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Teacher Attrition: Exploring the literature on teacher attrition

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Problem Statement

Ideally, teaching would be a lifelong career. One where professionals continue to grow and advance in their craft until retirement. We need to create a work environment that will attract new teachers and keep current educators engaged and productive until the end of their careers (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Yet, teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Teacher attrition is at a high of 8%, meaning that nationwide hundreds of thousands of teachers need to be hired each school year (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). This high turnover is costly for schools and impacts student learning, ideally this percentage would be cut in half or less, as it is in other high achieving countries (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). If teachers were to stay in education until retirement, student achievement would increase and the cost associated with high teacher turnover would be eliminated benefitting staff and students.

Importance and Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic made the teacher shortage a pressing issue in this country (Giffin, et. al. 2021). Many states have started initiatives to improve teacher preparation programs, offer scholarships, and school loan forgiveness, however the issues of teacher attrition have more to do with how we are treating current teachers. Many people are leaving the profession due to poor work conditions, low wages, and the lack of respect for the profession from the general public. Making teacher preparation programs easier, faster, or cheaper might increase the number of people entering the profession but it won't solve the problem. This topic is important because we need to find the true research based causes of teacher attrition and work to solve it so that we can rebuild one of the most important professions. If this problem is not addressed there will be even larger class sizes in the future due to a lack of teacher personnel

nationwide. This will lead to lower student achievement, in addition to learning loss and gaps (KONIEWSKI, 2013).

If teachers were to stay in education until retirement, student achievement would increase and the cost associated with high teacher turnover would be minimized, benefitting staff and students. By reducing the cost of hiring, training, and mentoring new teachers, school districts will have more money to put into classroom materials and resources. These are items that students can use on a daily basis for more hands-on experiences, deepening their understanding of concepts and leading to higher student achievement. Some of those extra funds could also be used to honor and recognize teachers who have stayed in the district with retention bonuses. The hope for the future is that working conditions, pay, and respect for teaching as a profession would improve and the population of teachers would stabilize, reducing the high rate of teacher attrition.

Background of the Project

Unfortunately teacher attrition is not a new problem. Legislators have tried to solve this problem in the past with quick fixes and have been unsuccessful (Hanks et al., 2020). The No Child Left Behind act passed in 2001, was one of those policies. This legislature increased the requirements to become a teacher, making licensure and qualifications harder to obtain (Hanks et al., 2020). We are still feeling the effects of this law today, as many people are unable to pass their certification tests to become a teacher (Vance, Meadows & Caniglia, 2022). This is just one of the many factors that is decreasing the number of eligible teachers for hire in America.

Teachers are leaving the profession at increased rates. The demands of time-consuming work, seemingly unrelated to the craft of teaching, are wearing teachers out. Increased paperwork is an important reason teachers leave the profession (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Teachers

are overwhelmed by the amount of time spent on paperwork and they are leaving the profession due to their frustration. Many schools have increased class sizes as a response to the teacher shortage, which is significantly affecting the time teachers spend grading after school, impacting their home lives (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). This leaves teachers with less time to work on their lessons and focus on the craft of teaching. The decrease in time spent on lesson plans ultimately impacts the students most. When teachers are stripped of the time to make lessons engaging, dynamic, and exciting for students, learning of new material suffers. Teachers are stuck in a cycle of trying to keep up on paperwork, frustrated with student performance, and unable to put the time into quality lessons they feel passionate about which would lead to higher student achievement. This is leading to teachers and students who are frustrated with the school system. This negative attitude affects the profession of teaching and ultimately funding for schools.

Opportunities to work autonomously within a classroom are decreasing rapidly. Teachers are required to use curriculum even when it does not meet the best needs of their students. Open Court is an example of a scripted curriculum that skilled teachers have been forced to use which requires them to read word for word from a script and stop at designated points in reading to confer with students (Glazer, 2018). These programs were created with good intentions to create fidelity across classrooms, but when they are strictly enforced, it drains the creative craft of teaching and leaves teachers feeling powerless. Nothing strips teacher creativity and autonomy away more than a scripted lesson plan. New teachers feel pressure to follow the script exactly as it is written, because they do not know anything different and seasoned teachers tend to blow off curriculums like this one because it feels degrading. Anyone who can read can teach the material. Programs like Open Court demote the teaching profession and devalue the expert training and years of schooling teachers have done to learn how to create engaging lesson plans

and learning experiences. It will lead to teachers losing the ability to think creatively which will impact students's ability to do so and eventually society as a whole.

While these and many factors lead to teachers leaving the profession, the root cause of teacher attrition is the lack of support. When teachers feel that the support they receive is insufficient to meet the needs of their students, they are less likely to continue teaching (Hindman & Bustamante, 2019). These supports can include resources, administrative supports, and grade level supports. Administrative support is a major factor in teacher retention (Sutcher, Darling Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019). Teachers are 13% more likely to leave teaching or move schools when they feel that their administration is not supportive (Carver-Thomas & Darling Hammond, 2019). Strengthening the support teachers feel from administration and within their grade level teams would increase teacher retention rates and lower the cost associated with high teacher attrition, leaving more money for resources teachers are looking for within their classrooms. An increase in resources would lead to richer learning experiences and deeper understanding of material for students.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to develop a set of mentorship norms that will increase the support teachers feel in schools. These norms will be provided online for easy access to mentors and mentees. These norms will be used to help cultivate a collaborative co-teaching environment within schools with frequent observation and feedback.

Objective of the Project

The objective of this project is to help provide support for new teachers, teachers with less than five years of experience, and guidance for mentor teachers in order to improve the mentorship process for both parties. Through increasing the support new teachers feel in their

first years of teaching and providing clear guidelines for mentor teachers, teacher retention will

increase.

Description of Terms

Attrition: Teachers who voluntarily leave the profession (Lambert, Boyle, Fitchett, & McCarthy,

2019).

Curriculum: What is to be taught (Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

Scope of the Project

The scope of this project does not go beyond one school district at this time. It will

address improving the mentorship norms at one school within a school district at first and may be

used district wide if deemed appropriate. This project will not address solving worldwide or even

statewide teacher attrition all at once. This multifaceted problem will require many small

changes over time.

Introduction

This paper examines what the literature says about teacher attrition within a social and cultural context. More and more, teachers are leaving the profession, new and old teachers alike. The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened the teacher shortage in this country. Many states have started initiatives to improve teacher preparation programs, offer scholarships, and school loan forgiveness, however the issues of teacher attrition have more to do with how we are treating current teachers. Many people are leaving the profession due to poor work conditions, low wages, and the lack of respect for the profession from the general public. Making teacher preparation programs easier, faster, or cheaper might increase the number of people entering the profession but it won't solve the problem. This topic is important because we need to find the true research based causes of teacher attrition and work to solve it so that we can rebuild one of the most important professions.

Theory

Ideally, teaching would be a lifelong career. One where professionals continue to grow and advance in their craft until retirement. We need to create a work environment that will attract new teachers and keep current educators engaged and productive until the end of their careers (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Yet, teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. The COVID-19 pandemic made the teacher shortage a pressing issue in this country (Giffin, et. al. 2021). Many states have started initiatives to improve teacher preparation programs, offer scholarships, and school loan forgiveness, however the issues of teacher attrition have more to do with how we are treating current teachers. Teacher attrition is at a high of 8%, meaning that nationwide hundreds of thousands of teachers need to be hired each school year (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Historically, this is an all time high level of teacher attrition. Lawmakers have tried a variety of policies to solve teacher attrition in the past and they have often made things worse (Hanks et al., 2020). This high turnover is costly for schools and impacts student learning, ideally this percentage would be cut in half or less, as it is in other high achieving countries (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). If teachers were to stay in education until retirement, student achievement would increase and the cost associated with high teacher turnover would be eliminated benefitting staff and students.

Research

Numerous countries worldwide are having issues with teacher retention. There is a heavy burden these high turnover rates put on Turkish teachers (Kavgacı & Öztürk, 2023). The number of factors mentioned in this text that lead to teacher turnover is extensive. This is a multifaceted issue with many contributing parts. The article examines how a few selected factors: distributed leadership, trust in the principal, teacher psychological capital, and work engagement affect teacher turnover rates. This study revealed that distributed leadership and a teacher's

psychological capital do not have a direct effect on teacher intentions to leave (Kavgacı & Öztürk, 2023). However, it was still suggested that distributed leadership be used as a tool to increase teacher trust in the principal and work engagement. These results show that distributed leadership might not be the silver bullet to many of the issues we face in education today. When diving deeper into the literature about teacher attrition, it is clear that there is not just one or two things that will solve this complex problem.

Finland, a country where teaching has historically been celebrated and praised as a profession, is also experiencing an increase in teacher turnover. A study was conducted in 2010 and 2016 in Finland revealing that fifty percent of teachers had intentions to leave the workforce (Räsänen et al., 2020). It is reasonable to assume that the rate of turnover has only increased since the time of this study. Not only is the high number of teachers with intentions to leave the profession concerning but so is the average age of teachers. Thirty nine percent of the teachers in Finland are over fifty (Räsänen et al., 2020). That is almost half of the teaching workforce approaching retirement quickly. This makes the issue of teacher attrition all the more pressing in Finland and other countries with a similar average age for teachers. Additionally, this study revealed that there are several different factors like workload, school systems, and a lack of professional commitment that impact teachers' decisions to leave the profession (Räsänen et al., 2020). This article reiterates that this is a multifaceted global issue that will require many areas of improvement to improve teacher retention rates.

A study done in Sydney, Australia interviewed twenty-one ex-teachers about their exit from education (Buchanan, 2010). This research reveals many factors that lead to these teachers leaving the profession. The small sample size of this study is limiting, but does provide a very comprehensive account of why these teachers are no longer teaching. The time frame in which

these interviews were conducted indicates that this has been an ongoing global problem that

researchers have been trying to solve for many years. Many of the testimonies from these

teachers echo the things being said by teachers who are leaving the profession in America today.

One teacher said this about the workload: "There was a lot of extra work when I got home. I

found that really draining ... I'd be up till 11 or 12 o'clock planning for the next day" (Buchanan,

2010, p. 204). Another said this about the support in the school system: "There was very low

staff morale and I found the management in the school very lacking" (Buchanan, 2010, p. 205).

Other testimonies from teachers address issues of classroom management, salary, working

conditions, and prestige of teaching.

Many factors influence teacher attrition. A prominent factor of teachers leaving the

profession is the increased demands in time-consuming work, seemingly unrelated to the craft of

teaching. Increased paperwork is an important reason teachers leave the profession (Tye &

O'Brien, 2002). Teachers are overwhelmed by the amount of time spent on paperwork and they

are leaving the profession due to their frustration. Many schools have increased class sizes as a

response to the teacher shortage, which is significantly affecting the time teachers spend grading

after school, impacting their home lives (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). This leaves teachers with less

time to work on their lessons and focus on the craft of teaching. The decrease in time spent on

lesson plans ultimately impacts the students most. When teachers are stripped of the time to

make lessons engaging, dynamic, and exciting for students, learning of new material suffers.

Teachers are stuck in a cycle of trying to keep up on paperwork, frustrated with student

performance, and unable to put the time into quality lessons they feel passionate about which

would lead to higher student achievement. This is leading to teachers and students who are

frustrated with the school system as society feels that students are simply taught to test instead of

mastering the material or developing a personal passion for learning. This negative attitude affects the profession of teaching and ultimately funding for schools.

Additionally, opportunities to work autonomously within a classroom are decreasing rapidly. Teachers are required to use curriculum even when it does not meet the best needs of their students. Open Court is an example of a scripted curriculum that skilled teachers have been forced to use which requires them to read word for word from a script and stop at designated points in reading to confer with students (Glazer, 2018). These programs were created with good intentions to create fidelity across classrooms, but when they are strictly enforced, it drains the creative craft of teaching and leaves teachers feeling powerless. Nothing strips teacher creativity and autonomy away more than a scripted lesson plan. New teachers feel pressure to follow the script exactly as it is written, because they do not know anything different and seasoned teachers usually circumvent curriculums like this one because it feels degrading. Anyone who can read can teach the material. Programs like Open Court demote the teaching profession and devalue the expert training and years of schooling teachers have done to learn how to create engaging lesson plans and learning experiences. It will lead to teachers losing the ability to think creatively which will impact students's ability to do so and eventually society as a whole.

The literature also reveals that the long, uncompensated hours that teachers put in year after year are leading to high teacher burnout. In a study done by Gicheva (2022), a theoretical framework was tested with three school years worth of data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This national data provided a comprehensive look at how the weekly hours teachers put into their jobs affects their likelihood to stay in the profession. The results of this study revealed that teachers with more years of teaching experience, twenty-one years or more, were less likely to exhibit signs of

burnout related to the number of extra hours they are working than new teachers with five years or less experience (Gicheva, 2022). There was a strong increase in the amount of burnout young teachers feel with the increase in hours they are working. According to Rinke (2007), forty percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. If the working hours for younger teachers do not begin to decrease, there will not be any teachers that make it to twenty-one years of experience in the classroom.

It is important to consider why so many young beginning teachers are leaving the profession. An assistant professor of education at the University of Central Missouri, Julie Hentges (2012), found that beginning teachers are under a tremendous amount of stress compared to their veteran colleagues. Teaching is a unique profession in that starting on day one of the job, a beginning teacher is expected to complete all of the same tasks as a teacher with more experience (Henges, 2012). All of the "on the job training" in teaching is a bit of trial by fire style where you learn things as you go. One of the ways that Hentges (2012), suggests mitigating this is through building longer and more robust teacher preparation programs.

While these and many factors lead to teachers leaving the profession, the root cause of teacher attrition is the lack of support. When teachers feel that the support they receive is insufficient to meet the needs of their students, they are less likely to continue teaching (Hindman & Bustamante, 2019). These supports can include resources, administrative supports, and grade level supports. Administrative support is a major factor in teacher retention (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2019). Teachers are 13% more likely to leave teaching or move schools when they feel that their administration is not supportive (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Strengthening the support teachers feel from administration and within their grade level teams would increase teacher retention rates and lower the cost

associated with high teacher attrition, leaving more money for resources teachers are looking for within their classrooms. An increase in resources would lead to richer learning experiences and deeper understanding of material for students.

There is a lot that can be learned from the increase in teacher attrition rates in primary schools in Malawi (Morley, 2021). They are experiencing a different type of attrition than we are seeing in the United States, but the common thread is a lack of support for teachers. This study found that most primary teachers of grades 1-8th had plans to upgrade to secondary education (Morley, 2021). The secondary education schools in Malawi have better facilities, resources, and smaller class sizes due to the fees associated with secondary education (Morley, 2021). Just as we are seeing in the United States, teachers in Malawi are fleeing to work in an environment that they feel more supported in.

Teacher attrition has attempted to be remedied in the past. In the work of Hanks et al. (2020), the downfalls of each attempt are explained. These include attempts to recruit and hire "ideal" teachers and make teacher preparatory programs more rigorous. None of those attempts were successful in solving or even reducing teacher attrition in the United States (Hanks et al., 2020). The article then shares the results of a study done on some of the actual factors, compensation, respect/support, teacher preparedness, career goals, work conditions, etc. contributing to teachers leaving the profession. The interconnectedness of all the factors that lead to teacher attrition are mentioned and ways to prevent it are suggested. The study shows that throwing a few extra hundred or even thousand dollars at teachers to recruit them into the profession will not solve the problem (Hanks et al., 2020). A true solution would be policy makers who are willing to pay teachers a competitive wage that is comparable with other professional jobs.

The literature suggests that there are some proven ways to improve teacher retention rates with positive affirmation and feedback. Mentor teachers have found that praising new teachers is crucial to their confidence (Goodwin, Roegman, & Reagan, 2016). If teachers do not feel supported in the beginning stages of their career they are less likely to continue working in the profession. The findings in this study can be used to support positive affirmations and feedback to mentored teachers to increase teacher retention. Positive feedback is extremely important in any occupation but especially in teaching when you are constantly under scrutiny from the public, parents, and administrators. Frequent, ongoing feedback and opportunities for observation is critical to teacher improvement (Peeples, et. al. 2019). Providing teachers with frequent, non-evaluative, observation will naturally lead to more positive affirmations of the work that is going on in classrooms. The flow of positive feedback from administrators, to teachers, will lead to more positive feedback and comments to students. If teachers feel happy and appreciated in the daily work they are doing that will positively impact their students' learning.

Other research suggests that supportive co-teaching is an effective method for improving teacher retention. Collaboration in any field makes a profession stronger, this could not be more true for education. When teachers support one another in implementing a curriculum they hold each other accountable and teach with greater fidelity (Baker, 2018). Working together sharpens and strengthens all teachers capabilities and increases the level of support within a school. This is why it is critical to cultivate a supportive network within a school system

In another study, two schools were compared using different distributed leadership components. Mainly organizational components were analyzed. One school focused on external input and individual professional development while the other used weekly meetings, a

counseling team, and a centrally located cafe to promote collaboration. The results revealed that first and foremost a school must have a clear vision for teachers to make sense of their teaching practice, without it activities for collective learning will not succeed (Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023). Explaining the why behind something is important to students and teachers alike. Without purpose or an end goal, it is hard to find a clear direction. Additionally, a leader's use of their infrastructure affects how teachers make sense of their jobs (Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023). This can most often be observed in the tone a principal sets in a school's teacher's lounge. Is it a space that is used for collective learning throughout the school year? Is it a space that is physically set up for collective learning and conversation? When teachers have a safe common space to gather together and share ideas, collaboration happens organically. Using a public space for social interaction and discussion is just one example of how infrastructure can be used to increase collective sensemaking (Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023). While distributed leadership cannot solve this complex problem of teacher attrition on its own, it is one of the tools that can be used to help mitigate the problem.

Online professional development is another way the literature points to solving teacher attrition. The wealth of knowledge available to teachers online combined with the constant access has made it a center for teacher professional development (PD). New teachers are seeking online PD for teaching standards, cognitive engagement, motivation strategies, assessments, classroom environment, professional communication, and ethical behavior (Leung, 2018). With many teachers seeking these valuable learning communities online they should be recognized as credible continued education tools for mentor and mentee teachers. The addition of these professional learning opportunities and communities to state accreditation continuing education hours would expand these resources available to teachers and ultimately strengthen the

profession worldwide. The sharing that happens in social media networks passes cultural, social, and geological lines, providing teachers with a much more diverse perspective of education than they would have from their school wide professional learning communities. This wide range of perspectives will lead to improved empathy for a variety of different social, cultural, and ethnic groups among teachers. This will undoubtedly lead to improved relationships with students and ultimately higher student achievement because of those strong relationships. The impact on our future communities and society as a whole will be that teachers, students, and people in general will be more empathetic, open-minded, and respectful of others than they would be without these resources.

Limitations of These Studies

Due to the relatively new nature of this topic there are some limitations in the amount of literature available about teacher attrition. Considering the time it takes for peer reviewed articles to be approved and published there is still a lot to be discussed about this topic in the future. It was very difficult to find any literature that directly opposed the perspective of teacher attrition. The most relevant scholarly work I could find that claimed we had too many teachers in the profession was published in 1977 which was too outdated to include in this literature review. What this limitation reveals is that teacher attrition is undeniable at this point.

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Summary

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Teaching, like any other profession, will have a certain amount of attrition each year. Currently, the rate of teacher attrition is at an all time high of 8% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). This is a growing global issue. Schools in Turkey, Finland, Australia, and across the United States are hemorrhaging teaching at an alarming rate. This is a multifaceted issue with many contributing parts. Teachers in Sydney, Australia report feeling a

lack of support from the school system (Buchanan, 2010). Increased paperwork and demands are among some of the other reasons teachers are leaving the profession in the United States (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). In addition, the lack of autonomy within the classroom is driving teachers away. Teachers are being asked to use scripted curriculums which is stripping them of their creative freedoms (Glazer, 2018). Long hours and the stress associated with the first few years of teaching are causing many teachers to leave the profession within their first five years (Rinke, 2007). If veteran teachers were able to share the responsibilities of teaching with newer teachers and provide more support during their first few years of teaching we might see attrition numbers decrease. The literature suggests that a lack of support is the root cause of teacher attrition. Teachers are thirteen percent more likely to leave the profession if they feel unsupported by their administration (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Teachers in both the United States and Malawi are searching for work in more supportive environments (Morley, 2021). While many attempts have been made in the past to resolve teacher attrition, none have been successful (Hanks et al., 2020). This complex problem will require a robust solution addressing many areas of support that need to be improved within many school systems. Providing teachers with positive affirmations and consistent feedback is one proven way of increasing teachers confidence (Goodwin, Roegman, & Reagan, 2016). Additionally, encouraging teacher collaboration increases support teachers feel in implementing curriculum (Baker, 2018). One way of doing this is to create common spaces for social interaction and discussion (Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023). Online professional development communities have also become a safe common space for teachers to share ideas (Leung, 2018).

Conclusion

More information and research needs to be done around this topic before any concrete solutions can be offered, however, someone must start somewhere with solutions that can be tested, researched, and analyzed for success rates and qualifying data to work toward figuring out what solutions will be successful in preventing teacher attrition and what ones are not. Such an important topic that affects teachers, students, and society at large should be addressed in a timely fashion with careful evaluation and research done on proposed solutions. Which makes this a complex topic to tackle as the literature in this paper suggests. It will take many people and many different perspectives to begin to solve such a pressing matter.

Introduction

Teacher attrition is a complex problem to solve. It involves a variety of different factors and will require frequent and ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment to solutions. After researching many different solutions to this problem three solutions emerged to be the most effective at improving teacher retention rates. These solutions include providing positive affirmations and feedback, supportive co-teachers, and online professional development. These solutions are the best options for increasing teacher retention rates because they directly impact teachers' daily work environments and support systems. Lack of support has proven to be one of the leading factors in teachers having thoughts of quitting (Hanks, et. Al. 2020). Addressing this factor that highly affects teacher retention rates by combining these three solutions into a set of mentorship norms will help reduce teacher attrition in schools.

Project Components

The design of this proposal includes developing a set of mentorship norms to decrease teacher attrition. These norms will be provided online for easy access to mentors and mentees. These norms will be used to help cultivate a collaborative co-teaching environment within

schools with frequent observation and feedback. The research from Peeples et. Al. (2019) proves that frequent feedback improves teacher performance. Therefore, this project will lead to an increase in student achievement because of improved teacher performance. Beyond this, the major need for this proposal is rooted in the fact that teachers need to feel supported to stay in their positions. With one of the leading factors to teachers thinking of quitting being lack of support, we must address this need (Hanks, et. Al. 2020).

It will establish good guidelines for mentor teachers that will help improve clarity of their roles. This will help improve mentor and mentee relationships and untimely lead to better school wide and building culture. Mentor teachers will be better able to support new teachers and as a result feel less frustrated with their performance. This proposal will help the district achieve student academic improvement goals with increased teacher performance, leading to higher student achievement. This will lead to higher test scores that will reflect positively on the school to the community. Additionally, the community will recognize the consistency of returning teachers as an indication of a healthy school system. Another district goal that will be achieved is a decrease in the budgetary needs spent on hiring new teachers. Those extra funds can then be used to increase support for teachers, provide retention bonuses, or provide more hands-on learning experiences for students. The benefits of implementing this proposal are exponential. It will positively impact teachers, students, building culture, district goals, and the community.

Project Evaluation

Effectiveness of this proposal will be based on how often mentors and mentees use the norms document. If mentorships continue to use the document throughout the school year it will be successfully implemented. The best way to evaluate the impact this proposal had on student achievement will be to look at student achievement from a previous year, when the norms were

not used as compared to when they were. The program will prove to be a success if student achievement increases with the use of the norms. Data will be collected and monitored throughout the year of use of the mentorship norms document and regular student data collection of state and local achievement tests like the Star, NWEA, MAP, etc. Ultimately, the true success of this project will be reflected in teacher attrition numbers. If teacher attrition decreases after the mentorship norms are used, the proposal will be a success.

Plans for Implementation

Implementing new norms can take time for mentors and mentees to accept and adopt. The first step to positively implementing any new process is to help teachers "buy-in" or support the reasoning behind the new program. To help develop this buy-in, implementation would start with a meeting of mentor teachers to talk about what support they might need to help mentor new classroom teachers. This meeting could happen during professional development either at the end of a school year or the beginning. During this meeting, research will be shared to show the need for strong mentorship programs, informing people of the high levels of teacher attrition, and helping them feel empowered to be part of the solution. After this meeting, the norms would be presented as one of the ways to help support mentors in their work with mentees. Again, research will be shared at this meeting to show why these norms will help prevent teacher attrition. Then, time would be spent to work with mentors to help develop a common set of mentorship norms. This would be run as a brainstorming session to generate ideas and collaboratively create a common set of mentorship norms for everyone to use. For example, some of the norms might include a space to list three positive behaviors, practices, or actions of the mentee and one area of improvement or a goal to work on. Once these norms have been agreed upon the common document will be shared to all mentors and mentees so that it can be

easily accessed and filled out digitally when they are meeting. A google document could be a great way to do this. An email will be sent to all mentors and mentees explaining the purpose behind the document and reminding them of the expectations for the frequency of use. At minimum the norms should be used once a month. If they are used more often, it will make for an even stronger mentorship program. Mentor teachers will be responsible for initiating the use of the document and making sure it is used at least once per month. Administrators will monitor the frequency of use by having mentor teachers share the active document with them throughout the year.

Project Conclusions

Due to the complex nature of the issue of teacher attrition, it will be necessary to try multiple solutions to solve this problem. This project focuses on strengthening the guidelines and process for mentoring new teachers to increase the amount of support they receive in their first formative years of teaching. Teachers often leave the profession due to lack of support (Hindman & Bustamante, 2019). This is an area where all schools have the opportunity to put more work and time into establishing stronger mentorship norms and policies to ensure that new teachers are supported in their first few years so that they will continue to work in education for many years to come. Forty percent of teachers are leaving the profession within their first five years of teaching (Rinke, 2007). If we can walk alongside teachers during their first five years in education and make sure they are receiving the support they need to feel successful, we will bolster the work force and decrease teacher attrition.

However, there are many questions that remain about this topic. Will support be enough to keep people working in education? Do wages and overall respect for the profession also need to increase in order to make teaching a sustainable career for people in the future? These

questions await to be answered and this project serves as a springboard for finding answers and

solutions to this extremely urgent and important issue.

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