of students who met the highly mobile qualifications set by the researchers (Eadie et al., 2013). However, there was again racial disparity when breaking down this highly mobile subgroup (Eadie et al., 2013). Only 0.9% of white students and 0.7% of Asian-American students were classified as highly mobile, which was well below the average (Eadie et al., 2013). However, 2.1% of Hispanic students and 4.3% of Native American students were highly mobile, while a disproportionate 7.3% of black students met the same qualification (Eadie et al., 2013). The study not only revealed Hispanic, Native American, and black students were more likely to move than white and Asian students in Wisconsin, but they were also much more likely to experience multiple moves (Eadie et al., 2013).

The GAO (2010) report also indicated special education and English language learners were more mobile as populations when looking at data from the ECLS-K. Schools with high rates of student mobility had higher numbers of students qualified for special education (GAO, 2010). Of the schools with 11-25% of their students enrolled in special education, almost 50% were highly mobile districts whereas only about 32% were from more stable districts (GAO, 2010). In addition, schools with special education populations exceeding 6% were more likely to be highly mobile (GAO, 2010). This same trend was true for eighth-grade students with limited English proficiency, as a majority of schools with 6% or more of English language learners were from typically highly mobile districts (GAO, 2010). Popp, Grant, and Stronge (2011) also mentioned two other student populations often associated with high mobility: children of migrant workers and military dependents. However, these two groups were not a commonality in the studied population. Schools encountering high rates of mobility within various demographic groups have also been stressed to meet the needs of all learners (GAO, 2010).

Student Mobility Effects on Schools

According to a GAO (2010) report, school officials convey high student mobility not only places strenuous demands on students who have moved, but also upon teachers and students within the receiving and withdrawing schools. Dalton (2013) explained student mobility can make record keeping arduous and can hinder the transferring of student documents. This sentiment was shared by interviewed school officials in a GAO (2010) report. These school employees cited student mobility as an impedance in determining "class placement, credit transfer, and the need for special services, such as

services related to special education and language proficiency" (GAO, 2010, p. 18). Beesley et al. (2010) claimed rural schools may struggle more than suburban and urban schools to keep up with the technical demands of student transfers. Lower staff numbers and smaller budgets have been shown as realities for rural districts (Beesley et al., 2010). Beesley et al. (2010) acknowledged rural schools can be at a larger disadvantage when trying to efficiently keep up with student transfer paperwork.

Teachers in schools facing high student turnover encounter difficulties as well (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) asserted teachers perceive the constant moving of students in and out of their classrooms as a barrier to student learning. Teachers point to mobility causing a major disruption in the learning environment and decaying the overall quality of classroom instruction (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). Gaddie (2010) explained the pattern of instruction in a typical school year is a nine-month cycle where teachers use formative and summative assessments to check for student understanding. Modifications and adjustments are made by teachers in response to student performance on these assessments (Gaddie, 2010). However, this cyclical process is disrupted in classrooms adversely faced with high student mobility (Dalton, 2013). Dalton (2013) also pointed out schools encountering high student mobility face more stress when it comes to students' performances on standardized state tests.

The constant movement of students in and out of classrooms has handicapped many school districts (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). A GAO (2010) report illuminated a process where administrators at times must place students in classes without prior educational records. This leads to a lengthy period of assessment and observation to

determine each new student's educational needs and causes an unfortunate delay in learning (GAO, 2010). Student mobility also causes many teachers to capitulate low standardized test scores in response to the revolving doors in their classrooms (Rumberger, 2003). Teachers devote too much instructional time to already-covered topics to help students who come from other schools, which negatively impacts the normal scope and sequence of curriculum for stable students (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). Fiel et al. (2013) contended, "This means that after only a few years, students attending high-mobility schools are exposed to considerably less information than those attending schools with lower mobility rates" (p. 1191). High student mobility has been shown to negatively affect all students (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011).

Stable students already enrolled in schools experiencing high mobility have been shown to struggle as well (Rumberger et al., 1999). Fiel et al. (2013) stated when teachers encounter a high volume of new students during the year, instruction is hampered and becomes more review-oriented. In a study by Rumberger et al. (1999), non-mobile California high school students scored lower on standardized achievement tests in highly mobile schools when compared to peers in less mobile districts. Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) speculated, "Mobility may be a decisive factor in overall school performance" (p. 18). In addition, Thompson et al. (2011) discussed a study where over 66% of principals surveyed posited mobility was a significant threat to educational achievement and meeting state or federal testing requirements. The challenges posed by high student mobility have led many educational leaders to become innovative when trying to maintain quality schools (Dalton, 2013; Tkatchov & Pollnow, 2012).

Methods Used to Combat Student Mobility

Dalton (2013) advocated for a common curriculum to help create academic
stability for highly mobile students. Dalton (2013) argued most state standards and local
curriculum alignment assume a high majority of students are overall stable. However,
the GAO (2010) report revealed a significant number of students do not attend the same
school throughout their years of education. A common curriculum was indicated as a
necessary requirement to ensure mobile students keep pace with their more stable
counterparts (Dalton, 2013). Dalton (2013) also provided the following strategies as
additional means to assist highly mobile students: "a timely transfer of student records, a
checklist for student transfers, immediate student orientation, extracurricular programs,
communication of changes in schedules, professional development targeting mobile
students, and similar requirements for graduation" (p. 51). Dalton (2013) believed these
practices will help new students assimilate to new schools more efficiently.

Studies of mobility have also shown the significance social networks can play in
encouraging those families most likely to move to stay in place (Fiel et al., 2013).
Family ties and social ties with others living nearby can deter long-range mobility,
especially for the most often-moving demographic populations, which are racial/ethnic
minorities and families of low socioeconomic status (Fiel et al., 2013). However, Irwin,
Blanchard, Tolbert, Nucci, and Lyson (2004) reported sources of social capital are
decreasing, and the need for local organizations to replace them is apparent. Churches
and businesses have fulfilled this socially integrating function which discourages
residential and school mobility (Irwin et al., 2004). Schools have also played a critical
role in deterring mobility (Irwin et al., 2004). According to Fiel et al. (2013), schools can

increase parent engagement by improving social and academic climates and trying to help students and their families become better. Schools can also improve their images by implementing programs that make them more attractive to students and parents (Fiel et al., 2013). These programs should promote positive family relationships (Rumberger, 2003; Rumberger et al., 1999).

Rumberger and Larson (1998) asserted effective schools are deterrents of mobility, because parents are reluctant to leave schools they feel are benefitting their children academically and socially. Xu, Hannaway, and D'Souza (2009) endorsed identifying and then flagging mobile students. Districts can then ask teachers to collaborate on ways to stabilize the educational process for these highly mobile children (Xu et al., 2009). In addition, the development of district pacing and curriculum guides can bring more curricular stability for mobile youth (Dalton, 2013). Dalton (2013) also recommended increasing access to school activities through expanding school transportation opportunities for these students.

Tkatchov and Pollnow (2012) provided the following suggestions to help alleviate the harmful effects of mobility in schools:

- School enrollment practices should be efficient and reviewed annually.
- Create a partner system where the new student is paired with a stable and academically strong student to help with orientation.
- School administrators should try to meet the new child and his/her parents. In addition, a follow-up appointment should be set within two weeks with the parents.
- Information should be available to parents on the detriments of mobility.

- If a move is inevitable, parents should be encouraged to attempt to keep their child in school for the duration of the academic year (p. 49)

Finally, Popp et al. (2011) indicated mobile students have unique affective needs as well. Teachers should strive to develop quality relationships with new students and should provide an enthusiastic class environment to help motivate new students to participate (Popp et al., 2011). Quality classroom management skills can also help ease anxiety among new students to the classroom (Popp et al., 2011).

Summary

The information presented within this chapter was a summary of relevant literature pertaining to student mobility and its effects. Special attention was given to the relationship of residential mobility and school mobility, the various types of school mobility determined by past researchers, and how mobility impacts child development. Additional topics discussed in this section were student mobility's impact on academic achievement, student discipline, and schools overall; the characteristics of students most likely to move; and methods used to combat student mobility.

Beesley et al. (2010) reported, "Highly mobile students…are less successful academically, drop out of school at higher rates, and require more frequent disciplinary action" (para. 2). Beesley et al. (2010) also indicated mobility is not isolated to urban schools alone but includes many rural areas in the Midwest. The need to further research the impact of student mobility is supported by Greta Gibson in a NRC and IOM (2010) report. She acknowledged a plethora of quantitative data show student mobility can be harmful; however, Gibson revealed the need for qualitative and mixed-method studies is apparent (NRC & IOM, 2010). These studies would allow risk factors for mobile

children to be isolated along with truly looking at what is happening in schools dealing with high levels of mobility (NRC & IOM, 2010).

       In Chapter Three, the qualitative methodology used in this study is presented. A brief explanation of the problem and purpose of the study are provided, and the research questions and design are reintroduced. The population and purposive sample selected for this study are described in detail. Instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations are also included.

Chapter Three: Methodology

A qualitative research design was used to analyze the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and teachers on the topic of student mobility. Emphasis was placed upon intermediate elementary schools (or schools closest in resemblance to an intermediate elementary school in each district) within two select southwest Missouri counties. This was due to the high volume of students who transfer into and out of selected schools included in the study. Due to the seasonal nature of many tourism-related jobs in this area, families are sometimes forced to move due to economic pressures. There are also families in this region who move for other, more positive reasons, such as job relocation and residential progression. Better understanding of the common problems or benefits which arise from student mobility can help guide future programming and decision-making for school leaders.

To discover common themes on student mobility from practitioners, a phenomenological approach was utilized. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2014) characterized phenomenology as a researcher's attempt to find likenesses in the thoughts and perceptions of a research sample regarding a specific phenomenon such as student mobility. Interviews were conducted with four principals whose buildings contain the fifth grade. Special attention was given to perceptions of how frequent student mobility impacts academic programming, school discipline, student achievement, and other important tenets related to the topic. Four school counselors were also interviewed to gain further insight as to how student mobility impacts their jobs. Special attention was placed on how much time and energy are given to students moving into and out of local

districts from the counselors' perspectives. Finally, four fifth-grade teachers were interviewed to further comprehend the impact high student mobility has on a classroom.

Chapter Three includes the researcher's purpose for exploring the perceptions of school professionals in regard to student mobility. The research questions which guided this study are presented. The qualitative nature of this study is detailed, and a rationale for its use is provided. Additionally, the researcher discusses the purposive sample (Suter, 2012) who were interviewed, instrumentation used, data collection and analysis procedures utilized, ethical considerations of the participants, and a summary of the chapter.

Problem and Purpose Overview

School funding in Missouri is based upon an adequacy principle, which strives to be sure all districts have enough money to provide their students with an adequate education (MSBA, 2014). This means schools can provide varying amounts of funding per pupil and still meet the state's foundation formula requirements (MSBA, 2014). The cost of educating highly mobile students is more when compared to servicing a fairly constant student population (Beesley et al., 2010). These realities show the significance funding can play for districts with high student mobility rates. In addition, Beesley et al. (2010) acknowledged many rural districts may not have a surplus built into budgets due to little assessed valuation within district boundary lines. This requires many rural districts to rely on federal programs such as Title I, Part A to help fund additional services for highly mobile student populations (Beesley et al., 2010).

Data collected in this study can help local intermediate elementary principals and staff members gauge how much time and effort are given to effectively educate mobile

student populations. Insight on specific classroom practices and schoolwide systems used to successfully transition new students was a focus in this study. It has been well-documented high rates of student mobility are related to negative student outcomes like drop-out, decreased achievement levels, increased behavior problems, and social adapting difficulties (Beesley et al., 2010). Perceptions of those interviewed helped identify what common troubles arise from highly mobile student populations.

Research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on students and staff?

2. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary teachers in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on classrooms?

3. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary counselors in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on students and staff?

4. What, if any, common approaches are used in intermediate elementary buildings in select rural counties in Missouri to help mobile students find success?

Research Design

A qualitative methodology was used to complete this study. The research questions allowed the researcher to find the perceptions of certified school professionals on the topic of student mobility and its impression on daily school life. One-on-one interviews were the primary research tool used to gather pertinent data related to the study. Butin (2010) warned researchers of two pitfalls when using interviews in dissertations: interview bias and poor journalistic techniques. The researcher carefully crafted research questions to help delineate effective interview questions. Three school

positions were the emphasis for interviews. These positions included elementary

principals, fifth-grade classroom teachers, and school counselors within the purposive

sample.

Butin (2010) cautioned researchers to be wary of "response effect bias" (p. 97),

which occurs when subjects provide the interviewer with information the interviewer

would like to hear. In addition, Butin (2010) claimed, "Gender, race and ethnicity, tone,

and body language all impact how individuals answer the questions posed" (p. 97). To

protect against this possible bias, the researcher constructed interview questions which

were open-ended and allowed subjects to voice opinions and emotions freely. Questions

used sought "meaningful and 'deep' responses that take the shape of narratives" (Butin,

2010, p. 97). Interview questions were crafted with the possibility of follow-up questions

in mind. Butin (2010) emphasized the importance of effective follow-up questions to

gain ample information from subjects' responses. "Yes" or "no" questions were not asked

to participants without further questioning to support with reasoning.

After interviews were completed, the researcher sent the recorded data to a third-

party transcriptionist. Once all interview data were transcribed, the researcher analyzed

data from each session to discover common patterns and themes, along with distinctive

perspectives.

Population and Sample

The population for this study included elementary principals, counselors, and

fifth-grade classroom teachers in specified southwest Missouri schools containing the

fifth grade. Four school districts were focused upon due to their proximity to each other

and their high student mobility rates. Because some students frequently move back and

forth among these districts throughout their educational careers, the researcher gave special attention to how identified buildings in each district deal with high mobility. The sample consisted of schools containing intermediate elementary grades. The configuration of grades within selected buildings was different depending on how the various schools were set up by grade levels. Special emphasis was placed on the fifth grade, as it is the grade level always found in intermediate elementary schools (Combs et al., 2011). A fifth-grade classroom teacher and school counselor were interviewed from each school to gain different perspectives on how mobility impacts both positions.

The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling (Fraenkel et al., 2014). Purposive sampling is considered an acceptable sampling means when previous knowledge conveys those selected have pertinent information (Fraenkel et al., 2014). According to Fraenkel et al. (2014), researchers discern what sample will yield needed data rather than study the most readily available participants. Suter (2012) stated a purposive sample is selected "for its potential to yield insight from its illuminative and rich information sources" (p. 345). The researcher felt selecting a principal, counselor, and fifth-grade teacher from each identified school fit the criteria above for purposive sampling. In addition, a random sampling of each school's fifth-grade teachers was used to determine which teachers to interview. Each fifth-grade teacher selected had three or more years of teaching experience. A random sample is "selected using chance methods or random numbers" (Bluman, 2013, p. 10). Bluman (2013) asserted a random sample can help create a more unbiased sample to study.

Instrumentation

The researcher created three sets of interview questions to correspond with each school position being interviewed. Three distinct sets of questions were developed for the intended population (elementary principals, classroom teachers, and school counselors). Interview questions focused upon the various ways student mobility affects schools. Special attention was given to perceptions of how mobility impacts achievement, attendance, and discipline in each intermediate elementary school. Each set of interview questions (see Appendices A, B, and C) was field tested by a group of elementary principals from schools not involved in the study. The researcher utilized feedback to make needed revisions to the interview questions.

Data Collection

All study participants were contacted via telephone (see Appendix D) and informed of the research project (see Appendix E). Each participant who expressed interest in participating in the study was provided an informed consent form (see Appendix F) by electronic mail along with a copy of the interview questions. This allowed participants to think about answers ahead of time to give more robust data to the researcher. Interview schedules were established and made available to all participants by the researcher. Interviews for this study were conducted face-to-face between the researcher and participants. A third-party interviewer completed all interviews involving participants from School A to protect against possible bias toward the researcher. All interviews were video-recorded with the permission of each subject. After the responses were transcribed, all video data were retained in a password-protected Dropbox account

to ensure confidentiality of participants. Participants were assigned a code throughout

the study to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

A phenomenological approach was applied to this student mobility study.

Creswell (2013) noted the main premise behind phenomenology is to reduce single

experiences with a phenomenon to create a more global understanding among several

participants. Creswell (2013) explained a composite description of how participants

experience the studied phenomenon should be the end goal for researchers once

interviews are completed. Suter (2012) claimed data collection and analysis are

inseparable entities, which must occur simultaneously. Merriam and Tisdell (2015)

espoused researchers must analyze data as collected to ensure fidelity in the interview

process and to help identify commonalities among participants.

The researcher was provided interview data in Google Docs format by a third-

party transcriptionist. These data were then re-formatted to Microsoft Word and saved in

a password-protected Dropbox account. All participant interview data were read multiple

times by the researcher. The Constant Comparative Analysis method was used to analyze

this data. According to Fram (2013), Constant Comparative Analysis involves constant

coding and re-coding of interview data to find commonalities based upon participants'

observations. Fram (2013) advocated Constant Comparative Analysis allows researchers

to "identify patterns in the data and to organize large amounts of data so as to abstract

categories," (p. 20). A continual synthesis of information occurred to find emerging

themes which helped explain student mobility's interplay in rural intermediate

elementary schools. Suter (2012) believed, "Making good sense of data as it comes in

(its interpretation) is a process of organization, reduction, consolidation, comparison, and reconfiguration. One has to 'break the code,' so to speak" (p. 360).

Triangulation of data was intentional in this study. The researcher included various school positions (principal, teacher, and counselor), various intermediate elementary school buildings (School A, School B, School C, and School D), along with a thorough review of related literature to support or refute participants' perceptions. The Constant Comparative Analysis method allowed the researcher to use note taking and coding to find common themes, sort data into "meaningful patterns," and then creatively write about what was discovered (Suter, 2012, p. 362). The researcher continued to analyze transcribed interviews until a point of saturation occurred, meaning further analysis did not produce any novel themes or information pertaining to already-identified themes (Suter, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher created interview questions which helped find commonalities among subjects' answers. Careful attention was given to be sure questions were not leading or simple in nature. Open-ended questions were used to invite participants to give quality feedback to the researcher. Another consideration the researcher made was protecting against "response effect bias" (Butin, 2010, p. 97), where interviewed subjects try to provide answers they believe the interviewer wants to hear. The researcher strived to utilize neutral phrasing during questioning and invited further feedback from participants through follow-up questions when needed. All interview participants appeared confident and safe to express their own thoughts and opinions due to assured

confidentiality. Research participants were also provided informed consent, which explained there was no penalty for refusing or ceasing to partake in the study.

Upon approval from the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix G), ethical considerations were made to protect the identities of involved study participants. Personal information collected on participants remained anonymous throughout the duration of the study. Any data collected during interviews remained confidential during the research process and were retained in a locked office cabinet or a password-protected Dropbox account. The researcher provided codes representing each subject interviewed to further ensure anonymity. All collected data were kept in a secure location by the researcher and will be destroyed after three years according to federal regulation.

Summary

This qualitative research study involved elementary principals, counselors, and classroom teachers from four southwest Missouri schools with above-state-average student mobility rates. The researcher sought to discover common perceptions among those interviewed to illuminate the various ways student mobility affects schools. Special attention was given to intermediate elementary buildings, because this population is underrepresented in related studies. The researcher provided all study participants with informed consent procedures and assured there was no penalty for withdrawing at any time. Collected data were transcribed and coded for subject anonymity and then were stored in a secure password-protected Dropbox account.

Chapter Four includes a presentation of the findings from the school staff interviews. An analysis of collected interview data was performed and is offered in

Chapter Four to provide readers with information on the researched topic. Common

perceptions are highlighted on how student mobility influences intermediate elementary

buildings in southwest Missouri. Special emphasis is given to the interview instruments

used by the researcher to collect data. This information is then presented in a

professional manner to provide an in-depth evaluation of student mobility in the

purposive sample.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of rural intermediate elementary teachers, counselors, and principals on the topic of student mobility. According to Ihrke, Faber, and Koerber (2011), there were more than 37 million cases of residential mobility in the United States throughout the 2008-2009 school year. According to Han (2014), "Such residential change impacts school mobility as well" (p. 1). Tonsager, Neiman, Hryczaniuk, and Guan (2010) showed on average 70 students transferred to or from public schools at all age levels during the 2007-2008 academic year.

Research has suggested highly mobile students can be affected in negative ways educationally (Beesley et al., 2010). These negative effects include but are not limited to lower academic scores, school dropout, and discipline problems in school (Beesley et al., 2010). A GAO (2010) report concluded multiple moves within a single school year can compound the detrimental effects student mobility has on academics and behavior. The researcher wanted to gain a better understanding of student mobility from a qualitative approach to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on students and staff?

2. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary teachers in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on classrooms?

3. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary counselors in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on students and staff?

4. What, if any, common approaches are used in intermediate elementary

buildings in select rural counties in Missouri to help mobile students find success?

Interviews

Personal interviews were the primary data source for this study. All interviews were conducted in-person, and the proceedings were video-recorded. Participants included intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and fifth-grade teachers from schools in two select rural counties in southwest Missouri. Individual participants were divided into three categories, which included intermediate elementary principals, intermediate elementary counselors, and intermediate elementary teachers. The individual schools involved in the study were also categorized as School A, School B, School C, and School D.

Intermediate elementary principals. To assure anonymity, each intermediate elementary principal was assigned a data code. For example, the first principal interviewed was referred to as Principal 1, the second as Principal 2, the third as Principal 3, and the fourth as Principal 4. Each school was also assigned a data code in the study to correspond with their listed mobility rates in Chapter One. School A, School B, School C, and School D were the codes utilized to distinguish individual buildings in which the participants were employed as educators.

Interview question 1. How long have you been an educator, and of those years, how long have you been an elementary school principal? How many years have you been employed in your current position?

Three out of the four principals interviewed had at least 10 or more years of experience in administration (see Table 1). All four principals had been in their current positions for at least three years or more. This allowed the participating principals to have on-the-job experience in dealing with student mobility as building leaders.

Table 1

Principals' Years of Experience in Current Position and in Education Overall

Participant	Years of experience as principal in current district	Overall years of experience in education
Principal 1	8	19
Principal 2	3	10
Principal 3	12	21
Principal 4	6	18

Interview question 2. How would you define student mobility?

The four principals interviewed agreed student mobility involves students transferring between different schools; however, each principal provided a unique interpretation in his or her definition as well. Principal 1 cited student mobility is "students who frequently transfer between different schools." Principal 3 agreed by stating student mobility is "students moving in and out of schools…transferring out, transferring in several times." These definitions include a component of the frequency of

moves a student makes. Principal 4 felt student mobility is isolated to student moves within a school year. This was the only definition among principals where within-school-year moves was mentioned. Principal 2 explained student mobility does not include students changing schools for grade advancement. Principal 2 was the only principal to mention this distinguishing characteristic, which is found in Rumberger's (2002) definition of student mobility.

Principal 3 also mentioned, "You know, I don't think that when you talk about mobility, it really matters, the time span, but probably, just, you know those kids that have to readjust often." This statement was the only instance where a principal incorporated students adjusting to new environments into the definition. Actually, Principal 2 disagreed by stating, "If they were in the fifth grade at the elementary in our district and then they change buildings to go to the middle school, that is not mobility." Principal 2 claimed a change in environment due to grade promotion should not be considered a factor in defining student mobility.

Interview question 3. What are common reasons for students entering or leaving your school building during a school year, and how frequently do students move in or out of your school?

Job instability was a common reason given by all four principals. Principals 2 and 4 both indicated an abundance of seasonal and part-time work leads to unemployment in the winter months. During this down-time in the area, both principals explained impacted families often move in with family members or friends nearby. Principal 1 also discussed the familiarity of students coming or going due to moving in with family or friends to share living costs. Principal 4 pointed out, "We also…see a lot

of issues with housing, [families] not being able to stay in affordable housing." Principal 3 echoed this concern, "I can see where a lot of families would go over there [School D] to do either weekly or monthly rentals in hotels or motels." Seasonal work and a plethora of low-cost living options seemed to be a perceived problem to these principals.

Another interesting reason mentioned by Principals 1 and 3 was families running from something. Principal 1 contended many families seem to move from place to place as if they are running from investigations by the Division of Family Services (DFS) in surrounding districts. An additional reason recognized by all four principals was the regularity of high poverty in the region. Principal 2 reported a 72% free and reduced priced meals rate for School B. Principal 4 acknowledged a high poverty population is prevalent in the area. Principal 3 cited homelessness is an issue for some students as well. The seasonal economy and prevalence of poverty in the area seem to be a visible problem all four principals recognize. Finally, Principal 1 mentioned divorce, job changes, and school discipline issues as additional reasons contributing to student mobility.

Each principal interviewed expressed student mobility is a frequent phenomenon within his or her building. Principals 1, 2, and 4 actually stated "frequently" or "very frequently" when answering the second part of the interview question. Principal 3 wanted to be more specific and estimated 30% of students move frequently in and out. The actual three-year average student mobility rate in Principal 3's district from 2012 to 2014 was 42.9%.

Interview question 4. What demographic characteristics do your mobile students have in common overall, if any?

Poverty was a commonality in all four principals' responses. Principals 2, 3, and 4 all directly claimed low socioeconomic living conditions are a common characteristic among most of their highly mobile students. Principal 3 indicated 68% of students in School C qualify for free and reduced price meals. Principal 1 claimed a majority of mobile students are considered "at-risk" of failure in academic and/or behavioral success. Principals 3 and 4 implied the common thread of poverty leads to obvious struggles for mobile students. Principal 3 suggested mobile students lack basic coping skills to help deal with the apparent problems precipitated by impoverished living conditions. A lack of educational resources is an apparent detriment for Principal 3's mobile student population. Principal 4 concurred by stating, "Struggling learners, socialization issues, different coping mechanisms" are all observable problems students face as "a new kid in school on a continual basis." Principal 2 added English language learner (ELL) students are sometimes among School B's most mobile student populations as well.

Principal 1 did not perceive apparent commonalities between students moving into or out of School D, other than those students being considered "at-risk." Principal 2 identified a major at-risk population where mobility is rampant as homeless students. Principal 2 explained which students qualify for homeless student funds under the McKinney-Vinto Act in School B. Any student "who is not living in a stable home with…parents" is considered eligible to receive those designated funds to assist in providing a quality education. Principal 2 clarified homeless students include those children living in a home of extended family, being displaced without an actual residence, and taking residence in temporary housing such as hotels. Principal 2 reported

School B had 22 students who were considered homeless during the 2014-2015 school year. No other principals provided these data during the study.

Interview question 5. Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face academic challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

Each principal conceded high rates of student mobility do impact the academic performance of their often-moving students. Principals 1, 2, and 4 asserted students who enter school after the year begins suffer definite academic setbacks. However, Principal 3 raised the following point to support a differing opinion:

> I think of myself, as my dad moved us four times when I was in fourth grade. I went to four different schools in one year, and I made it. So, I think it kind of depends on the kids, too. If they can, you know, compensate for those skills, personalities, and circumstances.

Principals 1 and 3 were the only administrators to contend many mobile students are not too different from more stable students who struggle academically as well. Principal 1 insisted mobile students should be evaluated on an "individual basis." However, these same school leaders agreed high numbers of school moves will eventually have negative impacts on the academic performance of often-moving students.

Principals 2 and 4 really honed their responses to this question around curricular demands. Principal 4 asserted, "Of course they [students] are going to struggle academically…it is inevitable." Principal 4 further explained School A teachers already struggle to cover expected content and standards for students who are present all year, let

alone those who move in during the school year. Whereas, Principal 2 illustrated how mid-year mobility promotes significant curriculum gaps:

> We see those students coming from other schools, and many times their pacing guides don't line up with our pacing guides. So, let's say we have a fourth grade student in the [School A] district who moves to us…They have not learned place value in third grade in [School A]. But, when they move to us, we have already covered that. So, they have these gaps in learning because our pacing guides are not the same, especially when they move in mid-year. When they transfer at the end of the year and the start of a new year, it's not as much because hopefully they had the full pacing guide for the state standards.

In addition, Principal 2 thought mobile students also struggle to get "involved" at school. Parents of mobile students often struggle to get "plugged in" to extracurricular opportunities for their children. Principal 2 noted research showed, "Kids who are…involved at the school typically do better academically, and they also have a higher percentage of graduation and going on to college." This lack of connection hampers students' sense of belonging at school, according to Principal 2.

>> *Interview question 6.* Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face behavioral challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

The principals interviewed were split on this question. Principals 1 and 3 did not really perceive mobile students to struggle with behavior compared to more stable students. Principal 1 again referred to the importance of "the individual situation"

pertaining to each new student. Principal 1 felt students who have displayed a pattern of

positive or negative behaviors in previous places will likely demonstrate those same

behaviors at their new school. Principal 3 reinforced this stance by contending, "I don't

see a huge difference in kids that move in behaviorally" when compared to more stable

students. Principal 3 asserted the actual reason for behavioral struggles for most students

is the current structure and functionality of their families. Principal 3 said, "If parents are

more worried about…having to find a job and those kind of things, maybe those kids

aren't getting the attention they need." This corresponded to the sentiment shared by

Principal 1 as well.

Principals 2 and 4 did perceive a pattern of their mobile students struggling with

behaviors at school when compared to more stable students. Principal 2 speculated the

underlying cause of these behavioral struggles is poverty and a lack of resources.

Principal 2 characterized this problem with the following opinion:

> I have met with several parents of students who are in this situation, and they have
>
> just said, I don't know what to do with my kid at home. They [kids] don't do
>
> anything that I say, and I don't know what to do. And if someone is not reaching
>
> out to those parents and giving them resources and giving them parenting guides,
>
> I mean they don't get a parenting guide at the hospital with the baby, so some of
>
> those things are learned. If parents don't have those skills, then it is a challenge
>
> for them.

Principal 4 believed the reasoning behind more negative behaviors is a continual lack of

significant relationships at school. Principal 4 insisted relationships are necessary

"building blocks" for success at school. Students who move multiple times often come to

the building with "a chip on their shoulder" as a coping mechanism of not knowing anybody, according to Principal 4. Two other interesting topics arose from this question as well.

Principal 1 reported highly mobile students struggle much more with attendance than behavior. This was the only instance where attendance was mentioned during the principal interviews. In addition, Principal 2 illuminated the need for increased parent involvement to help mobile students acclimate to new surroundings more effectively. Principal 2 voiced frustration over struggling to find ways to get parents more actively involved with their child's education. Parents as Teachers and Love and Logic are two parent education programs in place at Principal 2's school. However, Principal 2 did not believe these two programs alone are enough to adequately equip often-moving families with needed knowledge and resources.

Interview question 7. How do you feel student mobility impacts your building in the following areas:

   a. Student discipline?

   b. Teacher effectiveness?

   c. Quality of education for non-moving students within a class?

Again, Principals 2 and 4 agreed students who are more mobile tend to struggle with exhibiting proper behaviors consistently at school. Principal 2 explained all students participate in Tiger Training to help orient them to the building's expectations for behavior in all areas. This is a critical part of their Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS) program. In addition, classroom teachers are required to focus on community-building activities the first few weeks of school, instead of jumping right into

the curriculum. Principal 4 recalled a conversation involving a student who had enrolled earlier in the day. The student had been in several districts over the past year. Another student in the class had accidentally touched him, so this new student threatened to hurt the other student if this happened again. Principal 4 reiterated how new students frequently take this approach as a defense mechanism in the new environment. Principal 3 actually concurred highly mobile students struggle to understand the structures and boundaries in place at School C. These students are continually having to relearn the different nuances and expectations at each school they attend.

Principal 1 disagreed by again shifting the focus away from mobile students' behaviors. Instead, Principal 1 believed each student, mobile or stable, must be analyzed on an individualized basis. Some of these students endure harsh backgrounds, whereas other new students may have better home lives. Principal 1 did not feel students new to the district will necessarily have a significant negative impact on discipline in School D.

The question about student mobility and teacher effectiveness was perceived differently by the principals in the study. Principals 1 and 4 both addressed the question through a lens of teacher-student relationships. Principal 1 thought answering this question "really depends on the time of year when the student moves in." Teachers are accustomed to creating relationships with new students at the beginning of the school year. However, when students enter school after the first few weeks, Principal 1 claimed, "It's just going to take our teachers longer to get to know that individual student and to know their learning patterns." Principal 4 expanded this perception by creating the simile that new students are like a blank sheet of paper. Principal 4 pointed out teachers can

become frustrated when a lot of time is spent to get to know a student, and then soon, that same student leaves.

Principals 2 and 3 both addressed this question through a lens of pedagogy and the necessitated demands a highly mobile student population places on a group of teachers. Principal 2 suggested teacher effectiveness "is still high, because in our district we do a lot of small group instruction." Teachers utilize "guided math and guided reading" to help plug the holes in a new student's learning. Principal 3 actually believed a highly mobile student body "makes them [teachers] more effective." Principal 3 continued, "Teachers have to do a lot more one-on-one and differentiation." Both principals also stressed the importance of weighing student growth versus overall achievement when assessing mobile students.

Finally, all four principals agreed student mobility can negatively impact those students in a school who are more permanent. Principal 2 indicated a "slight effect" due to teachers having to "go back and do some review" to help new students catch up to the rest of the class. Principal 2 concluded the negative effect is much higher for whole group learning than small group learning. However, since small group learning is the preferred means of teaching, Principal 2 felt this "minimized" the negative influence on stable students. Principal 3 emphasized the importance of differentiation to allow stable students on grade level to utilize enrichment and project-based learning. This negates a lot of valuable learning time being lost to focus on new students, according to Principal 3. Principal 4 contributed to this notion as well:

> Sometimes you are going to see disruptions to the learning environment because
> of the behavior issues or just the acclamation process of the new students. You

know, obviously, your teacher can only spread herself or himself so thin spending

an inordinate amount of time with students who need catching up or need extra

help.

Principal 1 mentioned another detriment can be harmful peer influences caused by new

students.

Interview question 8. What steps are taken at the office level to efficiently enroll

new students to your building?

Three of the principals interviewed pointed out all enrollment procedures are

completed primarily in the administrative office. Principal 1 reported office secretaries

are primarily in charge of most enrollment procedures. Packets are distributed to

guardians of enrolling students, and the secretaries help troubleshoot, if needed. The

secretaries are also responsible for providing tours of the building for new students and

their families. Finally, if administration and the counselor are available, secretaries will

lead introductions to help students connect to a familiar face. Principal 2 explained

enrollment packets are readily available for secretaries to distribute. Principal 2 also

emphasized the importance of getting new students to class as soon as possible: "As long

as the parent can provide the things we need, as far as documentation that they live in our

district and some of the shot records,…they can start the next day." Principal 3 reported

the attendance secretary takes care of all enrollment paperwork, while administration

assigns a designated homeroom teacher.

Principal 4 described a different enrollment process. The guidance counseling

office enrolls all new students. Principal 4 elucidated a need for the process:

We saw the need to really work with our new students, find out as much as we

could know about them to be very intentional with class placements, you know, to

be the first point of contact, and so we started running everything through our

counseling office, and they have a great orientation process set up. They

welcome the student and find out as much as they can about that student, then

they take the student on the tour for introductions.

Principal 4's school is the only building not to directly involve the administrative office

in the student enrollment process.

Principals 2 and 3 provided additional data pertaining to student mobility.

Principal 2 acknowledged the addition of having families identify the enrolling child as

homeless or ELL if applicable. This speeds up delivery of those needed student services.

Additionally, Principal 3 remarked on the importance of reviewing academic and

behavioral records before placing a student. Principal 3 studies records to see if students

"had a struggle at a previous school," so Principal 3 can make the best attempt to provide

the student a successful entry. Finally, Principal 3 creates "behavioral plans" for students

with many discipline problems in previous schools.

Interview question 9. How are new students in your building welcomed? Is there

a consistent orientation for new students? If so, what does this orientation include?

Each principal conveyed how their buildings help orient new students to feel more

comfortable in new environments. Principal 1's school utilizes a buddy system where all

new students are assigned to a student mentor. The mentors help acclimate new students

by providing tours, sitting with them at lunch, and assisting them in finding classrooms.

Principal 1 noted all mentor students have to meet certain character criteria to be eligible

for this responsibility. Principal 2 admitted, "We don't have a great orientation program.

I think that is something we could look to improve on." However, Principal 2 indicated the building counselor meets with groups of new students during lunch sporadically throughout the year. These informal meetings are called lunch bunch, and the counselor provides information about the school and expectations. In addition, Principal 2 pointed out lunch bunch meetings are an environment where new students can feel more comfortable to take risks and meet new students.

Principal 3 again mentioned how new students are placed in a focus room on their first day in the building. The focus room teacher reviews building-wide PBIS expectations, as well as the school's student discipline policies. In addition, the focus room teacher collaborates with classroom teachers to help new students understand one-to-one technology procedures. Principal 4 again reiterated the importance of the counseling office in new student orientation. Principal 4 pointed out both the counselor and counseling secretary provide tours for new students, and sometimes "we also involve students when we can." This was the only other instance along with Principal 1's buddy system where current students were mentioned as important participants in the new student orientation process. Principal 4 also believed another valuable practice is implementing a bulletin board to help introduce new students. Pictures of each new student with a brief description of their likes and dislikes is "just a way to try to help make the student feel more welcome." Principal 4 felt this was another simple way to help put new students at ease.

Interview question 10. What attempts are made to communicate with parents of mobile students? Do you feel this communication helps new students to be more successful in your school? Why or why not?

Principals 1 and 3 acknowledged an improvement in the communication with transient students' families is needed. Principal 1 revealed the majority of parent communication with mobile students occurs during enrollment through the following statements:

> I don't know that there is really constant communication…We try to make them feel as welcome as we can whenever they first enroll. We tell them they can call any time or stop by and see us. Or, if they want to come and meet our teachers, we let them know the hours they are available…and then we offer an optional tour to parents to just try and make them feel more welcomed and familiar with our campus.

Principal 3 lamented, "I would say we are probably not very good at that, I don't think we're really good at communicating other than if we would see an issue either academically or behaviorally." Principal 3 also stated transient families are not provided information on how this type of lifestyle can negatively affect students.

Principals 2 and 4 agreed Schools A and B focus on ways to help mobile students be successful at school. Principal 2 really honed in upon the different means of communication that are made available for all parents, stating, "We try to make every effort to communicate with parents of mobile students, and with all students really." The following communication tools were mentioned by Principal 2: paper notes, Facebook, Twitter, school website, Remind, parent link apps, and even student sticker reminders on days before important events. Principal 2 recognized many transient students' parents still "all have smartphones, and they all have Facebook." These two mediums are effective ways for the building to get important information out to all parents. Another

great tool, according to Principal 2, is a parent link app which streams all school Facebook and Twitter posts. Finally, Principal 2 suggested placing stickers on students' shirts the night before an event, because "if the parents see it and the kids wear it on their shirt, we get a much higher turnout." Stickers are utilized as reminders for most school events outside of normal hours.

Principal 4 summed up the importance of parent communication by saying, "You can never communicate too much." Principal 4 did not go into as much detail on the various means used to communicate with families of mobile students. However, Principal 4 conveyed how well-equipped the school district is to help transient families in need of assistance. A school social work office provides needed resources for families in need. This was the only instance where an interviewed principal mentioned this additional service being available. Principal 4 also declared, "Our community is accustomed to mobility and transient populations, so we have a lot of things in place community-wide to help assist families." Finally, Principal 4 indicated, "Any contact we have with home fosters that relationship," which again revealed the focus placed on creating relationships at School A.

Intermediate elementary teachers. To assure anonymity, each intermediate elementary teacher was assigned a data code. For example, the first teacher interviewed was referred to as Teacher 1, the second as Teacher 2, the third as Teacher 3, and the fourth as Teacher 4. Each school was also assigned a data code in the study to correspond with their listed mobility rates in Chapter One. School A, School B, School C, and School D were the codes utilized to distinguish individual districts in which the participants are employed as educators.

Interview question 1. How long have you been an elementary teacher, and of those years, how many were spent in your current position?

The years of experience for the teachers interviewed ranged from three years to nine years (see Table 2). Overall, their years of educational experience ranged from 6 years to 18 years.

Table 2

Teachers' Years of Experience in Current Position and in Education Overall

Participant	Years of experience as teacher in current building	Overall years of experience in education
Teacher 1	3	16
Teacher 2	5	18
Teacher 3	9	14
Teacher 4	5	6

Interview question 2. How would you define student mobility?

The fifth-grade teachers interviewed provided unique answers to this question. Teacher 1 felt, "It would be a student that it's very common for them to change schools mid-stream on a regular basis." Teacher 1 noticed this pattern as a physical educator in the same building. Many students who leave in earlier grades often return to School D in a later grade level. Teacher 3 echoed this definition by defining student mobility as "when students are changing schools during the school year." Both teachers included within-year school moves as critical components in these responses. Teachers 2 and 4

did not distinguish the time of move within definitions of student mobility. Teacher 2 contended student mobility is whenever a student's family moves around "a lot" for various reasons. Teacher 4 defined student mobility as "the frequency" of students moving from one school to another. These definitions shared similarities with the counselors and principals interviewed as well.

   Interview question 3. What are common reasons for students entering or leaving your school building during a school year, and how frequently do students move in or out of your school?

   This question elicited a common answer from all four teachers interviewed. The major reason shared by all four teachers was parents having to relocate out of district to find work. Teachers 1, 2, and 3 all agreed the local seasonal economy in the area is a definite cause for increased student mobility. Teacher 4 agreed job relocation is a pertinent factor but did not allude to the tourist industry in the region as a cause. In addition, Teachers 1, 3, and 4 were the only participants to provide answers on the frequency of students moving into or out of schools. All three teachers stated student mobility is a "common" occurrence but did not provide concrete data. Teacher 3 believed students move "weekly" into or out of School C, while Teacher 1 explained a new student at School D had already been to two previous districts this school year as of mid-October.

   Another reason noted by Teachers 1 and 2 is the plethora of low-cost housing within School A's district lines. Many students from Schools B and D often move into the district of School A, because there are many more low-cost housing options available in School A's town. Teacher 1 claimed, "[School D] loses a lot of students that way,

because there isn't a lot of low-income housing here." Instead, the parents move to find cheaper rent elsewhere. Teacher 2 coined the term "rent dodgers" to describe the many parents of her students who are forced to relocate when bills come due. Teacher 2 pointed out many students' parents hold minimum wage jobs, so bills can be very difficult to pay in a tourism area. Teacher 2 also indicated the cost of living in the area is slightly higher than other nearby towns.

Another reason shared by Teachers 1, 2, and 3 was the prevalence of extended family members within neighboring communities. Teacher 3 suggested some students' parents often move in and out with extended family nearby to help make ends meet. Teacher 2 stated highly mobile students will often temporarily move in with their grandparents if the parents are struggling. When the parents "get back on their feet," the student will move back in with Mom and/or Dad, which may mean another school change. Teacher 1 illuminated another related phenomenon which may cause student mobility, "I think you also see some transience because of foster care. They've been taken away from a family or something has happened to a parent and they get moved into foster care homes." Teacher 1 implied ineffective parenting can lead to student mobility if DFS has to remove a child from the home.

Interview question 4. What demographic characteristics do your mobile students have in common overall, if any?

Each teacher identified poverty as the predominant demographic characteristic mobile students have in common. The only other characteristic provided was "dysfunctional home life" by Teacher 4, which may or may not be related to low

socioeconomic status. There were no other distinguishing demographic characteristics identified by the interviewed teachers.

Interview question 5. Do students who move into your classroom after the school year begins face academic challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

All four teachers interviewed agreed mobile students who enter classrooms after the school year begins face academic struggles that stable classmates do not. Teachers 1 and 3 are employed at buildings where students are provided one-to-one technology to assist in learning. Teacher 1 indicated some new students do not even understand how to restart their personal laptops by pressing the control, alt, and delete buttons on the keyboards. Teacher 3 emphasized many new students have never used the learning platform utilized at School C. These students, in turn, continue to fall further behind academically upon entering school due to needed frontloading of technology instruction.

Another common challenge noticed by the teachers are obvious gaps in learning among new students. Teacher 4 maintained there are often learning gaps:, "especially, if they have come from another district that is in another state, because not always are they learning the same things that our students have learned." Teacher 1 concurred by providing the following response of a typical new student in class: "I haven't covered this yet at my old school." Teacher 1 reinforced this challenge by also mentioning how new students often struggle if they came into class halfway through a unit. Teacher 3 argued the subjects new students struggle in the most are science and social studies. Both of

these subjects are departmentalized in Teacher 3's building, which allows for more coverage of curriculum.

Teacher 2 illustrated a different set of academic challenges posed by constant mobility. Lack of organizational skills was the predominant deficit Teacher 2 noticed in students new to the building:

Well, it's difficult for them to do homework. They don't have that kind of stability at home. They lose it because when they are moving a lot, they never know where things are…At the same time, they haven't learned techniques of being organized…They don't have the study skills or the resources they need. Simple things such as a composition book, paper, pencil, and they feel bad because of those things.

This was the only instance where a teacher identified lack of structure at home directly impacting a student's academic performance at school.

Interview question 6. Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face behavioral challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

Teachers 1 and 4 did not believe students new to classrooms struggle any more than their more stable peers. Teacher 4 insisted behavioral problems are a direct result of non-involved parents or a dysfunctional home life. Teacher 1 acknowledged some students new to class are often better equipped to make friends quickly compared to the students who are currently enrolled. Many of these new students have adapted to frequent school changes, so they understand ways to meet new people quickly. However,

Teacher 1 also recognized the problems new students have in making "long-term" relationships with peers and teachers in the school. Teacher 1 also thought new students can range in observed behaviors from total introverts to constant acting out in the classroom.

Teachers 2 and 3 proposed there is an observable difference in the negative behaviors of students new to class versus students enrolled for the entire year. Teacher 3 pointed out how many new students are always worried about fitting in with certain peer groups. Teacher 2 further reiterated this point with the following response to the question: "Absolutely. Self-esteem, they haven't been anywhere to become who they are and comfortable with who they are…they feel like they are always having to prove themselves or try to fit in." Eventually, Teacher 2 felt new students who do not identify with a positive peer group often become disengaged with school thinking they can try again soon at the next new school.

Interview question 7. How do you feel student mobility impacts your building in the following areas:

   a. Classroom management?

   b. Teacher effectiveness?

   c. Quality of education for non-moving students within a class?

Classroom management is impacted in negative ways by student mobility, according to the teachers interviewed. Teachers 1 and 3 found consistent movement of students in and out of the classroom makes teaching tougher. Both of their schools are one-to-one with technology as each student has a personal laptop. Teacher 1 claimed getting new students caught up with technology takes needed instructional time away

from the other students. In addition, Teachers 1 and 3 assign many group projects throughout the year. Both concluded constant mobility impedes the progress of already existing groups, because new students have to find their roles with a project already well underway. Teacher 1 also admitted catching new students up academically takes instructional time away from students already present. Teacher 3 felt the most significant negative impact made to classrooms is the move in of a special education student with extreme behavioral needs. Teacher 4 concurred and said new students with "behavioral challenges" can also take needed instructional time.

Teacher 2 agreed classroom management is impacted negatively by student mobility. However, Teacher 2 specified the challenge is ensuring continuity of a team atmosphere in the classroom: "I feel like as a team, it's really hard to build a team when you have members moving in and out because we don't know each other. We don't feel comfortable with each other." Teacher 2 continued, "So every time a student moves in or out, we're constantly rebuilding that team." This continual team evolution takes away from the potential a more stable class can have, according to Teacher 2.

Teachers 1, 2, and 4 maintained student mobility does have a negative impact on teacher effectiveness as well. These teachers perceived teacher effectiveness to be closely related to classroom management. Teacher 1 claimed, "If you don't have good classroom management, then you are not able to be as effective as you would otherwise. You feel like you are constantly putting out fires rather than being involved with all the kids." Teacher 4 coined the term "chip away" to represent what it feels to get a new student with significant learning gaps. Teacher 4 also reiterated teachers have only so much time in a day with students, and newly enrolled students have even less time.

Teacher 4 exclaimed, "We are not miracle workers," when facing the challenge of moving these new students toward expected grade-level academic performance. Teacher 2 defied the sentiment of mobile students being too tough of a challenge. Instead, Teacher 2 stated, "I love a challenge, so it's what am I going to do to make this student feel comfortable." Teacher 2 continued by sharing, "They [new students] can't learn as well when they are frightened or are in a new situation…it automatically brings that lower level of brain thinking." Teachers 2 and 3 both noted mobility's impact upon teacher effectiveness, but both believed these mobile students can overcome and be successful.

Teacher 3 utilized a different perspective from which to address this particular interview question. Teacher 3 proposed student mobility "did not impact teacher effectiveness but did make teaching harder." Instead, Teacher 3 felt mobile students will benefit most from being placed in effective teachers' classrooms. According to Teacher 3, "Getting new students does not make me more or less effective, but it can make my job more difficult." Teacher 3 really used a different lens to approach this question, which brought about unique responses when compared to the others.

The teachers cited impacts of varying degrees on how student mobility affects the quality of education for non-moving students within a class. Teacher 1 posited, "It [new students entering an established class] maybe just slows down your instruction a little bit." Teacher 3 concurred a new student "just takes more time that could be devoted to instruction and lesson planning," but the overall impact is small. Teacher 4 indicated the quality of education for students already in the classroom is not really impacted by new students, unless these new students have special needs requiring the teacher to sacrifice

planned instructional time. Teacher 2 recognized a possible impact but suggested a highly mobile class actually provides an enrichment opportunity for stable students. Teacher 2 created an ambassador system where current students who consistently show good character are asked to help acclimate new students to the classroom. Teacher 2 pointed out this program helps to teach the ambassadors "leadership skills" and "empathy." A mobile student population brought about a valuable learning experience for students already accustomed to classroom practices, according to Teacher 2.

Interview question 8. Do you implement any type of consistent orientation for students who move into your school after the beginning of the year? If so, what does the orientation consist of for these students?

Teachers 2, 3, and 4 described how new students are welcomed to the classroom after the beginning of the school year. Teacher 2 creates a "packet" of materials to help ensure new students receive materials necessary for success. The packet includes a name plate, Friday folders, a welcome letter, and other information handed out at Open House. Teacher 4 acknowledged a three-step plan for welcoming new students. First, students are provided needed supplies and assigned to equipment such as a locker and a cubby. Then, students are paired with another student to go over classroom procedures and practices. This includes how to turn in assignments and check out books from the classroom library. Finally, Teacher 4 checks in with the new student at day's end to help answer any further questions. Teacher 3 also noted new students are paired for the first few days with another student to learn classroom practices and to meet new friends.

Teacher 1 answered the question more holistically, taking into account the lack of an orientation program for students new to the district. Teacher 1 asserted, "I would say

we are lacking in that. I wish we had orientation outside of my classroom for those new students." Teacher 1 summed up the need for a new student orientation in the building:

But there isn't a class where they go and say okay, this is your computer. This is how it works, these are the programs, these are all your passwords, and this is how to log on to all this. So, I can see that would be a huge benefit to our district to have like a technology orientation course when they first start…they take an hour or so with that student and just inundate them with all that information and give them a sheet that has all their logins and everything they need to know.

Teacher 1 felt the level of technology in the building actually hinders the ability of new students to acclimate quickly to the educational environment.

Interview question 9. How are new students in your classroom welcomed? Is there a consistent orientation for new students? If so, what does this orientation include?

This question was actually answered by Teachers 2, 3, and 4 in the previous interview question. Teacher 4 answered much like Teacher 2 in the previous interview question by having Open House packets on hand for new students. This information allows for immediate communication with the new student's parents to learn more about the child. In addition, Teacher 1 summarized key details of classroom orientation at School D. New students are paired with outgoing, well-behaved students of the same gender. The chosen students take new students on tours of the building, introduce classroom procedures, show locations of important areas in the classroom, sit with the new students at lunch for a familiar face, and play with the new students at recess.

Interview question 10. What attempts are made to communicate with parents of your mobile students? Do you feel this communication helps new students to be more successful in your classroom? Why or why not?

Each teacher interviewed highlighted the importance of parent communication with all students but especially those students who enroll after the beginning of the school year. Teacher 1 characterized mobile students' parents as often not being "communicative." Many of these parents do not have working phone numbers or do not reply consistently to electronic mail. Teacher 1 blamed this ineffective communication upon hopping from school to school and not wanting to get too attached to people, because the family will soon have to uproot again. Parents perceive school-home collaboration as a waste of time, according to Teacher 1.

Teacher 2 agreed many mobile students' parents are difficult to reach at times. Due to this, Teacher 2 always tries to make contact with parents as they are enrolling their child, "because I might not see that parent again." This requires efficient enrollment and class assignment procedures from the office at School B. Teacher 2 also highlighted the importance of initial communication on student progress always being positive in nature if possible. This helps to encourage new students to give good effort in their classwork when parents are proud. Teacher 3 concurred positive parent contact is "essential" to student success. Teacher 3 explained the use of technology to aid in school-home communication. Students at School C are all utilizing the same student learning programs which communicate efficiently with most smartphones. Teacher 3 concluded, "Most, if not all parents, have a smartphone above anything else. It is nice to use our technology to send quick updates on student progress at the touch of a button."

Teacher 1 agreed having personal laptops for every student and a consistent learning interface makes parent communication much easier for teachers. However, it still does not guarantee parents will communicate back with the teacher.

All four teachers discussed the importance of constant communication of progress to parents. However, each teacher voiced frustration with the lack of reciprocation in this process from many mobile students' parents. Teacher 4 summarized the importance of keeping in touch with parents by saying, "Anytime the student knows that we are communicating with their parents, it is usually more accountability. So, they [student] are usually going to put forth more effort and it also shows them that I care." Parent communication was perceived to be of great importance but unfortunately is not a consistent two-way process, according to the teachers interviewed.

Intermediate elementary counselors. To assure anonymity, each intermediate elementary counselor was assigned a data code. For example, the first counselor interviewed was referred to as Counselor 1, the second as Counselor 2, the third as Counselor 3, and the fourth as Counselor 4. Each school was also assigned a data code in the study to correspond with their listed mobility rates in Chapter One. School A, School B, School C, and School D were the codes utilized to distinguish individual districts the participants are employed with as counselors.

Interview question 1. How long have you been an educator, and of those years, how many were spent in your current position?

The years of experience of the counselors interviewed ranged from one to 10 years (see Table 3). Their overall years of educational experience ranged from one to 16 years. Half of the counselors interviewed were in their first year as school guidance

counselors. The other two counselors had at least four or more years of experience in these current positions. This created a natural dichotomy among the guidance counselors due to their experience levels.

Table 3

Counselors' Years of Experience in Current Position and in Education Overall

Participant	Years of experience as counselor in current district	Overall years of experience in education
Counselor 1	1	6
Counselor 2	4	4
Counselor 3	1	1
Counselor 4	10	16

Interview question 2. How would you define student mobility?

Each counselor interviewed provided a slightly diverse definition of student mobility. Counselor 1's definition was "a student who moves in and out of districts pretty regularly…even if it is back and forth from one to another." Counselor 2 agreed student mobility includes "any student who transfers to another school," but also inserted, "In my opinion as a result of an unstable living environment." Counselor 2's definition was the only instance where this stipulation was included among all interviewees. Counselor 3 proposed any students in schools constantly moving should be a part of the definition. However, the only counselor to parallel the definition provided by Rumberger (2002) was Counselor 4 who stated, "I would say that it is the change of a school without

a grade advancement." This answer most resembled the definition of student mobility found within related research.

Interview question 3. What are common reasons for students entering or leaving your school building during a school year, and how frequently do students move in or out of your school?

The reasons given by the counselors shared some commonalities and revealed some differences. Counselor 1 designated parents moving residences due to job location as the primary reason for students leaving School D. Many parents work in a nearby town and are trying to live closer to their workplaces. Counselor 1 also proposed family issues such as divorce are another common reason. Counselor 3 echoed this as a reason kids leave School C. Counselor 3 also remarked, "We have kids who have been abused and taken into a home." This was the only instance where child abuse was given as a possible reason.

The primary reason provided by all four counselors was family difficulties due to financial hardships. Counselor 1 shared, "They need a new place to live so they have to move out of district to live in the means of their income." Counselor 4 speculated the seasonal economy within the region plays a pivotal role in the building's student mobility rates. Counselors 2 and 3 both maintained poverty is a driver of student mobility at Schools B and C, which is evidenced by their significant homeless populations. Counselor 2 cited, "We have a large percentage of students that are deemed homeless, considered living in a non-permanent residence. We have families living with other families, living in a hotel or motel, and even families that move from couch to couch."

Counselor 3 discussed the frequent nature of homeless students' families having to transfer to nearby schools due to being kicked out of their motels for not paying rent on time.

Interview question 4. What demographic characteristics do your mobile students have in common overall, if any?

Each counselor indicated one common characteristic among their mobile student populations—poverty. Counselor 1 answered, "Maybe socioeconomic status…because they are constantly kind of having to move and adjust to make ends meet." Counselor 1 then clarified these mobile students are often from "low" socioeconomic families. The other counselors pointed out the high rate of mobile students eligible for free and reduced price meals. Counselors 3 and 4 both stated many highly mobile students are on "free and reduced lunch." Counselor 2 pointed out "almost 70%" of students in School B are on free and reduced price meals.

Interview question 5. Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face academic challenges unique to their situation (when compared to their non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

All four counselors believed students who move into school after the year begins face academic challenges apart from their more stable peers. The counselors identified inconsistencies in curriculum as a common challenge for highly mobile students. Counselor 1 illuminated this possible reason with the following statements:

Because you never know where one school is in the curriculum compared to the one they are going to. Or, if they leave us, we might be at a different point in the

subject area at the beginning of the year than what they teach. They have some

gaps there because of that.

Counselor 4 added mobile students might encounter curriculum taught in a different

sequence in subjects such as math. Finally, Counselor 2 suggested mobile students force

teachers to review already-taught content.

This particular question did bring to the surface some unique comments from the

counselors. Counselor 1 asserted students moving to a new school must cope with the

emotional stressors of a new environment and with developing relationships. Whereas,

Counselor 2 implied the most significant academic problem mobility creates is lack of

parental support toward the school. Counselor 2 explained, "I think many of our parents

do not provide the support for their students to complete any work at home or to

encourage them to be on the bus on time or to do well in school." Counselor 2 continued

by stating, "Those same parents normally do not provide teachers…assistance when

addressing the student's needs." Another interesting point suggested by Counselor 2 was

mobile students tend to have poor school attendance compared to more stably enrolled

students. Finally, Counselor 4 mentioned another detriment of frequent school mobility:

> I think we miss kids that probably need services you know, whether that is special
>
> education or could even be the other side of the spectrum and be gifted. We are
>
> missing those [students] because they are not in one location long enough for
>
> those needs to be identified.

This was the only instance where this concern arose during all participants' interviews.

Interview question 6. Do students who move into your building after the school

year begins face behavioral challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-

moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you

attribute their success?

Three of the four counselors felt mobile students do struggle more with discipline

than their more stable peers. Counselor 1 disagreed stating, "I think students who have

behavior problems are going to have them whether they are in our district five years or

whether they move in." However, Counselors 2 and 4 both confirmed a lack of constant

relationships among peers and adults at school leads to negative student behaviors.

Counselor 2 contended students moving in and out of schools often consider the

educational process "useless." These students often seem to "lack motivation" because

they never stay in one school long enough to accomplish long-term goals. Counselor 4

specified the function of misbehavior for many of the mobile students at School A:

> When they are in the classroom and cannot meet the academic expectations, the
>
> behaviors start to come out to kind of take the focus off of what they do not know
>
> how to do. And then just socially, they struggle because they are not able to bond
>
> and form those relationships as the non-mobile students do.

Counselors 2 and 4 agreed frustration is a common sentiment among their mobile

students.

Interview question 7. How do you feel student mobility impacts your building in

the following areas:

a. Student discipline?

b. Teacher effectiveness?

c. Quality of education for non-moving students within a class?

Again, a majority of the counselors attributed at least some blame to mobile

student populations having a negative impact on student discipline. Responses communicated a concern for how mobile students are in a perpetual cycle of re-acclimating to new environments. Counselor 2 depicted a typical scenario for highly mobile students as, "Hey, if I [mobile student] get in trouble and I get kicked out, no big deal. I will be starting fresh in a new school anyway." Counselor 1 elaborated further by discussing the difficulties of having little to no knowledge on the background of new students. This makes it difficult to "understand where they are coming from and why they are acting that way." Counselor 4 provided the most definitive answer to this particular question. Counselor 4 insisted, "I think if we look at our discipline records, probably the majority of the students that we are seeing coming through the office are highly mobile students." Counselor 3 disagreed and felt School C's PBIS expectations and focus on differentiated learning really help new students adjust quickly.

The perceptions of how student mobility impacts teachers' effectiveness mirrored the previous question. Counselors 1, 2, and 4 agreed the resulting impact will not be favorable, whereas Counselor 3 did not perceive a negative impact. Counselor 1 contended the exposure to inconsistent curriculum by mobile students is a definite handicap. Counselor 1 explained further stating, "The student probably stressed out about that as much as the teacher because it seems like more work on that student." Counselor 1 also noted the additional demands placed on teachers when new students enter midway through a unit of instruction. Counselor 2 cited the already tedious curricular demands teachers have before the year begins as a pertinent problem. Counselor 2 felt it is hard to take a class of stable students and have them achieve a grade level of progress; however, the difficulty increases dramatically when new students come

throughout the year. Counselor 4 maintained the most negative impact is a difficulty in planning instruction for a class of students that changes "on a weekly basis." However, Counselor 3 implied teacher effectiveness is not impacted due to the focus on project-based learning and one-to-one technology at School C. This really allows stable and mobile students alike to be engaged in academic learning, according to Counselor 3.

The third component of this question revealed similar answers again. Counselors 1, 2, and 4 all recognized student mobility has adverse impacts on non-moving students, whereas Counselor 3 challenged the impact is nonexistent. Counselors 2 and 4 both thought stable students have to endure slower curricular pacing to help catch up new students. Counselor 3 perceived the impact to be more social in nature. Student social groups are often modified or interfered with as new students come to school. According to Counselor 1, "This kind of throws off the equilibrium for the students who are always here versus the students who are the ones that move in new." Counselor 3 dissented by saying a school environment driven by individualized learning will prevent negative effects precipitated by high student mobility.

Interview question 8. What steps are taken at the counseling office level to efficiently enroll new students to your building?

Three of the counselors interviewed acknowledged the guidance counseling offices have little to do with the actual enrollment process and required paperwork. However, Counselor 4 explained all enrollment procedures were transitioned from the administrative to the counseling office at School A a few years ago. The reason was to help combat the difficulties faced by an increasingly mobile and impoverished student population. Counselor 4 also suggested the counseling office has more time to assess

new students' needs along with their families' needs as well. Counselor 4 summed up the reasoning for this practice by stating, "Just for us to get to know the families so we can go ahead and link them with community resources that they want." Although the other counselors do not directly deal with student enrollment, each does play an integral part in welcoming students. Counselor 1 carefully reviews all student files to see academic, attendance, and behavior data from previous schools. Counselor 1 also ensures every student starts with needed school supplies upon enrollment. Counselors 2 and 3 review student cumulative files, but both also are responsible for procuring needed resources for students who qualify as homeless upon enrolling.

Interview question 9. How are new students in your building welcomed? Is there a consistent orientation for new students? If so, what does this orientation include?

Each counselor summarized how new students are welcomed to the building on their first day. Counselor 1 reported School D has just implemented a student buddy system where all new enrollees are matched with a student mentor. The student mentors must meet established character criteria to be eligible for this honor. Counselor 1 summarized the buddy system as follows:

> I went through and I paired up a student in the same grade with about the same schedule with someone. I introduced them in the hallway and kind of, you know, I encouraged the…mentor student to invite them to lunch and make sure they are not sitting by themselves. Make sure they are included in activities and if they get lost in the hallway, help guide them where they need to go.

Counselor 1 indicated new students feel more comfortable talking to peers than adults when acclimating to a new school.

Counselors 2 and 4 both admitted the need for a more effective orientation program for new students who enroll within the school year. Counselor 2 developed a lunch bunch when beginning at School B to help orient new students to the building. Counselor 2 explained all new students are put in a lunch bunch by grade level. These groups meet periodically throughout the year to discuss building expectations, provide student introductions, and talk through common issues. However, Counselor 2 illuminated the need for a consistent orientation for students who enroll within the school year. Counselor 4 indicated a student group will be formed later in the year to provide student tours, but this process has not started yet. Until that time, the counseling office provides tours for new students and introduces them to the classroom teachers.

Counselor 3 asserted School C's orientation is effective. New students are initially placed in the focus room on the first day of school attendance. The focus room teacher goes over building-wide PBIS expectations and provides a convenient person for new students to ask questions of when not in front of peers. Counselor 3 also indicated School C has a leadership club comprised of current students in the building. As new students come, they are greeted by a leadership club member who helps make the acclimation process smooth.

Interview question 10. What attempts are made to communicate with parents of mobile students? Do you feel this communication helps new students to be more successful in your school? Why or why not?

This particular question elicited responses indicating a need for improvement in each school building. The frequency of communication from school to home differed among the counselors interviewed. Counselors 1 and 4 admitted to having little contact

with the families of mobile students. Counselor 4 also voiced frustration with the struggle to contact some of these families:

> Well, the attempts are made, but they are often not successful. Because as the students are mobile, so are the phone numbers of these parents. So a lot of times, we cannot reach them as much as we would like to. I feel like if we could, they [mobile students] could be more successful. The parents are just not accessible.

Counselor 2 took this premise further by mentioning how many mobile students do not have physical addresses. Both counselors 2 and 4 acknowledged effective communication with mobile students' parents is inconsistent and often difficult.

Counselor 2 also indicated home visits are made when phone contact cannot be made with parents. These visits are not meant to cause fear or alienation to parents. Instead, Counselor 2 characterized home visits as "necessary" to communicate with many students' families at School B. Counselor 2 summed up the mentality of home visits with the following statements:

> I am one of the ones that goes on a regular basis just so that we can let them know we are not here to bust down your door. We are not here to call the police on you. We are here just to communicate with you. We are here to talk with you to find out what can we do to help. Because we help in lots of different ways. It's not just about education, but we understand that family or that student isn't focused always on education when they don't have food to eat, when they don't have a place to stay that night, and when they don't have a running vehicle.

No other counselor mentioned making home visits to ensure parent communication with mobile students' families.

Summary

This qualitative study exposed the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and fifth-grade teachers in two select rural counties in southwest Missouri toward student mobility. Interview responses were analyzed to provide perceptual data on how mobility impacts schools, staffs, and students. Student mobility is a perceived problem overall in each school involved in the study. Most stakeholders involved felt student mobility is related to negative outcomes for mobile and stable students alike. In addition, most stakeholders agreed higher-than-normal rates of student mobility pose problems for staff members and schools involved with this study.

Chapter Four consisted of the perceptions of four intermediate elementary principals, four intermediate elementary counselors, and four intermediate elementary teachers. Each participant was employed in a school building with higher-than-average rates of student mobility in Missouri. Participants' transcribed interviews were analyzed within their specific staffing classifications (Principal, Teacher, Counselor) to find commonalities and differences in opinions. These comparisons showed higher-than average-rates of student mobility pose unique difficulties for schools. Participants pointed out the loss of instructional time to help acclimate new students, the likelihood of new students coming from impoverished families, the difficulty of providing consistent curriculum pacing with surrounding districts, and the process of creating and recreating deep relationships with peers and teachers all are difficulties faced by often-moving students. In addition, student achievement is hard to gauge for mobile students in the schools due to the number of moves some students make. However, student mobility is

combatted in alike and unique ways at each school involved in the study. Some buildings

create more intense scaffolding for mobile students to be successful than do others.

The findings from the analysis of data and a summary of these findings are

presented in Chapter Five. Each of the research questions is revisited, and conclusions

are discussed. Implications for practice are addressed, and recommendations for future

research concerning student mobility's effects on students, staffs, and school buildings

are presented.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Student mobility continues to impact education in various ways. High student mobility is related to negative outcomes for students and schools alike (Fiel et al., 2013). These negative effects can be more damaging in rural schools due to fewer financial and human resources when compared to larger districts (Beesley et al., 2010). Research has also shown highly mobile students score lower on state standardized tests and are more likely to be involved in discipline problems at school (Beesley et al., 2010). Thompson and Haskins (2014) also discussed the negative implications high mobility can have on the general welfare of children both socially and physically.

Demographics of the students most likely to move have highlighted target populations for school leaders. The primary related demographic among highly mobile students is poverty (GAO, 2010; Meyers, 2012; Voight et al., 2012). Eadie et al. (2013) discussed the prevalence of economically disadvantaged students found in a studied population of often-moving students in five Wisconsin schools. According to a GAO (2010) report, highly mobile students are most likely to come from low-income families. In addition, African-American and Hispanic students have been shown to be the most mobile ethnicities in studied student populations (NRC & IOM, 2010). These disturbing trends have highlighted the importance of finding effective interventions for mobile student populations in rural schools.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and teachers on student mobility in rural schools. Most research on student mobility has centered upon early elementary and high school students, but there has been very little focus placed on late elementary students

and staff members. Within this last chapter, the research questions which guided the

study are answered. The findings are presented with corresponding data to support. In

addition, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research

are provided concerning student mobility in rural intermediate elementary schools.

Findings

This qualitative study involved examination of participants' perceptions of

student mobility to help answer four guiding research questions. Interviews were

performed and then transcribed to provide needed data. These data were then analyzed to

gain insight as to how intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and teachers feel

about student mobility. These findings were summarized and then applied to the

corresponding research questions. Supporting literature from Chapter Two was included

to provide further comparisons with the findings of this study.

Research question 1. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary

principals in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact

on students and staff?

Each principal in the study was asked, "What are common reasons for students

entering or leaving your school building during a school year…?" All four principals

recognized job instability in the local economy as a major determinant of family moves.

The selected schools are very close to popular tourist destinations such as theme parks,

musical shows, campgrounds, recreational lakes, and other related attractions. As a

result, many local jobs are seasonal in the area, which leads to unemployment during the

winter months when tourism wanes. Principal 4 discussed how many mobile students at

School A live in local motels where rent is paid weekly. All principals interviewed also

pointed out poverty as a major reason students are highly mobile. According to Anderson et al. (2014), low-income families often experience residential volatility over and over again. The plethora of low-cost housing in the area allows many families to move to a new motel or residence when bills cannot be paid. This perpetuates the cycle of student mobility from school to school in the studied region.

The principals were also asked, "Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face academic challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)?" The principals believed high rates of student mobility negatively impact student achievement of mobile students. There has been ample research showing high student mobility is related to decreased student achievement (Eadie et al., 2013; Fantuzzo et al., 2012; Herbers et al., 2012; Voight et al., 2012). Principal 2 attributed the most damaging school moves to be within-year moves. Principal 2 asserted, "We see those students coming from other schools, and many times their pacing guides don't line up with our pacing guide." Learning gaps are a natural result of students hopping from one school to the next. Another challenge to student achievement is lack of parent involvement at school. Principal 2 suggested mobile students struggle to get "involved" at school, as do their parents. Gruman et al. (2008) found highly mobile students' participation at school and in class continues to decrease with each additional school move.

Principals were also questioned about how high rates of mobility affect student discipline. The principals were split in how they perceived mobility's impact on school-wide discipline. Principals 1 and 3 believed mobility has little to do with how a student behaves at school. Instead, the functionality of the family is the main determining factor,

according to these administrators. However, Principals 2 and 4 both agreed highly

mobile students struggle more frequently with school discipline when compared to their

more stable peers. Several studies have shown the negative influence high student

mobility has on student behaviors at school (Fantuzzo et al., 2012; Gruman et al., 2008;

Han, 2014). Principal 4 emphasized the importance of relationships at school becoming

"building blocks" for student success. In addition, Principal 4 mentioned behavioral

struggles for mobile students are a coping mechanism due to not knowing anyone at the

new school. This sentiment was paralleled by Martinez (2013), who posited students

new to a building may behave in unacceptable ways because they are accustomed to the

previous school's expectations.

Another question the principals were asked was how student mobility impacts

teacher effectiveness at school. Principals 1 and 4 valued the importance of students

being present at the beginning of the year for community-building time in classrooms.

Teachers focus more on creating trust and collegiality versus curriculum during the first

few weeks. Principal 1 indicated when students enter a classroom after this valuable

period of time, teachers have to work much harder to know these new students. Principal

4 followed this point up acknowledging teacher frustration may increase if students

continue to move in and out of the classroom for the duration of the year.

Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) revealed teachers perceive persistent classroom

mobility as an impedance to student learning. These same teachers feel mobility disrupts

learning and decays instruction (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). However, Principals 2 and

3 actually believed a highly mobile student population makes teachers more effective.

The demands of a highly mobile classroom bring about necessary effective instructional

approaches such as differentiated small groups in math and reading, according to Principal 2.

The final interview question related to this research question dealt with the impact of student mobility on students already enrolled. All four principals again concurred high student mobility negatively influences those students who are more stable. Principal 2 contended teachers may have to "go back and do some review" to help catch new students up with the rest of the class. Fiel et al. (2013) insisted classroom instruction becomes more review-oriented when teachers encounter high numbers of new students throughout the school year. Principals 2, 3, and 4 advocated for the implementation of differentiated small group instruction and project-based learning to minimize mobility's negative impacts on the whole classroom.

Research question 2. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary teachers in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on classrooms?

Each teacher in the study was asked, "What are common reasons for students entering or leaving your school building during a school year…?" The two major reasons cited by the teachers are parents relocating due to the local seasonal tourist economy and an abundance of low-cost housing options. These reasons mirrored what the principals felt were the predominant factors which lead to high student mobility in local schools. Teachers 1 and 2 also indicated many of their students (from School B and School D) often move into the district boundary lines of School A. School A is in the largest town and school district involved in the study. Correspondingly, School A's district has the highest volume of low-cost housing options available to highly mobile families when

compared to the other schools in the study. Schafft et al. (2010) supported this observation by explaining high mobility and poverty are constants in rural towns with high unemployment and an abundance of low-income housing. Teacher 2 used the term "rent dodgers" to describe many of the parents of highly mobile students. The driving force requiring moves for these families is the inability to pay required bills. Many moves happen when overdue notices are sent to families.

The teachers also pointed out many highly mobile students will move in with extended family members within the same community or in a neighboring town. Teacher 3 reported some mobile families have to combine incomes with other extended family members in order to make ends meet. In addition, Teacher 2 illustrated how some parents who fall on hard times will send children to live with grandparents nearby. This allows the financially struggling parents to get time to "get back on their feet," according to Teacher 2. Theodos et al. (2014) illuminated that residential mobility often is related with student mobility. Theodos et al. (2014) also generalized students from poor families often encounter ill effects with a move.

The teachers also felt mobile students are at a disadvantage academically compared to their more stably enrolled peers. Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) found mobile students in rural Nebraska did achieve less than their more stable counterparts. Teachers 1 and 3 both teach in buildings where a one-to-one technology initiative is in place. Each student is provided a personal laptop to take with him or her class to class and then home. Teacher 1 characterized mobile students as sometimes not being as "tech savvy" compared to more stable students. In addition, Teacher 3 contended new students are unfamiliar with the learning platform used by teachers to present content and provide

assignments. This puts mobile students further behind peers. Teacher 4 mentioned achievement gaps due to diverse curricula taught to often-moving students. This reason also surfaced with the principals who were interviewed. Teacher 2 insisted mobile students struggle with organization by stating, "They lose it [homework] because when they are moving a lot, they never know where things are…They don't have the study skills or research skills they need." Teacher 2 reflected by stating a chaotic home life is detrimental to successful academic performance at school.

Teachers were also questioned if mobile students struggle more with discipline at school than students already enrolled. Much like the principals, the teachers were split when answering this question. Teachers 1 and 4 did not observe new students having more behavior issues than students who have been in school all year. Instead, Teachers 1 and 4 believed dysfunctional parenting is the primary determinant of student discipline problems. Teacher 1 believed mobile students actually are better equipped to make friends quickly than peers who are more stable. However, Teachers 2 and 3 noticed many mobile students do struggle with behavior at school. The main reason provided by Teachers 2 and 3 was a constant worry to fit in with new social groups. Eventually, some mobile students become apathetic to school and peers because they know another move is coming soon, according to Teacher 2. Students' attitudes toward school and classroom behavior have been shown to be negatively affected by student mobility (Gruman et al., 2008). In addition, highly mobile students require more resources for their social and emotional needs to be met at school (GAO, 2010).

The next question teachers were asked was how student mobility impacts classroom management. All four teachers felt high volumes of students entering and

leaving their classes make teaching more difficult. Teacher 1 pointed out acclimating new students to required technology takes away valuable instructional time. Teacher 3 added new students often struggle initially because a majority of teachers utilize group projects. Students entering or leaving groups on a regular basis make these types of assignments more difficult. Finally, Teacher 2 discovered a highly mobile classroom makes community building within a class much more strenuous. Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) found similar perceptions where teachers viewed constant student mobility as a major disruption to the educational process.

Teachers were also queried on how student mobility influences their instructional effectiveness. Teachers 1, 2, and 4 suggested student mobility hampers teacher efficacy. Teacher 1 claimed, "You feel like you are constantly putting out fires rather than being involved with all the kids." Teacher 4 added gaining new students who are academically behind the class is a daunting challenge. Gaddie (2010) found teachers cannot focus on valuable formative achievement data to guide instruction with rampant student mobility. Instead, teachers are burdened with properly managing an always-evolving classroom (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011). However, Teacher 3 disagreed with the others and felt student mobility forces teachers to become better. Teacher 3 utilized a growth mindset to use challenging circumstances as a cause for needed improvement.

The final interview question related to this research question sought to find how teachers feel student mobility impacts the quality of education for students already enrolled. Teachers 1, 3, and 4 did attribute some negative effects on stable students to high student mobility. The major factors cited by these teachers were loss of needed time for instruction, lesson planning, and maintaining student discipline. Teacher 2 actually

disagreed and utilized the variable of high student mobility to create learning opportunities for students. Teacher 2 created a student ambassador system within the classroom to help acclimate new students to their new surroundings. Teacher 2 proposed ambassadors gain "leadership skills" and "empathy" while also helping new classmates learn important processes.

Research question 3. What are the perceptions of intermediate elementary counselors in select rural counties in Missouri regarding student mobility and its impact on students and staff?

Counselors were asked, "What are common reasons for students entering or leaving your building during a school year…?" The counselors interviewed provided very similar answers to those given by the principals and teachers. Poverty, seasonal economy, low-paying jobs, and available low-cost housing were all mentioned as contributing reasons which lead to high student mobility. Counselors 2 and 3 also revealed many mobile students are considered homeless under the McKinney-Vinto Act. Students are classified as homeless due to living in non-permanent residences such as motels or recreational vehicle parks. Cutuli et al. (2013) pointed out homelessness is an issue encountered by a significant population of children in the U.S. In addition, homeless students show lower achievement trajectories compared to stable peers in school (Cutuli et al., 2013).

All four counselors also believed mobile students do encounter unique academic obstacles when compared to more stable students. Again, there were consistent responses also mentioned by the teachers and principals such as inconsistencies in curriculum pacing and lack of parental support. However, the counselors also brought up two unique

points contributing to poor student achievement for mobile students. Counselor 2 noticed

many mobile students have poor school attendance. This was consistent with findings

from Fantuzzo et al. (2012), where mobile elementary students showed declines in school

engagement. The other distinct reason mentioned by Counselor 4 was mobile students

are not at one school long enough for special needs to be identified. Systematic

identification of students with special needs, whether special education or gifted services,

is fragmented because identified students do not stay in one place long enough to finish

established processes. These mobile students may not receive needed services for

academic success.

When asked if mobile students struggle more with school discipline than their

stable peers, the counselors answered very similarly to how the interviewed principals

and teachers did. Again, there was not clear agreement among all four counselors.

Counselor 1 thought students with behavior problems would struggle in school whether

stable or mobile. However, Counselors 2, 3, and 4 disagreed and pointed to a lack of

social relationships with peers and teachers as a possible cause. In addition, Counselor 2

reiterated students who consistently move to different schools eventually view education

as "useless." Counselor 2 also asserted mobile students who are suspended from school

do not really care, because those students will be getting a fresh start soon at a new

district.

Next, the counselors were asked how mobility impacts teacher effectiveness.

Counselors 1, 2, and 4 felt teacher effectiveness is impeded by student mobility. A

similar reason as provided by the principals and teachers was inconsistencies in taught

curriculums across schools. Another reason mentioned was teachers struggle planning

for constantly evolving classrooms. Small group and individual student needs change

often, because rosters change weekly. Counselor 2 indicated the year-long curriculum

plans for teachers are already too tedious to navigate a consistent class through. With

students moving in and out, this makes moving all students a grade level in learning

"dramatically" difficult, according to Counselor 2. Fiel et al. (2013) supported this

thinking, stating teachers devote too much time catching new students up, which slows

down established curriculum pacing for all students.

The last question asked of the counselors pertaining to research question three

was how student mobility impacts already-enrolled students. Counselors 1, 2, and 4

concurred stable students are adversely affected by a highly mobile student population.

Primary reasons provided were slower curriculum pacing and adversity in student social

groups. Counselor 3 proposed an influx of new students often "modified or interfered

with" already established social groups. These perceptions were consistent with findings

from Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011), where high mobility impacted all students

negatively. However, Counselor 1 believed a continual focus on individualized learning

will negate these hostile effects.

Research question 4. What, if any, common approaches are used in

intermediate elementary buildings in select rural counties in Missouri to help mobile

students find success?

Findings related to this research question resulted from the final three interview

questions asked of the principals, counselors, and teachers. These questions sought to

discover how each participant views the effectiveness of enrollment and orientation

procedures for new students. The final interview question asked participants to gauge the

effectiveness of communication between the schools and mobile students' families. Principals,' counselors,' and teachers' answers were analyzed jointly to discover what practices are perceived to be effective and ineffective according to participants.

Each principal and counselor was asked what steps are taken to efficiently enroll new students to the building. Schools B, C, and D all primarily utilize the administrative offices for student enrollment. In these buildings, secretaries hand new enrolling families pre-made packets containing all necessary paperwork. Principal 2 reiterated the importance of having new students begin school as soon as possible, noting, "As long as the parent can provide the things we need, as far as documentation that they live in our district and some of the shot records,…they can start the next day." In addition, Principal 2 mentioned the importance of identifying students who qualify for ELL and/or homeless services due to federal program funding. Principal 3 also reviews student files when flagged by secretaries for having discipline problems at a previous school. School A is the only building where all enrollment procedures are handled by the counseling office. Counselor 4 claimed the counseling office actually has more time to focus on the needs of new families compared to the administrative office. In addition, the counseling office is better-equipped to link highly mobile families to needed resources at school and in the community, according to Counselor 4.

All participants were also questioned about orientation processes in place for new students. There are orientation practices of varying effectiveness in place at each school. School A has a limited program in place to help new students acclimate. Building tours are provided to new students and their parents by the counselor or counseling secretary. Counselor 4 suggested plans are in place for students to begin leading these tours in the

future. School A posts all new students' pictures on a bulletin board close to the office where new students have the chance to introduce themselves. School B participants discussed the need to improve building orientation for new students. Again, tours are provided by the counselor or administration if inquired about by enrolling parents. School B relies on Counselor 2 to host "lunch bunch" groups where all new students who have enrolled since the beginning of the year meet to discuss building expectations. This practice provides an environment where new students can feel more comfortable to ask questions and get to know others. However, both Principal 2 and Counselor 2 acknowledged the need for further orientation practices.

School D implements a buddy system where all new students are paired with a current student who meets certain character requirements. Principal 1 believed this program has made a difference in helping welcome new students to School D. The "buddy" student is selected not only because of strong character but also having a similar academic schedule as the new enrollee. Buddy students provide building tours, sit beside new students at lunch, and help new students find classroom locations throughout the school day. School C participants also expressed effective orientation practices are in place. Counselor 3 elaborated on how all new students spend the first day of attendance in the focus room. The focus room is supervised by a certified teacher whose job is to house in-school suspension, task completion, and new students on their first day of attendance. The focus room teacher introduces PBIS expectations to new students and helps them secure a student log-in and password in order to use their assigned personal laptop. This teacher also provides answers to any questions the new students have

throughout the day. In addition, Counselor 3 links new students with a student from leadership club at School C to act as a peer mentor.

The teachers in the study also described the classroom welcoming systems in place for new students. Several of the teachers stated pre-made packets of needed materials for new students are ready when needed. These materials consist of name plates, communication folders, welcome letters from the teacher, and other necessities. In addition, teachers find classroom supplies for new students if needed with the help of the school counselors or community partners. Teacher 3 was the only one who mentioned pairing new students with a mentor within the classroom. However, Teacher 1 explained the office assigns a buddy for new students which negates the need for a classroom mentor.

The final question asked of all participants dealt with how frequent and effective communication is between school and home pertaining to mobile students. Overall, participants agreed communication is minimal at best. Teacher 1 and Counselor 4 both indicated many mobile students' parents are extremely difficult to contact, because working phone numbers change constantly. In addition, parents often go from job to job, so work phone numbers are inconsistent, too. Another problem encountered by Counselor 2 is that some mobile students' families do not have permanent addresses due to homelessness. Principal 3 also brought up the fact mobile families are not educated on the detriments high mobility can have on students.

The successes participants do find in communicating with highly mobile students' families usually include technology and additional resources. Principal 2 noted social network sites like Facebook and Twitter produce positive results at School B because "all

[parents] have smartphones, and they all have Facebook." Teacher 3 also stated the importance technology plays in communication with parents: "Most if not all parents have a smartphone above anything else." Since School C utilizes a consistent learning management system, parents can link smartphones to get announcements, grades, lunch menus, and other pertinent school information. Principal 4 contended another positive communicative tool is School A's social work office. This office helps link mobile families to needed resources at school and in the community.

Conclusions

Conclusions were based upon participants' answers to the research questions which guided the study. This section highlights common perceptions among participants to show how principals, teachers, and counselors view student mobility in the studied schools. Consistent perceptions provided by participants were discovered by a continual synthesis of participant responses to produce emerging themes. The identified themes help explain how intermediate elementary schools co-exist with higher-than-average rates of student mobility. The following themes arose after a thorough analysis of participants' transcribed interviews.

Poverty contributes to high student mobility. All participants agreed poverty plays a significant role in creating high student mobility rates. Several interviewees discussed high percentages of students qualify for free and reduced priced meals in these schools. Poverty is evidenced by a general lack of educational and social resources among many new students. This emerging theme is consistent with supporting research showing impoverished areas see higher rates of student and residential mobility (NRC &

IOM, 2010). Theodos et al. (2014) also found families experiencing economic hardships are likely to experience negative consequences when moving.

Student mobility is a common phenomenon in studied schools. Participants expressed student mobility is frequent in the studied schools. Principals 1, 2, and 4 stated "frequently" or "very frequently" when asked, "How frequently do students move in or out of your school?" Teachers 1, 3, and 4 believed student mobility is "common" in the studied schools. The interviewed counselors really did not ever allude to how frequent mobility is at their buildings. Three-year mobility rates at the studied schools were all over 42%, which was above the Missouri state average (MODESE, 2014c).

The area's seasonal economy is a critical contributing factor to student mobility. Principals, teachers, and counselors discussed the prevalence of students' parents changing or losing jobs. The area's seasonal economy provides a plethora of low-paying jobs during tourist season; however, the winter months lead to dips in employment which were noticed by participants. This pattern coincides with many mobile students' families enduring poverty. As a result, families are forced to relocate to new residences when bills cannot be paid. Counselor 1 claimed parents relocating for jobs (or loss of jobs) is the primary reason students have to leave School C. Ihrke (2014) revealed within-county movers many times face economic pressures compared to peers making moves outside of their current counties. This supported participants' perceptions of the link between poverty and school mobility in the studied districts.

All participant groups also mentioned the myriad of low-cost housing options as a major reason students enroll in or withdraw from studied schools. Motels were the most often-mentioned type of low-cost housing. Because of the seasonal economy, many

motels have been built to house tourists. However, participants explained many students actually live in area motels that struggle to stay open for tourists alone. Many of these motels present dangerous living conditions for tenants. As a result, the motels provide weekly rentals for families as a means to remain in business. Berns et al. (2013) warned housing instability and dilapidated living conditions can be related to the exposure of children to additional risk factors such as drug abuse and domestic violence.

 Diversity in curriculum and content pacing negatively impacts students. Each participant group revealed differences in curriculum and curricular pacing place mobile students at a disadvantage when compared to more stable peers. Principal 2 illuminated the negative implications a within-year move can have on a mobile student:

> We see those students coming from other schools, and many times their pacing guides don't line up with our pacing guides. So, let's say we have a fourth grade student in the [School A] district who moves to us…They have not learned place value in third grade in [School A]. But, when they move to us, we have already covered that. So, they have these gaps in learning because our pacing guides are not the same, especially when they move in mid-year.

Teacher 4 added learning gaps are also common "if they [students] have come from another district that is in another state…" The studied schools within two southwest Missouri counties share some similar curriculum, but also vary greatly in established curriculum and pacing. Two districts offer students one-to-one technology, whereas the other two districts do not. Fiel et al. (2013) asserted students who attend highly mobile schools are exposed to much less educational content than students enrolled in low-mobility districts. Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) acknowledged teachers in highly mobile

schools have to sometimes sacrifice instructional time to help catch new students up to the rest of the class.

Mobile students struggle more with school discipline than their more stable peers. A majority of participants agreed mobile students show more negative behaviors at school than those students who are stably enrolled. Supporting research has shown mobile students experience behavior problems at school (Engec, 2006; Gruman et al., 2008; Han, 2014). Teachers 2 and 3 noticed many mobile students who do not identify with a social group often became disengaged at school. Counselor 2 noted students accustomed to moving schools often consider the educational process "useless." These highly mobile students many times lack motivation because they are never in one school long enough to experience success and to develop quality relationships. In addition, Counselors 2 and 4 contended a lack of quality relationships at school for mobile students leads to negative behaviors. Principal 4 mirrored this perception and pointed out relationships are necessary "building blocks" to student success. Fantuzzo et al. (2012) found school moves may have damaging effects on the ability to develop quality relationships with peers.

Highly-mobile student populations present challenges to teachers. The majority of participants interviewed concurred high rates of student mobility make teaching harder. Principals 1 and 4 indicated students moving in after the beginning of the year miss the most critical part of school—community building. This time is dedicated for teachers and students to develop meaningful relationships and to build trust. Teacher 4 also reiterated getting new students makes meeting curriculum demands much tougher. Teacher 4 insisted, "We are not miracle workers," when faced with the challenge of

advancing all students through grade-level expectations. Counselor 2 echoed this

sentiment by stating the difficulty of facilitating a grade level of progress for a stable

class is hard enough; however, with the addition of several new students during the year,

this responsibility becomes dramatically tougher. Isernhagen and Bulkin (2011) found

teachers perceive student mobility as a major disruption to the learning environment.

These same teachers also believe student mobility decays the overall effectiveness of

classroom instruction (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011).

   Highly mobile student populations negatively impact their stable peers.

Participants as a whole felt stable students encounter ill effects when classrooms are

exposed to high student mobility. Principal 2 contended stable students lose normal

instructional pacing as new students enroll. Teachers 1 and 3 consented new students do

take instructional time away from those already enrolled. This damaging effect is much

higher in schools where whole group learning is the primary instructional approach,

according to Principal 2. Principal 1 and Counselor 3 noticed new students sometimes

disrupt established peer groups. As a result, student conflicts become more prevalent.

Fiel et al. (2013) attributed more review-oriented instruction due to high volumes of new

students during the school year. Student achievement scores have been shown to suffer

for schools facing high rates of mobility (Rumberger et al., 1999).

   Student enrollment procedures are hampered by high student mobility. The

counselors and principals in the study thoroughly explained how new students are

enrolled. Three of the four buildings house the majority of student enrollment in the

administrative offices. Enrollment packets containing needed documentation for parents

to complete are readily available. However, School A utilizes the counseling office to

house all enrollment procedures. Principal 4 asserted this is a more efficient way for new families in need of resources to be connected with community and school assistance. Counselor 4 proposed the counseling office has more time to assess new students' and their families' needs. Although never mentioned by participants, a logical assumption could be made that high rates of student mobility put stress on employees responsible for enrolling students. A GAO (2010) report found administrators often have to place students in classes without needed educational records from previous schools. Beesley et al. (2010) showed rural schools struggle more than suburban and urban schools when keeping up with the paperwork demands of student transfers. Since the districts involved in this study often share the same students, the need for consistent forms and enrollment processes would seem to benefit all stakeholders. This would also speed up the delivery of needed services such as special education and ELL instruction for new students.

    Student orientation procedures for new students vary greatly in scope and effectiveness. Each school has a unique orientation process in place for newly enrolling students. School A's orientation consists of the counseling office providing needed tours and introductions along with a bulletin board highlighting all new students. Counselor 4 felt the need for a more intensive orientation for new students is needed at School A. School B's orientation consists primarily of new students being grouped by grade level and meeting with Counselor 2 throughout the academic year. These "lunch bunch" groups are a safe place for new students to exchange thoughts and fears without the risk of being ridiculed, according to Counselor 2. These groups are also a place where PBIS expectations are discussed in detail for new students. Both Principal 2 and Counselor 2 acknowledged the need for more intensive new student orientation practices.

School C garnered the best reviews from participants on orientation effectiveness. Students new to School C are assigned to a focus room for their first day of attendance. Principal 3 explained the focus room teacher reviews PBIS expectations and discipline policies, while also introducing new students to established one-to-one technology procedures. New students can also ask any questions they have of the focus room teacher. Counselor 3 believed this orientation to be effective for acclimating new students at School C. In addition, new students are welcomed to School C by members of a leadership club. School D uses a student mentor to help welcome new students. Principal 1 reported all mentors have to meet certain character requirements to be eligible for this honor. The mentors provide all new student tours, sit with their new students at lunch, and assist new students in navigating the hallways. Counselor 1 suggested new students feel more comfortable speaking with peers rather than adults during the orientation process. Tkatchov and Pollnow (2012) stated partnering new students with a stable and academically strong student is one way to alleviate the harmful effects of school mobility.

***Two-way* communication with mobile students' parents has much room for improvement.** All participants understood the importance of school/home communication in order to promote student success. A consistent perception was many parents of mobile students are very difficult to communicate with consistently or at all. Teacher 1 characterized these parents as not being "communicative," because attaching to a school was silly when another school move would be coming soon. Counselor 4 echoed this frustration with the following comment:

Well, the attempts are made, but they are often not successful. Because as the

students are mobile, so are the phone numbers of these parents. So a lot of times,

we cannot reach them as much as we would like to. I feel like if we could, they

[mobile students] could be more successful. The parents are just not accessible.

In addition, Counselor 2 added many highly mobile families do not have physical

addresses, as these families change residences very often. As a result, School B utilizes

home visits as a way to promote better communication with mobile students' families.

This was the only instance where home visits were mentioned as a communication tool.

Overall, the participants expressed the need for improvement on the school's side

of communication as well. Principal 1 stated a majority of communication with highly

mobile families takes place during student enrollment. Principal 3 explained mobile

students' parents only hear from the school if a behavioral or academic concern arises.

However, technology seemed to be a link to promote successful communication with

most parents. Principal 2 insisted most parents have smartphones with working internet

access. As a result, School B uses Twitter, Facebook, and a parent link app to provide

consistent information to parents of all students. Teacher 3 further reiterated

technology's importance in communication by explaining the school's student learning

platform is compatible with most smartphones. Parents can see student grades,

assignments, attendance, and discussions at the touch of a button.

Finally, Principal 4 discussed the vital role School A's social work office plays

for these highly mobile families. The social work office is equipped to help provide

assistance to transient families in need. This office helps to link families with needed

resources at and away from school. In addition, Principal 4 pointed out the community is

accustomed to transient families, so many community agencies are available to help these

people. Irwin et al. (2004) explained social capital sources have continued to diminish, and the need for local organizations to replace them is apparent. Schools, churches, and businesses have played vital roles in providing social capital for many transient families (Irwin et al., 2004).

Implications for Practice

Student mobility was perceived as a challenge to the educational process by all participants. The findings of this study indicated the need for participating schools to address how to effectively educate mobile student populations. After indicating major conclusions of the study, several implications for practice arose as possible means to address the issue of student mobility in these intermediate elementary schools. These major ideas to help positively curb the impact of student mobility arose in much of the related research as well.

Consistent academic curriculum and pacing. Participating schools in the study share many mobile students. Interviews indicated many school officials felt mobile students struggle initially with school work. Teachers and principals agreed precious instructional time is lost due to having to catch new students up to the rest of the class. In addition, these schools in two rural southwest Missouri counties utilize technology at varying levels. Schools C and D implement one-to-one technology initiatives where each student is provided a personal laptop to assist in the learning process. Schools A and B have technology available, but students are not provided with a personal device. The differences in devices and level of technology implemented leads to further confusion among shared mobile students, according to participants. Differences in academic curriculum pacing also became evident through participant interviews. These districts

must understand the importance of consistency in what is taught and when it is taught to help mobile students be successful.

School administrators in these participating districts must collaborate with one another to ensure curriculum and pacing is consistent. Time must be dedicated to allow curriculum leaders to meet and discuss how state educational standards are addressed at each school. These administrators then could create action plans on how to guarantee students moving back and forth among these districts will not face a learning gap or void when entering a new school. In addition, teachers must be allowed to work with common peers in other districts to create consistent curriculum pacing guides. This is the only way to ensure all students are taught standards and content simultaneously across the participating districts. Professional development days would need to be consistent across districts for all teachers to map out curriculum.

The choice of curriculum is afforded to each school district and its board of education. As a result, these districts must make concessions from time to time in order to benefit their targeted mobile student populations. Curricular programs, assessment practices, technology implementation philosophies, and content audits should be very similar among involved schools. This task may seem insurmountable, but the possibilities of encouraging best practices and ensuring consistent curricula for mobile students should be sufficient motivation to make these practices a reality.

Provide professional development on how to best educate highly mobile student populations. The need for research-based instructional practices is paramount when dealing with highly mobile student populations. The literature review revealed many of the challenges high mobility presents to all students and teachers involved.

Many of these obstacles were echoed by participants in interviews. Schools must find ways to promote effective teaching practices and instruction in order to promote student achievement.

Differentiation allows teachers to instruct students at the appropriate level of knowledge and development. The few participants who felt student mobility is not an impediment to learning pointed to the implementation of differentiated small groups and project-based learning as solutions. The importance of effective teaching is always important. However, with an often-moving student population, the need for quality teaching increases dramatically. These districts must find ways to attract highly qualified staff to ensure mobile students and stable students are afforded an excellent education.

School districts in the studied area need to collaborate to improve the professional development of teachers holistically. Each school provides in-depth professional learning for teachers, but the content often differs from building to building. Due to the heavy volume of students who move back and forth among the participating schools, there is a need for joint planning of teacher professional development. Educational leaders must identify best practices and establish these as common instructional strategies across the area. If teachers in Schools A, B, C, and D used the same instructional strategies and similar academic vocabulary, mobile students would have that much less to learn at a new building.

Effective school orientations must be in place for new students. Each building does provide an orientation of some sort for new students; however, the degree of orientation intensity and effectiveness varies. Schools A and C pair all new students with a student buddy to help ease transition anxiety. School C also requires all new students

to spend a day in the focus room where a teacher helps them learn procedures and expectations. School B implements a "lunch bunch" group where all new students meet sporadically through the year to learn PBIS expectations and also to make new friends. However, all participants yielded there is a definite need for more effective new student orientation, especially when those students move in during the course of the school year.

According to related research, each of these districts should have information available to all enrolling parents on the detriments of student mobility (Tkatchov & Pollnow, 2012). Educating these parents on just how tough moving to a new school is may deter some unnecessary mobility or at least persuade parents to let their child finish the current school year in the same building. This information should be placed in all enrollment packets created for parents among the schools. Another important tenet of effective orientation should be a follow-up feedback system between school and home to gauge how well the new student is acclimating and progressing. School administrators, counselors, and teachers could alternate finding ways to meet with families a few weeks after enrollment. Home visits from school stakeholders would be a requirement, as some highly mobile families do not communicate back after enrollment is completed. In addition, students could be surveyed a few weeks after enrollment to find what specific components of orientation are most effective

The final new student orientation component needed in these schools is efficient enrollment procedures. All participants felt the enrollment process is handled well by school employees; however, time for quality communication with sending and receiving districts is an area in need of improvement. A major reason for this concern is the high number of new students who enroll throughout the school year at each building.

Principals and counselors indicated the time needed to discuss with the previous school's teacher or administration about the new students is often difficult to find. The need for centralized enrollment arose as important information is not always relayed effectively to the new schools. Also, centralized enrollment would be a way to connect families to needed resources available through the schools and communities.

Schools must find ways to promote social capital with highly mobile families. Families who constantly move to new towns struggle to form needed relationships with important school and community individuals (Scherrer, 2013). This can make finding and utilizing needed resources much more difficult for these families. Stable families know more about opportunities for students, because they have made relationships with district employees. Gifted programming, academic tutoring, extracurricular offerings, PTA meetings, special education, and many other services are often harder for highly mobile families to access. The participating schools must find ways to help mobile families know what social and educational resources are available in order to promote student success for all.

School D understood the importance of providing additional resources for highly mobile and impoverished students and their families. As a result, School D created a social work office to help these families get needed financial and social assistance. This allows community agencies to cooperate with the school to help families. The studied schools could benefit greatly from a social work cooperative, where each district has the capability to utilize social workers to help mobile families. A collaborative approach could help families maintain needed assistance as they change schools.

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative study detailed the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and teachers as to how student mobility impacts education in two rural southwest Missouri counties. The need to access perceptions of similar stakeholders in other rural areas in Missouri is needed to see if these data are generalizable or unique to the studied region. A population that needs further study is the mobile students themselves. A longitudinal case study of randomly selected highly mobile students may further highlight difficulties these students face in rural schools. In addition, students could share what approaches seem to work best in helping them find success. Parents of highly mobile students could also be a valuable data source.

Comparative studies among urban, suburban, and rural schools could also reveal similar and unique dilemmas faced by schools and students in each population category. Most student mobility research has focused upon urban schools; however, there is little to no research available analyzing how urban, suburban, and rural areas impact perceptions toward student mobility. Similar findings could emphasize effective approaches to educate a highly mobile student population in specific geographic areas. In addition, problems specific to population groups may become apparent as well.

Limited demographic information was collected from participants. Another important area to study could be analyzing how experience, gender, race, and socioeconomic status of participants might impact perceptions toward student mobility. In addition, the need to analyze how varied demographics impact highly mobile students' attendance, achievement, and behavior at school would help fill a needed void in related research. This would require a much larger study sample to produce quality findings.

The last and possibly most important further research needed is studying how effective various programs and approaches are in curbing the negative effects of high student mobility. Schools with orientation practices in place could be compared to those schools without acclimation procedures for new students. Comparisons on how mobile students achieve and behave at schools with and without welcoming procedures in place may reveal just how important student orientation can be. Also, an analysis on which welcoming practices yield the most productive results for mobile students and schools might divulge best practices needed to create success in highly mobile districts.

Summary

This qualitative study was designed to discover perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and teachers in two rural southwest Missouri counties. Interview questions were created to collect data on how student mobility impacts moving students, students already enrolled, educational staff members, and schools overall. Academic achievement, school discipline, teacher effectiveness, and classroom management were all topics focused upon in this study. Additional interview data on the efficiency of school enrollment practices and orientation programs in place for mobile students were also included in this study. Data gathered provided insight for school leaders to better understand how high student mobility affects a building. Productive approaches to deal with student mobility became paramount for the intermediate elementary schools in order to be successful in educating all students.

The findings from this study supported related research reviewed in Chapter Two. Participants attributed poverty, an unstable local job economy, and ample low-cost housing as major reasons for high student mobility in the region. A cycle where students

and families move whenever bills cannot be paid is a regular occurrence in these communities. Living in motels and with extended family members are both commonplace in the area. In addition, participants agreed high student mobility impacts student achievement in negative ways. This surfaced as new students come from districts where curricular pacing and the level of technology implementation are diverse. Participants were split when gauging how high mobility affects student discipline. Some asserted dysfunctional home situations are the cause of misbehavior at school, while others pointed to mobile students never being in one school long enough to understand expectations and form relationships.

The study included an analysis of how high student mobility influences teachers and stably enrolled students. Most participants concurred classroom management is made more tedious with students coming and going frequently. Classroom procedures and expectations are constantly reviewed for new students. This is compounded when students enter a district after the initial few weeks when team building is emphasized greatly. Participants also acknowledged students stably enrolled in schools with high mobility struggle more than stable peers in low mobility schools do. The principals, counselors, and teachers suggested instructional quality is hampered by constantly having to review for new students to catch up with peers.

Participants also assessed the effectiveness of new student orientation procedures and student enrollment protocol. It was apparent student enrollment practices vary in each district. Interviewees indicated the volume of students moving in and out makes needed communication with local schools difficult. Another common complaint from school leaders was that communication is extremely limited with families of highly

mobile students. Social networking and school information apps get the best results in providing communication to these parents. The need for cross-district collaboration arose as an essential to help all students find success. Another finding that surfaced was the need for comprehensive student orientation programs for new enrollees during the year. Student mentors, home visits, all-day orientations, and efficient communication are all necessary components of effective new student orientations.

Appendix A

Principal Interview Questions

1. How long have you been an educator, and of those years, how long have you been an elementary school principal? How many years have you been employed in your current position?

2. How would you define student mobility?

3. What are common reasons for students entering or leaving your school building during a school year, and how frequently do students move in or out of your school?

4. What demographic characteristics do your mobile students have in common overall, if any?

5. Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face academic challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

6. Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face behavioral challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

7. How do you feel student mobility impacts your building in the following areas:

   a. Student discipline
   b. Teacher effectiveness
   c. Quality of education for non-moving students within a class

8. What steps are taken at the office level to efficiently enroll new students to your building?

9. How are new students in your building welcomed? Is there a consistent orientation for new students? If so, what does this orientation include?

10. What attempts are made to communicate with parents of mobile students? Do you feel this communication helps new students to be more successful in your school? Why or why not?

Appendix B

Classroom Teacher Interview Questions

1. How long have you been an elementary teacher, and of those years, how many were spent in your current position?

2. How would you define student mobility?

3. What are common reasons for students entering or leaving your school building during a school year, and how frequently do students move in or out of your school?

4. What demographic characteristics do your mobile students have in common overall, if any?

5. Do students who move into your classroom after the school year begins face academic challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

6. Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face behavioral challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

7. How do you feel frequent student mobility impacts your classroom in the following areas:

    a. Classroom management
    b. Teacher effectiveness
    c. Quality of education for non-moving students within a class

8. Do you implement any type of consistent orientation for students who move into your school after the beginning of the year? If so, what does the orientation consist of for these students?

9. How are new students in your classroom welcomed? Is there a consistent orientation for new students? If so, what does this orientation include?

10. What attempts are made to communicate with parents of your mobile students? Do you feel this communication helps new students to be more successful in your classroom? Why or why not?

Appendix C

School Counselor Interview Questions

1. How long have you been an educator, and of those years, how many were spent in your current position?

2. How would you define student mobility?

3. What are common reasons for students entering or leaving your school building during a school year, and how frequently do students move in or out of your school?

4. What demographic characteristics do your mobile students have in common overall, if any?

5. Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face academic challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

6. Do students who move into your building after the school year begins face behavioral challenges unique to their situation (when compared to non-moving peers)? If so, to what do you attribute these struggles? If not, to what do you attribute their success?

7. How do you feel frequent student mobility impacts your building in the following areas:

   a. Student discipline
   b. Teacher effectiveness
   c. Quality of education for non-moving students within a class

8. What steps are taken at the counseling office level to efficiently enroll new students to your building?

9. How are new students in your building welcomed? Is there a consistent orientation for new students? If so, what does this orientation include?

10. What attempts are made to communicate with parents of mobile students? Do you feel this communication helps new students to be more successful in your school? Why or why not?

Appendix D

Phone Script for Contacting Interview Participants

Hello, my name is Landon Gray. I am contacting you regarding the research I am conducting as part of the doctoral requirement for Lindenwood University. My study will examine the perceptions of intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and fifth-grade teachers on the topic of student mobility. As the primary investigator, I am requesting your participation in the form of a personal interview. The interview will allow me to collect thoughts, beliefs, and practices regarding student mobility in intermediate elementary schools in southwest Missouri. Thank you for your time and support.

Appendix E

Letter of Participation

<Interview>

<Date>
<Title> <First Name> <Last Name>
<Position>
<School District>
<Address>

Dear <Title> <First Name> <Last Name>:

Thank you for participating in my research study, *Educators' Perceptions of Student Mobility during the Intermediate Elementary Grades in Two Rural Counties*. I look forward to talking with you at <time> on <date> to gather your perceptions on student mobility in southwest Missouri intermediate elementary schools. I have allotted approximately one hour to conduct our interview.

Enclosed are the interview questions to allow ample time for reflection before our interview. I have also enclosed the Informed Consent Form for your review and signature. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign and date the provided consent form.

Your participation in this research study is purely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Confidentiality is assured. If you have any questions, please call (417-████████) or e-mail (LSG322@lionmail.lindenwood.edu). Once the study has been completed, the results will be available to you upon request.

Sincerely,

Landon Gray
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Appendix F

Lindenwood University

School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

"Educators' Perceptions of Student Mobility during the Intermediate
Elementary Grades in Two Rural Counties in Missouri"

Principal Investigator _____Landon Gray_____
      Telephone: 417-███████ E-mail: LSG322@lindenwood.edu

Participant_____ Contact info _____
_____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Landon Gray under the guidance of Dr. Shelly Fransen. The purpose of this research is to discover how student mobility impacts schools in two select rural counties in Missouri. Special emphasis will be placed on gathering these perceptions from intermediate elementary principals, counselors, and fifth grade teachers.

2. a) Your participation will involve:
   ➢ Voluntary participation in a 30-40 minute interview after reading and signing this form. You will be asked a total of 10 interview questions. One question will seek to elicit information on how long you have been employed in your current position and how long you have worked in the field of education. The other nine questions will be centered around student mobility and how this phenomenon impacts you as an educator.
   ➢ Interviews will take place at the school sites involved in the study. Interviews will be video-taped to allow the researcher to transcribe all verbal and non-verbal communication.

   b) The amount of time involved in your participation for an interview will be approximately 30-40 minutes.

   Approximately 12 participants will be involved in this research. Interviews will take place at the four school buildings selected for this research study to provide convenience for study participants. Elementary principals, counselors, and fifth grade classroom teachers will be interviewed to gain different perspectives on how mobility impacts them.

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about school mobility in southwest Missouri.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Landon Gray (417-██████) or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Shelly Fransen (417-█████). You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date   Participant's Printed Name

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date   Investigator Printed Name

Appendix G

Approval Letter
Institutional Review Board

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY   ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE: May 27, 2015

TO: Landon Gray

FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [754468-1] Educators' Perceptions During the Elementary Grades in
                         Two Rural Counties in Missouri

IRB REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: May 27, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: May 27, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project. Lindenwood
University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on
an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All
research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received an expedited review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study
and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed
consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and
research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed
consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office
prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the
appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting
requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly
to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a minimal risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of .

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Katherine Herrell at (636) 627-2555 or kherrell@lindenwood.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them to IRB@LINDENWOOD.EDU. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

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Vita

Landon S. Gray attended Missouri State University for his undergraduate and master's degrees. He obtained a Bachelor's of Science in Physical Education in 2003 and a Master's of Science in Educational Administration in 2006. He also served as a graduate assistant in Missouri State's Physical Education Department from January of 2014 through May of 2015.

Landon started his career in education with Branson R-IV Schools in 2005 as an elementary physical education teacher for grades three and four. After three years with Branson Schools, Landon was hired as an elementary assistant principal with Hollister R-V Schools in the summer of 2008. He spent three years as an assistant principal and one year as head principal at Hollister Elementary before returning to Branson Schools as an elementary principal in the summer of 2012. He currently serves as principal at Cedar Ridge Intermediate, which houses fourth, fifth, and sixth grades for Branson's south elementary campus. Landon is also an active member of the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Landon has been a registered Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) basketball official for the past 17 years. He has called in the Blue and Gold Holiday Tournament for the past 11 years, and he officiated the Bass Pro Tournament of Champions this past year as well. He has also refereed at three MSHSAA state basketball championships throughout his officiating career.