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Exploring the Role of the Principal in Elementary Teacher Retention and Migration as Perceived by Elementary Teachers in Rural School Districts of North-Central Pennsylvania

Diana L. Barnes
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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN ELEMENTARY TEACHER RETENTION AND MIGRATION AS PERCEIVED BY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF NORTH-CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

by

Diana L. Barnes

Chair: James A. Tucker
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University
School of Education

Title: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN ELEMENTARY TEACHER RETENTION AND MIGRATION AS PERCEIVED BY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF NORTH-CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

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Problem

Teacher migration and attrition are costly to educational institutions and negatively impact students’ education. Teachers migrate to other positions and/or leave the profession for different reasons. Research of literature indicated that one influence on the teacher’s decision to migrate to another position or to leave the profession is lack of principal support. This sequential mixed-methodology study explores elementary teachers’ perception of the relationship between principal support and teacher retention and migration in the rural elementary schools of north-central Pennsylvania.
Method

To explore the role of the principal, this sequentially mixed-methodological study used a focus group to identify elementary teachers’ perception of principal support, a survey to apply elementary teachers’ perception of principal support to a larger group, and, finally, interviews to clarify elementary teachers’ perception of principal support. A focus group was used as the primary means of collecting elementary teachers’ perceptions of principal support. The focus group data were combined with principal support data from the literature review. To apply the elementary teachers’ perceptions of principal support to a larger group, a 16-question survey was conducted with elementary teachers in rural north-central Pennsylvania. For clarification of elementary teachers’ perception of principal support, the five survey questions with the greatest means were used to generate questions for interviews. Four teachers, 2 male and 2 female, were interviewed.

Results

The data from the focus group and literature review generated 88 phrases of principal support. The 88 statements were grouped according into 16 common themes. The 16 themes were used to develop questions for the survey.

The results of the survey indicated that the survey actually measured two different constructs. The means of the negative-posed questions were consistently lower than the means of the positive-posed questions, indicating that it takes greater activation energy to leave a position because of lack of principal support than it takes to stay in a teaching position because of such support. The survey question with the top five means were:
1. The principal assigns me to an area that ensures my success.
2. The principal builds trust with the teachers at the school.
3. The principal is fair to me.
4. The principal supports me when dealing with student discipline.
5. The principal clearly communicates expectations from me.

These were used as a basis to conduct the interviews.

Interviews

The differences between the positive means and the negative means of the survey and four of the five interview questions indicated that the principal is a component of the teacher’s position but the principal is not the determining factor in deciding whether to stay in or leave the position. The interviews appeared to support the survey: Leaving appeared to require greater activation energy.

The responses in the interviews indicated that the principal actions were connected and that the individual actions affected each other. For example, fairness was connected to trust. Trust was connected to accepting where the principal assigned the teacher.

The interviews also indicated that teachers were willing to endure some lack of support; however, there could be a tipping point where they were no longer willing to stay because of lack of support. The differences of the positive means and the negative means of the survey indicated that a greater amount of activation energy was needed to leave the position because of lack of support than to stay in a teaching position because of such support. Hence, teachers might be willing to endure some lack of principal support without leaving.
Conclusions

The role of the principal in teacher migration and retention is limited. While the principal is a component of the teaching position, the principal is not the determining factor in deciding to stay in the teaching position or the decision to leave the teaching profession. To make the decision of migrating requires greater activation energy than staying in the position.

Principal actions are interrelated; one affects another. Teachers are willing to endure some lack of principal support; however, discussion revealed that there is a tipping point that can lead to migration or attrition.
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A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
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Dedication

God has blessed my life in so many ways and I am thankful. This dissertation is dedicated to the following.

To my husband, Larry, and to my family who encouraged and supported me the entire journey; please know how much your support meant to me.

To Dr. Tucker, who believed in me and persisted in making me look at each challenge as a gift. Your constant words of encouragement pushed me to reach and attain the goal. Thank you for the journey in the Leadership Program. To Dr. Gifford, Dr. Freed, and Dr. Stehouwer, thank you for demanding my best.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study explored the role of the principal in elementary teacher retention and migration, as perceived by elementary teachers in rural school districts of north-central Pennsylvania. To introduce the study, we first look at the background of the problem, then follow with the statement of the problem itself, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework, the research design, limitations, delimitations, definition of terms, and finally, the organization of the study.

Background of the Problem

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF, 2002), the United States produces more teachers than it needs. School systems should be comforted by that knowledge; however, beneath the surface of the above statement is a serious issue of schools’ inability to find and hire qualified teachers. The United States must hire at least 2 million teachers over to the next decade (Moir, n.d.), and although this country produces more qualified teachers than it hires, since the 1990s the annual number of exiting teachers exceeds the number of entrants by an increasing amount (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) contended that a persistent aspect of the teaching profession is a high rate of teacher turnover.
The teaching profession suffers from a chronic and relatively high turnover rate compared to other occupations, and turnover is particularly high among teachers in the first few years of service (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). In the 1999-2000 school year, schools hired 534,861 teachers but lost 539,778 teachers by the end of the year (NCTAF, 2002). Ingersoll and Merrill (2010) trended data encompassing two decades (6 cycles) of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and its supplement, the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS). Acknowledging that the SASS and TFS are “the largest and most comprehensive source of information on teachers available” (p. 1), they reported that teacher turnover for first-year teachers was 28.5% in 2008-2009. Darling-Hammond (2003) suggests that approximately one-third of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years, while Ingersoll and Smith (2003) contend that data suggest that after 5 years 40% to 50% have left the profession.

“As many principals know, the only thing harder than recruiting teachers is keeping them from leaving” (Delisio, 2006, para. 2). “We know that certain kinds of people are more likely to leave their teaching jobs and certain schools are more likely [to] lose teachers” (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005, p. 10). The problem of staffing schools is not due to lack of producing highly qualified teachers, but the ability to keep teachers who are prepared (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Darling-Hammond and Sykes (2003) suggest that retaining existing teachers is “a much larger challenge than preparing new teachers” (p. 15). Ingersoll and Perda (2009) posited that the new teacher supply was sufficient in cases of attrition (such as retirement) but not migration.

What is being suggested is that although the United States trains more than enough teachers to fill classrooms, schools and districts are not able to retain enough
teachers to meet the needs of students. In other words, all the talk about teacher shortage in America is missing the point (Associated Press, 2003); rather than finding new teachers, the issue is keeping the hired teachers in the classroom.

The high turnover rate carries a high price tag. This deficit has compromised the quality of teaching, contributed to student performance decline, undercut higher education tuition, and reduced tax support for teacher preparation. Additionally, the teacher deficit has burdened school districts with organizational costs for termination, substitutes, and new training, created a learning curve loss, undermined the ability to sustain professional teaching communities, and diminished a sense of community, continuity, and coherence, which are hallmarks of a strong school (NCTAF, 2002). Neild, Unseem, Travers, and Lesnick (2003), in a study for Research for Action as a part of Philadelphia’s school reform, stated that the high teacher turnover in individual schools has a detrimental effect on coherent educational process, institutional memory, and staff cohesion. Evidence that supports a direct connection between quality teaching and high student achievement is compelling (Educational Research, 2002). Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2012) found a direct and significant effect of teacher turnover on student achievement in math and English/Language Arts, and found that teacher turnover is especially detrimental to “the achievement of students in schools with large populations of low-performing and Black students” (p. 27).

Teacher turnover occurs in two ways: those who leave the profession entirely (attrition), and those who transfer from school to school or district to district (migration) (Ingersoll, 2001a). Though migration and attrition are separate processes, for schools they produce the same results—losing a good teacher (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003b).
Why is the United States experiencing a shortage of teachers? Although some job and career changes are normal in any occupation (Ingersoll, 2003), high levels of turnover are “both cause and effect of performance problems in organizations” (p. 11). Ingersoll (2001b) suggests that one limitation of empirical research is seeking to explain teacher turnover as a function of the characteristics of the individual, as opposed to explaining turnover as a function of the school, and determining which characteristics and conditions of the organization pertain to teacher turnover.

Since the 1990s, educational studies predicted a shortage due to two converging trends: increased enrollment and retirements (Ingersoll, 2001b). However, Ingersoll (2001b) suggests that factors tied to the organizational characteristics and conditions of schools “are driving teacher turnover and, in turn, school staffing problems” (p. 499). For two-thirds of the first-year teachers who left their position, job dissatisfaction and pursuit of another job were significant in that decision (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Twenty-nine percent of those teachers listed job dissatisfaction as a major reason for leaving, and the list of different school working conditions included lack of administrative support (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Research indicates that teachers leave for many reasons, and one of those reasons is administration (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005a). In one study dissatisfaction with support from school administration was the most-cited reason for leaving employment (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003b). Johnson and Birkeland reported that voluntary movers described their principals as incompetent, preoccupied, dictatorial, inept, exhausted, or overwhelmed. When questioned about what factors influence the decision to leave or move, teachers include inadequate support from school
administration (Ingersoll, 2001b). The Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) surveyed over 250,000 teachers and found that teachers intent on leaving their school and teaching included poor school leadership as one “grave concern” (Berry, Smylie, & Fuller, 2008, p. 2). Kopkowski (2008) identified too little support as one reason for teacher migration and attrition. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that 38% of the public school teachers gave dissatisfaction with support from administrators at their previous school as an extremely important or very important reason for moving (as cited in Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004). Chambers (2008) contends that lack of administrative support contributes to the special education teacher shortage.

Robertson, Hancock, and Allen (2006) discovered that although lack of administrative support was the number one reason for teachers to decide to leave the profession, it became obvious that administrative support meant different things to different people. Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, and Wyckoff (2009) posited that school administrators’ influence on teacher migration and attrition was important; however, their data did not “provide enough richness about the role of the administration to determine how or why administrative support” (p. 22) affects teacher retention decisions.

Statement of the Problem

The United States faces the dilemma of being unable to ensure that public-school students receive instruction from highly qualified teachers due in part to a revolving door of teacher turnover driven by attrition and migration. Teacher turnover should be examined from an organizational perspective (Ingersoll, 2001a). “Although research repeatedly confirms the central role that principals play in developing schools where
teachers feel supported” (p. 71), Johnson et al. (2005) feel that there is a lack of in-depth research that explains “specifically what a principal does to positively or negatively influence teachers’ commitment to the school and the profession” (p. 71). As a member of the school administration and the school organization, the principal has a direct effect on the conditions of the organization and determines the level of immediate administrative support. In this study I investigated the teachers’ perception of the principal’s role in elementary teacher retention in the rural schools of north-central Pennsylvania.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the teachers’ perception of the role of the principal in the retention and migration of elementary teachers in rural north-central Pennsylvania. This research investigated elementary teacher perceptions of principal behaviors that might support teachers and help reduce teacher migration and increase teacher retention.

**Significance of the Study**

Exploring the role of the principal in teacher retention is significant for several reasons. Teacher turnover and attrition carry a high price tag. The cost can be as much as double the salary and benefits of the leavers (Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). Student achievement is negatively affected by teacher attrition (NCTAF, 2002) and indicators of a strong school (sense of community, continuity, and coherence) are lost as teachers leave and need to be replaced (NCTAF, 2002).
Research Questions

The following questions guided this study: How does a teacher’s perception of principal support affect a teacher’s decision to stay in a teaching position or in the profession? How does a teacher’s perception of lack of principal support affect a teacher’s decision to leave a position or the profession?

Conceptual Framework

To better understand what is involved in teacher retention, the works of several authors are cited. These several authors identified stages or phases through which teachers pass as they develop to full teacher maturity.

The first of these authors is Fuller (1969), who identified the phases of novice teacher to experienced teacher. The concerns of the early-teaching phase include trying to estimate how much support will be received from the principal. Katz’s (1972) survival stage is characterized by the teacher’s focus on self-needs that include support. Burden (1982) describes the teacher’s first teaching year as one with concerns about adequacy in maintaining classroom control and improving teaching skills. Burden also points out that administrative responsibility includes facilitating teacher development, which requires different types of assistance for teachers at different developmental stages. Stroot et al. (1998) posited that one cannot assume that years of experience are directly related to the developmental stages of a teacher. Individual teachers move at individual rates as well as fluctuate between the stages. Littleton and Littleton (2006) contend the phases are linear in nature, not necessarily cumulative, and the phases are clearly demarcated. They also contend that a teacher could show characteristics of two or more phases at one time.
The teacher developmental stages or phases referred to above provide insight regarding teacher needs and, thereby, potential areas of support that might be considered by principals as they look at improving teacher retention. These concepts will be further unpacked in Chapter 2.

**Research Design**

This study used a sequential three-phased mixed-method approach. Mixed-methods research is defined as collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative forms of data in a single study (Creswell, 2003). Researchers use mixed methods to expand or elaborate on understanding from one method to another. The use of mixed methods requires the researcher to be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative methods of research (Creswell, 2003). The first phase of the study (qualitative) was to identify elementary teachers’ perceptions of principal support by combining the data of a focus group of elementary teachers in a rural district in north-central Pennsylvania of principal support with the literature review of principal support. The quantitative portion of the study was used to apply elementary teachers’ perception of principal support by surveying elementary teachers in public schools throughout Tioga and Bradford counties. To clarify elementary teachers’ perception of principal support, a qualitative method of interviews was used for the final portion of the study. The five survey questions with the greatest means were used as questions for the interviews.

**Limitations**

A limitation of the study was the possibility of interviewing teachers who chose to not answer or could not answer the questions. Three of the four interviewees gave answers rich in data. One interviewee did not really engage in the interview and provided
only minimal responses. It is important to acknowledge that in the two north-central counties, neighborhoods are small, which could mean that the interviewer would know the interviewees or would know someone who would know the interviewees. Because the population in these counties is low, which limits the number of schools, the sample was small.

**Delimitations**

This study was limited to elementary teachers of the north-central rural counties of Pennsylvania and focused on rural public schools in Potter, Tioga, and Bradford counties of north-central Pennsylvania.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined as they are used in this study:

**Attrition:** Those teachers who leave the profession; the same as leavers.

**Leavers:** Those teachers who leave the teaching profession for another profession; also referred to as attrition.

**Migration:** Teachers who have moved from one school to another or from one district to another.

**Movers:** Teachers who move to another school or school district.

**Revolving door:** The large number of qualified teachers departing their jobs for reasons other than retirement (Ingersoll, 2001b).

**Rural north-central Pennsylvania:** Tioga County, located on the north-central border of Pennsylvania and south-central border of New York State.

**Stayers:** Teachers who stay in the same school from year to year.

**Turnover:** Departure of teachers from their teaching jobs in schools.
Voluntary movers: Teachers who chose to transfer from their original schools to other public schools.

Organization of Study

Chapter 1 gives a background of the problem and describes the purpose of the study. Chapter 2 is a literature review of the teacher shortage in the United States. It identifies the victims of teacher shortages, and the causes, cost, and effects of teacher migration and attrition. The role of the principal in teacher retention is also reviewed. The chapter concludes with research on the phases and stages of teacher development. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 discusses the results, and Chapter 5 gives a summary of the study with some suggestions for practice and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To explore the role of the principal in elementary teacher retention and migration as perceived by elementary teachers, this chapter investigates and synthesizes research on teacher shortages, migration, and attrition, a conceptual framework for the study, and the role of the principal in teacher retention. Specifically addressed under teacher shortages is acknowledgment of state- and national-level problems in teacher shortages. Under migration and attrition, the causes, the costs, and the effects on learning are considered. The conceptual framework considers several authors and their theories, called stages or phases of teacher development. Finally, the role of the principal in teacher retention is researched.

Teacher Shortages

Acknowledging Teacher Shortages

The United States prepares and certifies more teachers than are needed to fill American schools (NCTAF, 2002) and at the same time there exists a reserve pool of teachers which includes those who have previously taught, along with those who prepared but never entered the profession (NCTAF, 2007). Despite these conditions, the United States cannot fill teaching vacancies.
Why does the shortage exist? According to the NCTAF (2007), some teachers prepared for but did not enter the profession. Some educators move on to administration or some other education-related positions. Some vacancies are due to the “graying workforce” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 9). None of the above reasons are a focus of this study. Ingersoll (2001a) suggests the shortage is due to teacher turnover.

According to Ingersoll (2001b), teacher turnover is used as a descriptor for “the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs” (p. 500). That could be for many reasons; one reason he calls attrition. Ingersoll (2001b) says that attrition is teachers who began to teach but become “those who leave the occupation of teaching altogether” (p. 503). The attrition rate for beginning teachers is disproportionately higher than for those who have been in the profession for 10 years (Marlow, Inman, & Betancourt-Smith, 1997). Ingersoll (2001b) reports that another reason for teacher vacancies is that teachers “transfer or move to different teaching jobs in other schools” (p. 503). He calls this situation migration. Ingersoll (2001a) also posited that “half of total teacher turnover is migration” (p. 15).

State-Level Identification of Teacher Shortages

For the state of Texas, the most critical problem in teacher employment is teacher retention (Texas Public Policy Foundation, 2002). The Texas Window on State Government (as cited in Suydam, 2002) reports a staggering 60% of Texan teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years. The Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) concluded that the segment of teachers most likely to leave teaching is those with less than 5 years of experience or over 20 years of experience (E. Fuller, 2002).
Tennessee, with an annual teacher turnover rate of 6%, loses 36% of beginning teachers in the first 4 years of teaching. That figure increases to 42% within the first 5 years (Curran & Goldrick, 2002). The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN, 2003) in Chicago, Illinois, examined the 2001-2002 teacher turnovers in 64 elementary schools and discovered a 23.3% turnover rate for teachers with 5 or less years of teaching experience and projected that over 5 years the rate will increase to 73.3%, well above the national average.

Georgia’s turnover rate is 10.2% (Regional Education Committee, 2006), while according to the Center for Education Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA, 2006), South Carolina loses new teachers at a rate of 16.7% after the first year, 27.5% after the third year, and an “unacceptable” (p. 1) 33.5% after 5 years. In North Carolina, the rate has been over 33% (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, n.d.); data from mid-western states show a 9% attrition rate (Hare, Heap, & Raack, 2001). The Florida Department of Education (2003) tracked individual classroom teachers from 1992 to 2002 and found that, except for retirees, more young teachers leave the classroom than any other age group. In 1997, for teachers under the age of 30, 13.9% left after 1 year, 31% left after 3 years, and 40.9% left after 5 years. In addition, about 1% of the teachers transfer from one school to another each year.

In the state of Utah, 6.3% of all public education teachers left their schools in the 2003-2004 school year, which was up from 2% in 1993-1994 (Utah Foundation, 2007). Utah’s projected attrition rate for 2014 is 14%.

An analysis of teacher turnover by the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP) in the state of Washington reveals a 33% teacher departure rate from
the profession during the first 5 years of teaching (J. Harmon, 2006). Elfers, Plecki, and McGowan (2007) prepared a report for the CSTP and found that only 53.7% of high-school novice teachers (having 0 to 4 years of experience) remained in the same school. In an Oregon principal study, 45% reported difficulty in finding enough candidates to fill vacant teaching positions (Oregon University System, 2000). Twenty-two percent of the teachers in California leave the profession after the first 4 years (Futernick, 2007), and the overall projected shortage of teachers will increase from 20,000 to 33,000 by 2015 if no new actions are taken. Of a teaching force of 126,915 teachers in Pennsylvania, a brief for the Alliance for Excellent Education in 2005 noted that in 1 year 6,100 teachers left the profession and 6,233 teachers migrated to other schools, leaving the state with a turnover rate of over 9% and a cost of $178,790,841.

**National Level of Teacher Shortages**

“Teacher retention has become a national crisis” (National Commission on Teaching America’s Future, 2003, p. 3). The Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC, 2004) maintains that “in spite of the best efforts of educational leaders at all levels of education, American education faces a crisis in attracting and retaining quality teachers” (p. 1). In addition, the NERRC described that the loss of teachers was occurring at an alarming rate. In their June 2007 policy brief, the NCTAF posits that their findings indicate “that America’s teacher dropout problem is spiraling out of control” (NERRC, 2004, p. 1), with teacher attrition growing 50% over the past 15 years. The brief also states that in some school districts, the dropout rate for teachers is greater than the student dropout rate. In the Teacher Follow-up Survey, the NCES found that the percentage of leavers (teachers who leave the profession) rose from 5.6% in 1988-89 to 13.6% in 2004-
2005 (as cited in Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2007). In looking at just public-school teachers, the percentage of teachers who left the profession increased from 6% in 1988-1989 to 8% in 2008-2009 (NCES, 2011). The NCTAF (2003) further reports that in the 1990s, while America increased the supply of teachers, the teacher attrition rate increased at a faster rate; thus making teacher retention a national crisis. In 1987-88 there were 3% more entrants into teaching than leavers; however, by 1999-2000, leavers exceeded entrants by 23%.

While different states have varying percentages, the issue is the same: Teacher turnover is creating a teacher shortage across the nation. Teacher attrition and/or migration are affecting the nation’s public education, with many states scrambling to hire teachers. The revolving door (Ingersoll, 2001b) continues to spin and maintain a high rate of turnover with associated cost—both fiscal and professional.

Victims of Teacher Shortages

Many schools are negatively affected by teacher attrition and migration. The Education Commission of the States (ECS, 2007) reports that, based on national data, teacher shortage is “particularly acute” (p. 1) in inner-city and isolated rural schools in fast-growing regions of the country. The “chief victims” (p. 17) of shortages are disadvantaged students in big cities or poor rural areas (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Murname, Singer, Willet, Kemple, and Olsen (1991) found that districts with a large percentage of disadvantaged students have very difficult teaching conditions and lose teachers very early in their careers, with the first year being most risky.

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2001) concurs that students in schools that are difficult to staff are usually located in troubled inner cities and isolated
rural areas with high levels of poverty. An aggregate computation of a 4-year attrition rate by Haun and Martin (2004) revealed a rural attrition rate of 17% in the sample. Rural districts, which constitute more than 45% of the nation’s public schools, are challenged to attract and retain quality teachers (R. Harmon, 2001). In Alabama, 30% of the school districts are challenged to fill teaching positions in rural impoverished districts (American Federation of Teachers, 2007). North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) reported that superintendents also experienced shortages in suburban districts (Hare et al., 2001). America’s most impoverished districts are in great need of “high quality teachers” due to veteran teachers “fleeing” (Peter Harris Research Group, 2004, p. 3). Districts with low-performing students face the challenge of finding/replacing qualified teachers with the end result of students receiving instruction from least-qualified teachers and being subject to inconsistent staffing on a yearly basis (Boyd et al., 2005a; Dillon, 2007; Johnson et al., 2005; Southern Regional Education Board [SERB], 1999).

High-poverty schools experience high rates of attrition and migration (Futernick, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001a; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2003), as do high-poverty and high-minority schools (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2006; Boyer & Gillespie, n.d.; CERRA, 2006; Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2002; Guin, 2004; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2003; Starr, 2007). The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE, 1998) estimates that the rate of teacher attrition climbs from 33% to 50% in schools with high proportions of poverty and students of color. Mont and Rees (1996) found that an increase in percentage of White students decreases teacher turnover. Hanushek et al. (2003) found that the higher the enrollment of Black and Hispanic students, the higher the rate of teacher mobility.
While not all subject areas are equally affected by the shortage of teachers, there are teaching fields in which it is difficult to recruit and retain teachers. These subject areas are mathematics (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll, 2002; Mont & Rees, 1996), science (Associated Press, 2003; Dillon, 2007; Guarino, Santibanez, Daley, & Brewer, 2004; Ingersoll, 2000; Johnson et al., 2001), foreign languages (Educational Research Service, 2002; Garcia & Long, 2004; Murphy & DeArmond, 2003; Oregon University System, 2000), and bilingual/special education programs (Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Collins, 1999; Croasmun et al., n.d.). Allen (2005) in his literature review on teacher recruitment and retention posited that one implication of research literature was the need for educators to concentrate on stemming attrition in secondary schools, but specifically in math and science. Ingersoll and Perda (2009) specifically addressed math and science where data showed that enough new teachers are produced to cover the reduction from retirement. It is when “preretirement teacher turnover is factored in” (p. 1) that there is “a much tighter balance between the new supply of mathematics and science teachers and losses” (p. 1).

The migration and attrition problem is far-reaching. High-poverty, high-minority, inner-city, and isolated rural students are affected by teacher turnover. The fields of mathematics, science, foreign languages, and special education are negatively affected by teacher immigration and attrition.

**Migration and Attrition**

In this paper migration refers to the teacher who moves from one school to another or from one district to another. Attrition refers to teachers who leave the profession.
Causes of Migration and Attrition

An assumption might be that retirement is a primary reason for teacher turnover, but facts show that retirement is not a leading cause (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). In truth, retirement is a “relatively minor factor” (p. 5) compared to other factors (Ingersoll, 2001a). Whisnant, Elliot, and Pynchon (2005) contended that although the retirement of a large population of teachers nearing the age of retirement contributes to attrition, it is not the contributing factor to the high rate of attrition. It is the non-retirement attrition rates that fuel the teacher shortage (NCTAF, 2002). Ingersoll (2001a) described staffing problems in terms of a “revolving door” (p. 24) with a large exodus of teachers for reasons other than retirement. The Alliance for Excellent Education’s (2005) analysis of teacher turnover listed retirement as a reason for leaving less often than job dissatisfaction or pursuit of another job. The ratio of teachers leaving for reasons other than retirement to those retiring is almost 3 to 1 (NCTAF, 2003).

To get a perspective from principals, the Peter Harris Research Group (2004) conducted more than 600 in-depth telephone interviews with public-school principals throughout the United States for input on the most significant challenges to retaining teachers and found that 49% say that low pay rates is the greatest issue. Low salaries are not the only reason (Scholastic Inc. & CCSSO, 2000); other challenges include paperwork, non-teaching responsibilities, burnout, and low staff morale. Rural principals (56%) are most affected by low pay affecting retention. Lifestyle issues were the second leading cause, particularly affecting low-income rural areas (44%). Third were social and emotional issues (16%).
The reasons for staying, moving, or leaving are not a mystery. Teachers are more than willing to share their thoughts and feelings about the decision to leave or stay and, though they are many, common strands emerge.

If the principal does not support classroom management, one of the most challenging areas for new teachers, teachers become frustrated and leave the profession (Michigan State University, n.d.). Poor working conditions, including low pay and lack of administrative support, are more likely to create conditions for special-education teachers, math teachers, or science teachers to leave than environments of collegiality and support (Boyer & Gillespie, n.d.). Halford (1998) describes a graduate of a prestigious university, an elated first-time teacher who is eager to make a difference with students and who, by the end of the first year, feels disillusioned and isolated. She chose to leave teaching to pursue another career, describing her principal as perfunctory and not supportive. In their review of research literature for the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ), Berry et al. (2008) found national studies show that teachers leaving because of job dissatisfaction often cite lack of administrative support as a top reason for leaving. For American teachers, poor student motivation to learn and inadequate administrative support were given as reasons for dissatisfaction with teaching (Weiss, 1999). From a selected sample derived from the 1990-1991 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and from Teacher Follow-Up Survey Questions, Murray and Osteen (1995) identified inadequate support from administration, poor student motivation, student discipline problems, poor salaries and benefits, and unnecessary intrusions on instructional time as reasons for leaving the profession. A study of public and private high-school teachers
released by the Texas Public Policy Foundation (2000) indicated that pay and benefits ranked third behind student attitudes/behavior and treatment by administrators.

The NCES (1997a) reported that, in the school year 1993-94, of the leavers who left teaching because they were dissatisfied with teaching, 32% said it was because of lack of recognition and support from administration, 17% said it was because of student discipline problems, and 16% said it was because of poor student motivation. Later that year, NCES (1997b) reported in the 1994-95 follow-up survey that of those public-school teachers who left between 1993-94 and 1994-95 citing dissatisfaction with teaching as a career, 17.9% cited discipline problems, 17.6% cited poor student motivation to learn, and 15.3% cited inadequate support from administration as the main reason for dissatisfaction. Luekens et al. (2004) reported in the NCES’s results of the teacher follow-up survey that in 2000-01, 40% of the movers were looking for a better teaching assignment, 38% were dissatisfied with administrative support, and 32% were unhappy with workplace conditions. The movers were less likely than leavers to report that instructional leaders were very or extremely effective at communicating respect and value, encouraging teachers to change ineffective instruction, encouraging professional collaboration, and working with staff to solve problems.

The ECS (2007) cited a context of stress and lack of support marked by student and parent apathy, discipline problems, inadequate physical facilities, lack of collegial support, unsupportive leadership, and lack of decision-making authority. Lack of preparation, support, adequate teaching conditions, and respect is the reason good teachers leave the profession (Scherer, 2003). In his study for the California State University Center for Teaching Quality, Futernick (2007) reported that when dissatisfied
teachers were asked why they left, five of the 10 most common responses were bureaucratic impediment, poor district support, lack of resources, unsupportive principal, and too little time for planning.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003b) described voluntary movers who were far more satisfied with their new positions compared to former positions in which they were assigned the least desirable courses and classrooms, the most challenging groups of students, and teaching subjects outside of their certification; they also left chaos in search of order and predictability, shared understanding about basic expectations, and a positive learning environment. They chose to leave environments of isolation for sustaining professional cultures and collegiality. All voluntary movers cited dissatisfaction with administration more than any other factor. The principals were described as inept, dictatorial, aloof, inaccessible, preoccupied, exhausted, overwhelmed, and non-supportive.

Johnson et al. (2001) indicated poor working conditions and lack of significant on-the-job training and support as reasons for becoming a leaver. From the NCES Teachers Follow-up Survey, 2000-2001, data show that from the movers, 40% left for a better position, 38% were dissatisfied with administrative support, and 32% were dissatisfied with working conditions (Luekins et al., 2004). Twenty percent of the leavers cited pursuing another career with better salaries and benefits. Seventy-one percent of the respondents of Stevenson, Dantley, and Holcomb’s (1999) study of 22 administrators in Urban Systematic Initiative (USI) school districts reported insufficient salaries as the main cause for teacher attrition, while 50% reported lack of administrative support as the second major reason. Quartz et al. (2004), in their longitudinal study of teachers who
received “specialized urban teacher preparation” (Quartz et al., 2004, p. 13), found that poor working conditions and lack of administrative support influenced movers’ career decisions. Unsolicited, 79% of the responding teachers surveyed by Scholastic Inc. and CCSSO (2000) indicated that respect for the teaching profession was needed in order to retain qualified teachers. The survey also indicated that the lack of respect was a “major stumbling block to recruitment and retention” (p. 1).

Geography has a role in staffing shortages (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005b). Novice teachers appear to seek first-time positions close to home or in regions similar to home. This presents a problem for urban schools. The number of teacher recruits whose hometowns are in an urban area is below the number of teachers needed to fill positions; subsequently, urban schools must recruit from other geographical regions. That in turn gives a one-two punch to the urban recruitment process, because suburban and rural recruits “strongly prefer to remain in those areas, rather than teach in the urban districts—both because of the importance of distance and because teachers have preferences with respect to urbanicity” (p. 127). Research on rural teacher retention appears thin and has been conducted mostly outside of the United States; however, what exists indicates that rural teachers leave for reasons of isolation—social, cultural, and professional (Collins, 1999).

At the other end of the spectrum, Guarino et al.’s (2004) findings indicate that (a) schools that provided mentoring and induction programs had lower rates of turnover among new teachers, (b) schools that provided more teacher-autonomy and administrative support had lower rates of attrition and migration, (c) schools that have fewer discipline problems or gave teachers more discretion over setting discipline
policies had lower levels of attrition and dissatisfaction, and (d) in at least two states (New York and Texas), larger class-size was associated with higher attrition rates. Knapp, Loeb, Plecki, and Elfers (2004) found that 55% of the teachers who stay at their schools felt that support from the administrator was very important.

Cost of Migration and Attrition

The toll of teachers leaving, regardless of the reason, and the ensuing need for teachers to be hired is heavy for schools and permeates the entire system in all capacities. The NCTAF (2007) estimates the cost to the nation at over $7 billion annually. This figure does not include the cost of migrating teachers and federal or state investments that are lost through attrition. If those costs were to be included, the figure would be “far in excess” (NCTAF, 2007, p. 1) of $7 billion. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) calculated the cost of national migration and attrition to be $4,867,879,421, with a cost of $178,790,840 for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania alone. The state of Texas estimated a turnover cost of $1.590 billion per year (Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). ACORN (2003) in Chicago calculated turnover costs based on the formula developed by the Education Commission of the States for the 64 ACORN neighborhood elementary schools at $34,710,505 for 2001-2002. A new-teacher attrition rate of 30% is costing Oregon $45 million yearly (Stand for Children & Chalkboard Project Proposal, 2006) and California spends over $455 million each year to replace teachers (Futernick, 2007).

In a pilot study for the NCTAF, Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007) quantified the cost of recruiting, hiring, and training of replacement teachers in Granville County, North Carolina, to be slightly under $10,000. In Jemez Valley, New Mexico, the cost per
teacher leaver was $4,366; in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the average cost was $15,325; and in Chicago, Illinois, the average cost was $17,872.

There are, however, other related costs. Johnson et al. (2005) addressed the issues of organizational costs and instructional costs. Organizational costs include staff cohesion and institutional memory, reinvestment in establishing professional relationships, re-establishment of routines for shared work, and faltering school norms and systems causing chaos, which, in turn, make learning more difficult. Instructional costs refer to teacher quality, the strings of new teachers who are, on average, less effective than teachers who are experienced, the ability to deliver high-quality instruction, and absence of programmatic traction. Darling-Hammond (2003) pointed out that, because of turnover, students are exposed to a “continual parade of ineffective teachers” (p. 3), and the “churn” (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003, p. 4) of teacher turnover results in a “constant influx of inexperienced teachers” (p. 4) thereby reducing overall education productivity and draining financial and human resources.

Shockley, Guglielmino, and Watlington (2006) listed teacher recruitment, separation processing, training, and orientation requirements for new teachers as costs associated with teacher attrition. Barnes et al. (2007) posited that low-performing schools are unable to escape from low student achievement due to a teaching quality gap. In those schools, an “inordinate” (p. 4) amount of human and financial capital is spent on the process of hiring and replacing leavers. Barnes et al. (2007) contend low-performing schools are caught in a “chronic cycle of teacher hiring and replacement” (p. 4) which in turn depletes them of critical dollars that could be used for improving teaching quality and thus student achievement.
Migration and attrition are a multi-billion dollar educational problem. State educational systems are reeling from the cost of hiring and training teachers to replace the departing trained teachers. In addition, the organizational and institutional costs are compromising the quality of students’ education.

Effect of Migration and Attrition on Learning

Beyond staffing problems, teacher turnover is detrimental to school environment and student performance (Ingersoll, 2003; NCTAF, 2002). A matter of concern is the high teacher turnover and its relationship to school cohesion and, in turn, student performance (Ingersoll, 2001b); in addition, the high rates of turnover are disruptive to the quality of school community. School reform, requiring years of sustained staff effort, is endangered by turnover (Halford, 1998; NCTAF, 2003), with students and schools being negatively affected.

Evidence from staff-climate surveys and case studies showed that schools with high turnover experience difficulty planning and implementing coherent curricula and sustaining positive working relationships amongst teachers (Guin, 2004). Chattanooga, Tennessee’s teaching force was weakened due to the fact that as soon as a new teacher gained enough experience to attract the attention of other principals in that district, that teacher would move to a more desirable school. As the process continued, good teachers were outnumbered and ineffective teachers collected and created a safe culture for themselves (Achievement Alliance, n.d.).

A negative consequence of turnover is that it becomes a source of group disintegration that affects organizational stability (Ingersoll, 2001a). Futernick (2007) points out that loss of continuity, experience, and expertise is a serious consequence of
teacher turnover. In addition, there is a negative impact on student educational experience. High teacher turnover produces a deficit of quality teachers, which results in loss of quality instruction (Charlotte Advocates for Education, 2004; NCTAF, 2003). Lowering teacher standards (one response to the teacher shortage and requirements of NCLB) by providing “shortcut versions—those providing little training and meager support for new teachers” (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003, p. 6)—does not prepare teachers to be successful or to remain in the profession.

Scholastic Inc. and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2000) surveyed 400 of the nation’s leading teachers to gain insight as to why teachers leave, what can be done to keep them, and how to attract qualified individuals into the profession. They found that the effects of teacher shortages include (a) larger classes and less individualized instruction, (b) non-certified teachers instructing students or teachers teaching outside of their field of expertise, (c) loss of planning time and increased teaching periods, and (d) a strain on staff morale, which has a negative impact on climate. The number of instances of a least-qualified teacher teaching low-performing students is exacerbated by teacher turnover (Boyd et al., 2005a).

**Conceptual Framework**

Because migration and attrition rates are so high in the first 5 years of teaching and those rates are affected by lack of effective principal support, school administration could better support teachers by proactively addressing the concerns and stresses of the beginner teacher. Research over the past 40-plus years has identified phases/stages that teachers experience when going from novice to experienced teacher as well as identifying
the concerns and stresses within each phase/stage of development. F. Fuller (1969) was one of the first to research and identify the phases of novice to experienced teachers.

Fuller and the Concerns of Beginning Teachers

Through her research, F. Fuller (1969) identified the concerns of beginning teachers in an effort to help teacher preparation institutions prepare and deliver appropriate training programs. The concerns were class control, their own content adequacy, the situations in which they teach, and the evaluations by their supervisors and of their pupils themselves (self-concerns). She points out that in the consistency of the expressed concerns there is an absence of topics that are a focus in education courses: instructional design, methods of presenting subject matter, assessment of pupil learning, dynamics of child behavior, and so on (pupil-concerns). Fuller posits a three-phase developmental conceptualization of teachers’ concerns: a pre-teaching phase (non-concern), an early teaching phase (concerns with self), and a late teaching phase (concerns with pupils).

Pre-teaching Phase: Non-Concern

The time span of the pre-teaching phase is when students are taking education courses, but it does not include student contact. Pre-teaching is characterized by the individuals rarely having specific concerns related to teaching itself; teaching-related concerns are expressed in amorphous and vague terms of anticipation or apprehension. The individuals often do not know what to be concerned about and think of teaching in terms of their own experience as a pupil and college student. Their concerns about student teaching are based on hearsay (discipline, getting a good grade, wrangling an assignment to a favored supervisor), and, when questioned about teaching concerns, they
parrot rumors they have heard or their responses are vague and difficult to classify. It is a
time of non-concern with the specifics of teaching or a time of relatively low involvement
in teaching.

**Early Teaching Phase: Concerns With Self**

This phase is the student teaching experience. It is characterized by covert
concerns regarding the student teacher’s place in the room of the supervising teacher and
in the school. They are wondering whether it will be “their” class or the teacher’s class,
whether they will be told what to do or will be allowed to do their own thing, or whether
they should address behavioral issues in the hall. They try to estimate the support they
will receive from the principal and supervisor; they try to discover the parameters of the
school situation. This phase is also characterized by overt concerns of adequacy in
classroom control. F. Fuller (1969) describes these as “blatant” (p. 220), persistent
concerns. During this phase, the student teachers also have greater concerns regarding
ability to understand subject matter, to know answers, to admit when they don’t know, to
have the freedom to fail on occasion, to anticipate problems, to mobilize resources, to
make changes when failures occur, and to cope with evaluation with a willingness to
listen for evaluation and to partial out the biases of evaluators.

**Late Concerns: Concerns With Pupils**

F. Fuller (1969) stresses the lack of data about concerns of experienced teachers
and indicates that any formulations are “tentative” (p. 221). The mature concerns focus
on pupil gain and self-evaluation as opposed to personal gain and evaluations by others.
Observed specific concerns were ability to understand pupils’ capacities, to specify
objectives for the students, to assess student gain, to partial out one’s own contributions to pupils’ difficulties and gain, and to evaluate oneself in terms of pupil gain.

F. Fuller (1969) further indicates that “the conceptualization of teacher development offered here is just a mediating statement, of course, but one which might eventually contribute to some larger chain” (p. 222). In that vein, further research by others is presented.

Katz’s Four Stages of Teacher Development

Katz (1972) posits four developmental stages for teachers. The survival stage (year 1) is characterized by a focus on oneself and self-needs. Can the teacher survive? Is the teacher able to make it through the day, the week, or until vacation? Is it possible to do the work day after day? Will the teacher be accepted by colleagues? The discrepancy between “anticipated successes and classroom realities intensifies feelings of inadequacy and unpreparedness” (p. 4). The needs in this stage include support, understanding, encouragement, reassurance, comfort, and guidance. There is also a need for instruction in specific skills and insight into complex causes of behavior.

The second Katz (1972) stage (years 2-3) is the consolidation stage, in which the teacher feels capable of surviving and is ready to consolidate gains made during the survival stage. The teacher is ready to differentiate specific skills and tasks to be mastered next and begins to focus on the instructional needs of individual children. The needs of the teacher in this stage include on-site help, which is most valuable, assistance in conducting mutual exploration of a problem, having give-and-take conversations, assistance in learning to use a wide range of resources as needed, and the opportunity to share experiences and feelings with teachers in the same situation.
Stage 3 provided by Katz (1972) is identified as renewal (years 3-4) and is characterized by striving to improve. The teacher is competent in the practice of teaching and looks for new developments. The teacher seeks out and is committed to providing projects and activities that contribute to pupil educational needs (concerns for the pupil). Needs in this stage include opportunities for regional and national conferences, opportunities to discuss with other colleagues from other programs, and opportunities to visit other classes, programs, and demonstration projects.

The final Katz (1972) stage is maturity. Teachers in this stage ask deeper and more abstract questions in a meaningful search for insight, perspective, and realism. There is a need to read widely and interact with educators working in many problem areas on many different levels. Teachers seek out opportunity for introspective and in-depth discussion. Stroot et al. (1998) suggest that teachers in this stage be encouraged to accept positions of leadership in the school, community, and professional organizations.

Burden’s Stages of Teacher Development

Burden (1982) posited that studies show that teachers have different concerns at different points in their careers and that changes in teachers follow a regular developmental pattern. He categorized the following stages of teachers’ development and concerns.

1. Survival stage (year 1): Concerns were about adequacy in maintaining classroom control, teaching the subject, and improving teaching skills. Teachers worry about surviving each day and completing the school year. Some teachers approach the early years as a trial period and are not certain whether they want to make a career of teaching. They use this experience to determine a future course of action.
Stresses at this stage: Confusion about many aspects of the job, uncertainty about how situations will improve, and frustration from not knowing how to deal with certain problems. The teachers are wondering and worrying about whether they measure up. Teachers in this stage expressed the need to feel confident, effective, and competent in the first year; however, they did not achieve those feelings. Because of a lack of confidence, they were hesitant to try new teaching techniques. Teachers also felt that at times they did not know what to do or how things would get better. Professional responsibilities took a great deal of time and cut into personal time during evenings and weekends.

2. Adjustment stage (years 2-4): Teachers felt they had learned a great deal, but they were not able to handle everything that happened in the classroom. Teachers in this stage are less concerned with teaching situations as a problem area and are more relaxed and less nervous. They have stopped worrying about self and have started looking at the larger issue of meeting student needs.

Stresses at this stage: While they are relaxed and surer of self, teachers still do not feel capable of handling any situation that might arise. Stress in this stage centers on the teacher’s adequacy in varying instruction and meeting the wide range of needs of students.

3. Mature stage (years 5 and up): Teachers feel mature and can handle anything that happens in their teaching. They are secure and confident and have a willingness to try new methods. They are more perceptive about complex needs of children and about their relationships with children. These teachers know what they are doing, where they are going, and what they want to do. They accept change as a continual process.
Stresses at this stage: Ability to keep teaching interesting for themselves. Teachers also experienced stress when coping with changes in school procedures and educational expectations (inclusion, paperwork, etc.).

Burden (1982) also points out that one responsibility of administration is to help improve instruction and facilitate teacher development. That means providing different types of assistance for teachers at different developmental stages.

Moir and the First-Year Teacher Experience

Moir (1990) describes the phases a first-year teacher experiences as follows:

1. *Anticipation* (starting in student teaching) is characterized by romanticizing the role of the teaching position, having a great desire to *make a difference*, and idealizing how he/she will accomplish his/her goals with the phase carrying through the first few weeks of school.

2. *Survival* (beginning to appear in the first month), in which the teacher experiences “instant bombardment” (p. 1) by problems he/she did not anticipate, learns at a rapid pace, and is caught off guard about the realities of teaching despite teacher training. The teacher struggles to keep his/her head above the water and is consumed and overwhelmed with the day-to-day routine of teaching, while having little time to reflect and evaluate. Up to 70 hours per week are spent on school work, and because he/she does not know what works, deals with consistent curriculum development and the need to create lesson plans for the first time. These teachers are optimistic and still maintain a great amount of energy and commitment; however, they harbor hopes that soon the turmoil will end.
3. *Disillusionment* (about 6-8 weeks into the year), which is signaled by extensive time commitment, comes when there is the realization that things are not going as smoothly as he/she wanted. Morale has started to dip and the teacher is questioning both his/her commitment and competence. Classroom management is becoming a great source of distress and the teacher is expressing self-doubt. Self-esteem is dropping, and the teacher may even experience illness.

4. *Rejuvenation* (generally begins in January after the holiday break, when they get some rest and spend time with family and friends, and lasts until spring) has many ups and downs. The phase is characterized by a better understanding of the system, a sense of accomplishment, and the teacher developing coping strategies and skills to reduce, prevent, and manage problems. He/she is focusing on curriculum development, long-term planning, and teaching strategies, and is accepting of the realities of teaching. Toward the end of the year, the teacher will become concerned with getting everything done that needs to be done, will wonder how students will do on tests, and will again question his/her effectiveness as a teacher.

5. *Reflection* (begins in May) is signaled by the teacher highlighting events that were successful and those that were not, thinking about changing management, curriculum, and teaching strategies, and developing a vision as to what year 2 might look like, which in turn brings the teacher to a new phase of anticipation.

What can be gleaned from the research on the phases of teacher development is that if administrators were to study the different phases of new teaching experiences, support could be individually designed and implemented to aid teachers’ successful
transition through the phases. That, in turn, could possibly result in lower rates of migration and attrition.

In Stroot et al.’s (1998) review of literature and theories of teachers’ developmental stages, the authors found that it was “important to understand the stages of development in order to provide adequate assistance” for teachers (p. 1). In addition, it cannot be assumed that years of experience are directly related to developmental stages, because individual teachers move at individual rates, and teachers can fluctuate between stages. However, Watzke (2003) reviewed theories of teacher developmental stages and posited that all are similar in terms of the concerns and problems teachers experience at each stage. Although some theorists have more stages than others, contended Watzke, the essential progression is self-survival, with a lack of confidence and concern about classroom control, task-instruction, with concerns of enhancing teacher skills, and impact-students, with concerns about student learning.

Littleton and Littleton and the Shaping of a Teacher

Littleton and Littleton (2006) discuss the “shaping” (p. 1) of a teacher as a process that occurs gradually through experience. Using alternative terminology, they combine Car Glickman’s and Kevin Ryan’s (who cite F. Fuller’s) stages of teacher development into the following phases: fantasy, survival, disenchantment, and competence. They contend that although the phases are “linear in nature” (p. 1), they are not necessarily cumulative. The phases are not clearly demarcated. In addition, a teacher can show characteristics of two or more phases at one time. Each of these phases is considered in the following paragraphs.
Fantasy Phase

From the time a person decides to become a teacher, a mental picture is formed. These teachers see themselves as a person of authority over actions within the context of the classroom. The rewards of teaching are esteem and admiration of the pupils. As they progress through structured education into their teacher-preparatory programs and the desire to be a teacher remains, the shift is slight. Until they experience the act of teaching, the expectations are still a fantasy. As they get closer to the actual act of teaching they experience some anxiety, but the fantasies remain “unrealistic and extremely pleasant” (Littleton & Littleton, 2006, p. 2). They believe they will have short-term and long-term influence, they will have plenty of time to prepare for classes, they will be able to teach “gracefully under adverse circumstances” (p. 2), and that they will be paid enough for an 8:00 to 3:00 job that lasts only 9 months and includes 2 weeks of paid vacation in December, and a paid week for spring break. Another big bonus is free admission to the sporting events. In this phase, the pre-service teacher believes that discussion of classroom management strategies and desist strategies is not very important, for, having been a student, they understand the needs of students, which means they are going to be liked, and, subsequently, they will not experience such problems. They are a legend in their own mind. This phase lasts through pre-service, student teaching, summer months, and in-service activities before school starts. It usually comes to an end within the first few days of experience as a teacher in the classroom.

Survival Phase

Shortly after classes begin, there is a realization that pacing is a problem. There is not enough time to teach, prepare, and grade before the next day begins. The fantasy of
8:00 to 3:00 is replaced with the reality of 7:00 to 5:00. As fantasized, they create elaborate presentations that take much of their evening, which means they live each day to survive. The survivalist is identified by swiftly moving through lessons (the students do not ask questions so they must be getting it), using college-level vocabulary, and they are either very permissive or very rigid. They take home huge amounts of work, frequently appear to be hurried, and show signs of exhaustion. This phase usually replaces the fantasy mode within the first 2 weeks of school. The operations of the classroom will start to improve if the novices are smart enough to ask veterans how they manage; however, if the novices do not ask for assistance or cannot pick up the tricks of the trade, the career could be quite short. (The authors mention losing many quality teachers at this point, because teachers do not know where to turn or are afraid to ask.) “Astute novices” (Littleton & Littleton, 2006, p. 2) will begin to manage the workload and get into the routine within 5 to 7 months.

Disenchantment Phase

This phase begins with the first paycheck and the causes are complex. The fantasy begins to meet reality. First, the teacher realizes that popularity is a fleeting concept. The gentle administrator who was lauding academic achievements is now wondering if the teacher is in control of the classroom. The parents that do appear at the teacher’s door usually do so to question the novice’s fairness and competency. Caring students begin to morph into an uncaring “conglomeration of hormones in sneakers” (Littleton & Littleton, 2006, p. 3) and are not as smart as when the novice “was in school” (p. 3). In addition, the apparent failures of the novice are visible to colleagues, as well as to the individual. Second, the brilliant manner in which the novice covered the material begins to dim when
the “dumb” (p. 3) students fail the test because the material was taught at the knowledge
and comprehension level, and then tested at the synthesis level (Littleton and Littleton are
invoking Bloom’s taxonomy). Or, because the students never responded to the teacher’s
“Any questions?” (p. 3), the teacher moved on without probing deeper. Third, discipline
problems are real. Student misbehavior is encouraged when teachers fail to keep student
attention, to use the teacher voice, and to develop classroom management. The
inexperience promotes further resentment of misbehavior, and the classroom environment
becomes confrontational. These complications propel the novice to become disenchanted
with the entire teaching profession. Because the novice cannot accept that he/she is
unable to control the students, blame is shifted to the “dumb” (p. 3) students, to the
administrator who does not know what it is like to be in the classroom, to the out-of-
touch with the real-world university, or to an overly bureaucratic system. The length of
time in this stage is critical, for if the novice stays there too long, he/she will leave the
profession. If that is not an option, the novice becomes bitter, denigrating the character of
parents, colleagues, and education in general.

**Competent Phase**

This phase usually starts 12 to 18 months into the teacher’s career, but can begin
multiple years later. The novice teacher has learned the tricks of the trade, is balancing
social and professional life, does not take student attitudes as a personal attack (has
developed a thick skin), and is able to manipulate personal life with professional life.
This is important because the innate characteristics that inspired the novice to become a
teacher are the very ones, if not controlled, that prolong disenchantment. This stage
demonstrates subtle but noticeable changes: The teacher has fewer discipline problems,
takes home less paperwork, interacts with students on a more personal level, and shows fewer signs of fatigue. Constant interaction with administration, the faculty, and the students helps to move the novice into the competent phase. Events such as a hug from an elementary student, a “thank you” from a struggling student, or a smile that communicates appreciation motivate the novice to continue in the profession.

Littleton and Littleton (2006) say that “typically” all novices pass through the above stages. How much time it takes depends on numerous factors. They contend that competence is attained sooner and with less emotional harm when administration and colleagues are aware of the novice’s affective needs. They recommend programs that come from universities, school administrators, and colleagues to assist the novice teacher.

Other Views of Teacher Development

Christensen, Burke, Fessler, and Hagstom (1983) reviewed research on stages of teachers’ careers and loosely categorized the stages as early years, middle years, and later years. In each stage teachers exhibited differing needs. Burke, Fessler, and Christensen (1984) posited that the metaphor of a cycle is a way to explain personal (family support structures, positive critical incidents, life crises, cumulative life experiences, avocational outlets, and individual dispositions) and organizational factors (school regulations, management styles of administrators, public trust present in community, expectations held by community for the school, activities and opportunities professional organizations offer, and union atmosphere in the system) that have an impact on the various facets of a teacher’s career. The cycle starts with the pre-service experience and then continues with induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, career frustration, stability and stagnancy, career wind-down, and career exit.
Burke et al. (1984) contended that if the organizational atmosphere (the school) has an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, then there will be a negative effect on the career cycle. In the induction stage of the posited career cycle, beginning teachers are socialized into the system, and they strive for acceptance by students, peers, and supervisors while also attempting to achieve a comfort and security level. The induction stage can be experienced when shifting to another grade level, another building, or another district (migration). The career cycle may not be linear in flow, for a teacher could move in and out of stages in response to personal and organizational environmental influences.

**The Role of the Principal in Teacher Retention**

In a profession “that eats its young” (Halford, 1998, p. 33), how does education address the issue of teacher migration and attrition while at the same time assisting and supporting teachers through the evolution process? If lack of administrative support (Boyd et al., 2005a; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003a; Robertson et al., 2006) is one key for teachers to make the decision to move or leave, the obvious solution is to provide administrative support. The Peter Harris Research Group, Inc. (2004) contends that the principal plays “a crucial role in the lives of novice teachers” and “should be a key influence in the lives of new teachers, helping to turn raw novices into seasoned, successful professionals” (p. 3). Flynt and Morton (2009) contend that “adequate” (p. 3) support for new teachers begins with “the building principal” (p. 3).

As stated in Chapter 1, Johnson et al. (2005) wrote that research repeatedly confirms the central role the principal plays in developing schools that have an environment of support for teachers; however, there is little in-depth research to explain
fully what a principal does to positively or negatively influence a teacher’s commitment to the school and to the profession. Johnson et al. (2005) also pointed out that studies should address the importance of the principal in providing both social and structural support for productive and rewarding collaboration among teachers.

Betsy Rogers (2005), the National Teacher of the Year in 2003, in her blog for Teacher Magazine, says, “This week my thoughts are turning to how do we keep good teachers in my school or any hard to staff school. One word comes to mind—support” (p. 1). The Educational Research Service (2002) reports it is hard to overestimate the importance of support for new teachers. The Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD, 2003) surveyed over 1200 first-, second-, and third-year teachers in the state of Washington and “support from the administrator” (p. 1) was one of the top three items that would influence teachers to remain in their current position.

According to the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), teachers who feel supported by administrators are more likely to remain in a demanding setting (Sparks, 2002). Ingersoll (2001a) suggests that increased support from school administration would lower the turnover rate and reduce staffing problems that would in turn aid school performance. In a 3-year study focused on working conditions of teachers, the Center For Teaching Quality (CTQ) found that new teachers who “have quality support are more likely to report they will remain in teaching” (Berry et al., 2008, p. 2). The Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (2001) reports that in order to improve school performance and reduce school staffing problems, schools need to improve teaching conditions, which would include increasing support from school administration.
In an effort to convey the observations, opinions, and recommendations of master teachers on the issue of teacher recruitment and retention, Scholastic Incorporated (Goldberg & Proctor, 2000) commissioned a study to which 400 National and State Teachers of the Year responded, and though 80% responded that higher beginning salaries help to retain new teachers, an even higher percentage (89%) said that administrative support was a great need. Butt and Retallick’s (2002) study of administrator-teacher workplace relationships revealed that in schools where teachers perceived positive relationships, the climate was described as positive and was characterized by “support, recognition, respect, and trust, and caring role models” (p. 21), whereas teachers who perceived their relationships with administrators as negative described the work context as characterized by “lack of support, lack of recognition, respect, and trust, and lack of caring” (p. 26).

When there is an effort to develop a powerful bond between the new teacher and the principal, the benefits will last well beyond the first year of teaching (DePaul, 2000). Teachers feel that much stronger support from administrators and parents would help them to be more effective (Public Agenda, 2000). Teachers in Johnson and Birkeland’s (2003b) study of 50 new teachers found that teachers who were voluntary movers paid “close attention to what the principal could offer” (p. 4). Respect and support from administrators were vital to teacher satisfaction.

Buttignol, Diamong, Houlihan, and Maggisano (2001), in their study of six Ontario principals, suggested that the principal plays “the first key role in first inducting new teachers into their schools” (p. 8), and that principals need to advocate for new
teachers. However, they caution that principals “cannot be expected to be everything to everyone” (p. 18), and that the induction of teachers needs to be a shared responsibility.

In a discussion with Delisio (2006), Bernell M. Petier-Galze, principal of Highland Heights Elementary School in Houston, Texas, felt that the following would help to support new teachers: assign new teachers to areas where you know they will succeed, limit out-of-classroom responsibilities for the first year, assign each new teacher a qualified mentor, and develop a culture of collaborative problem-solving in the school.

The Charlotte Advocates for Education (CAE, 2004) found that teachers listed working conditions as very important in the decision to remain at a school, and they felt that principal leadership was often the reason for a positive working climate. In the CAE’s study of 20 principals to understand the relationship between principals, culture, and retention of teachers, four key observations emerged:

1. Principals who have been more successful in retaining teachers have characteristics of successful entrepreneurs (p. 2).

2. These successful principals believe strong, instructional, operational, and strategic leadership qualities in their school are equally important. However, operational issues dominate much of their time, leaving too little time available for instructional leadership (p. 2).

3. These successful principals understand the value of people. They value teachers as individuals and sincerely want them to succeed and grow. The most successful strategies for these principals are those who give direct assistance to teachers (p. 2).
4. Principal preparation and continuing professional development must include practical information, the nuts and bolts of being a principal, as well as theory (p. 2).

Marshall (1993), an educator in the Boston Public Schools for 22 years, described that her reading of research about effective schools “made me see for the first time the key role of the principal in leading the staff and shaping an environment” (p. 2) within a school. The principal ideally serves as mentor, advocate, and instructional leader (Peter Harris Research Group, 2004). In that process, they help ensure that the new teachers learn the lay of the land, help with smooth transitions into the classroom, provide professional and personal support, help resolve conflicts with colleagues and community members, and provide guidance on matters of curriculum development, teaching style, parent relations, and classroom discipline. Brewster and Railsback (2001), in addressing current educational concerns, suggested that to help and provide support for new teachers the following should be considered:

1. A priority should be new teacher support.
2. Be sure to fund programs for new teachers.
3. Do not give new teachers the most challenging assignments (share the load).
4. Align new teachers to same grade level and areas taught when student teaching.
5. Orient new teachers at the start of the year.
6. Give teachers the data about their students prior to the first day of school.
7. Make sure teachers have the materials they need to get started.
8. Be clear about expectations of the new teacher.
9. Let new teachers know you are invested in their success.
10. Be sure to drop in and meet weekly with the new teacher.

11. Introduce new teachers to and make them a part of the larger school community.

12. Guide new teachers as they identify professional development activities.

The Puget Sound Educational Service District (2003) recommended that principals consider doing the following to influence teachers to stay:

1. Become familiar with the induction plan and the principal’s role.
2. Put new teachers where there is a strong chance of success.
4. Share the school’s culture, policies, and procedures.
5. Establish a welcoming culture.
6. Identify and assign the best mentor; identify other helpful staff.
7. Spend a good amount of time with the new teacher in the classroom.
8. Work with the mentor without breaking confidentiality.
9. Know that a little goes a long way.

The Peter Harris report (Peter Harris Research Group, 2004) suggested that the principal should be welcoming, friendly, interested, encouraging, and accessible. Stopping in to say hello to a new teacher who is working late, relaying compliments from parents, students, or colleagues, or leaving a positive note are ways to let a new teacher know he/she is supported. To develop a culture that will satisfy teachers and commit them to staying in the position, Anderman, Belzer, and Smith (1991) suggested that principals promote a supportive environment, effectively monitor the nature of curriculum, define goals, and carefully supervise teachers.
Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno (2000) report that new teachers in their study admired administrators who exercise quality control, carefully choose personnel, and resist compromises. When principals were strong and fair, the school environment flourished, but when the principals fell short, all felt it. The report also stated that given a choice of higher salary or schools where they receive strong backing and support, 82% would choose the support. In the report a New Jersey teacher tells exactly what she meant by administrative support:

For example, when you come head-to-toe with a parent, and you gave a grade to a student they feel they didn’t deserve and the parent comes to you and wants that grade changed, I want the administration to stand behind me and say, ‘This is my classroom policy, this is my grading policy, the criteria were not met, and that’s why this grade was given.’ Stand behind me. (p. 34)

Johnston (n.d.) alludes to the elusive precise meaning of “administrative support” that is used to criticize the principal for “failing to respond immediately and unconditionally to a staff member’s request” (p. 1). A study was done with 270 teachers to clarify the term and give specific advice to principals. The top-ranked behaviors are:

1. **Show up.** Visit the classrooms to see special things that are going on, such as student displays, and witness special projects. Use your presence to show interest in academic programs and teachers’ work.

2. **Back me up.** Help teachers devise reasonable solutions to discipline problems, assist in applying strategies, and help with dealing with parents and district administrators.

3. **Lend a hand.** Help teachers find resources, support continued professional development, and provide information and help for their specific needs.
4. *Show appreciation.* Simple, informal recognition of good work or exceptional effort is considered a major indicator of support. Notes, accolades at faculty meetings, celebrations, and private compliments make teachers feel valued and respected.

5. *Let me in on things.* Teachers feel effective when they feel included in what is going on in school. They want to know what is happening and how it is going to affect them and their students. They want a voice in things that affect them most directly.

6. *Respect my time.* Teachers feel time is their most precious commodity. They cherish leaders who respect their time. That means brief and focused meetings, keeping them free of unnecessary non-instructional demands, and protecting their time from demands of district administrators.

7. *Maintain an orderly environment.* Teachers are disturbed by chaotic, unpredictable, and unplanned activities. Create and maintain clearly established school routines. Plan special events well in advance and keep the overall climate calm and business-like.

Williams (2003) conducted in-depth interviews with 12 outstanding teachers who had been in the classroom for at least 15 years and had an average of more than 23 years, and they credited “talented administrators” (p. 75) with being able to get the correct combination of challenge and support to enable schools to become “joyful, creative, productive places” (p. 75). They felt that effective principals value teachers as individuals, take seriously and support innovative ideas, and trust them to do their job without a great deal of oversight. Richards (2003) asked teachers to rank the top five behaviors from a list of 22 behaviors desired from principals: support teachers with parents; support teachers in matters of discipline; respect and value teachers as
professionals; be fair, honest, and worthy of respect; and be accessible, available, and willing to listen. Johnson and Birkeland (2003a) found that movers sought better working environments that included administrators “who understood the challenge of being a new teacher, were fair and encouraging, and created structures of support and interaction among the schools’ teachers” (p. 599). School leaders need to pay attention to the working conditions that matter to novice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003), and key conditions included teacher participation in decision making, strong and supportive instructional leadership from the principal, and collegial learning opportunities.

Summary

The literature review in this chapter revealed that despite the fact that in the United States more teachers are trained than are needed, there is a shortage of teachers. Two significant factors of the teacher shortage are teacher migration and teacher attrition. Causes of migration and attrition have been attributed to poor working conditions, low pay, geography, and lack of administrative support. Migration and attrition affect school districts on a national level. The victims of teacher shortages are students of high-poverty, high-minority, inner-city, and rural students. The fields of mathematics, science, foreign languages, and special education are impacted by migration and attrition. The cost of teachers leaving positions for whatever reason is in the billions of dollars nationally. Teacher shortages negatively affect education with loss of continuity, increased cost of training new teachers, loss of experience and expertise, and lower student performance. Teachers who have migrated or left the profession have made that choice for reasons that include job dissatisfaction, low pay rates, paperwork, non-
teaching responsibilities, low morale, poor student motivation, discipline problems, lack of recognition from administration, chaos, and lack of principal support.

Research showed that teacher migration and attrition can reach as high as 40% within the first 5 years of teaching. Research on the role of the principal in teacher retention showed that the principal has a central role in creating an atmosphere of support for teachers. Several researchers, who identified stages or phases of teacher development and the concerns/stresses of those stages, were reviewed in this chapter. As the central role in creating a supportive atmosphere for teachers, the significance of understanding the phases/stages of teacher development and the concerns/stresses in those phases/stages provides insight and opportunity for administration to create a supportive atmosphere to proactively address those concerns/stresses before they overwhelm the teacher.

Understanding the phases/stages gives the administrator advanced knowledge, thereby providing a much needed opportunity to reduce costly teacher migration and attrition.

While the principal owns the central role of support for teachers, scant research specifically identifies exactly what a principal does that positively or negatively influences teachers’ commitments to a school. In addition, administrative support means different things to different people.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

There is a shortage of teachers in the United States that results from the migration and attrition. This revolving door is extremely costly in terms of dollars and level of student performance within public schools. Schools that are affected the most are ones with high percentages of disadvantaged students in urban and rural areas.

To explore the role of the principal in elementary teacher retention and migration, this study identified elementary teachers’ perceptions of principal support (qualitative), applied elementary teachers’ perceptions of principal support to a larger population (quantitative), and then clarified elementary teachers’ perceptions of principal support by interviewing (qualitative) elementary teachers using the five questions with the greatest mean from the survey.

This chapter describes the mixed methodology that was used and how the study was conducted.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study: How does a teacher’s perception of principal support affect a teacher’s decision to stay in a teaching position or in the profession? How does a teacher’s perception of a lack of principal support affect a teacher’s decision to leave a position or the profession?
Research Design—Mixed Methodology

Denzin (1970) refers to the use of more than one method of gathering data as methodological triangulation. A sequential mixed methodology was used for this study. This process helped establish triangulation by using a focus group interview, a survey, and the literature review (Creswell, 2003). In his synopsis of the historical background of mixed methodology, Creswell (2003) suggests that the origin of mixed methodology was the use of the multitrait-multimethod matrix to examine multiple approaches to data collection, which in turn prompted others to begin mixing methods that included observations and interviews (qualitative data) with the traditional surveys used in quantitative data.

Acknowledging that all “methods have limitations” and that “biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods” (p. 15), Creswell’s (2003) chronology supports the use of triangulation—convergence across quantitative and qualitative methods in which one method may help or inform another method. A benefit of nesting (mixing) the methods, chronicled Creswell, is bringing insight into different units of analysis, as well as serving a “larger, transformational purpose to change and advocate for marginalized groups” (p. 16).

Creswell (2003) describes three strategies of mixed methodology: sequential procedures, concurrent procedures, and transformative procedures. Sequential procedures involve elaborating on or expanding the “findings of method with another method” (p. 16). The researcher could begin with a qualitative method “for exploratory purpose” (p. 16) and then would follow with a quantitative method “with a large sample” (p. 16). Concurrent procedures lead to the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data, providing “comprehensive data analysis of the research problem” (p. 16). The researcher
simultaneously collects both forms of data and then integrates the information “in the integration of the overall results” (p. 16). One form of data is nested within a larger form so that different questions or levels of units in an organization can be analyzed. The transformative procedure uses a theoretical lens “as an overarching perspective” (p. 16) in a design that is both quantitative and qualitative.

In this procedure, data collection could be sequential or concurrent. Of the two procedures, I used the sequential procedure, which involved using a method to expand or elaborate on the findings of another method. There were three steps to the mixed-method approach. Step one, a focus group was conducted. The data from the focus group were used to generate content for a survey. Step two, the data from the focus group were used to develop and conduct a 16-question survey. Step three, the five questions with the highest mean scores from the survey were used for a follow-up interview. The three steps of the sequential procedure I used were qualitative, quantitative, and qualitative, in that order.

Merriam (1998) describes qualitative research as “being interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). Eisner (1998) states, “If qualitative inquiry in education is about anything, it is about trying to understand what teachers and children do in the settings in which they work” (p. 11). If, Eisner continued, education is to achieve success in understanding, then we must establish a connection with the students, teachers, and schools, and use what we learn as a source for interpretation and approval. Qualitative inquiry can help researchers to learn about teachers in ways that are useful to them, and researchers “are interested in matters of
motive and the quality of experience undergone by those in the situation studied” (Eisner, 1998, p. 35).

**Qualitative Data**

The first phase of the mixed-method sequential procedure (Creswell, 2003), the first qualitative portion of the study, began with a focus group. The data collected from the discussion and review literature functioned as a supplementary source of data for a survey. The following section describes the focus group process in general.

Focus groups (Morgan, 1997) as a form of qualitative research are essentially group interviews and have three basic functions. One function is as a principal source of data and is known as a self-contained method. In this method, the focus groups are the primary means of collecting data and require “careful matching” (p. 3) of the goals of the research with the data produced by the group.

A second use of focus groups is as supplementary sources of data for studies that use another primary method. The group discussions “often serve as a source of preliminary data in a primarily quantitative study” (p. 3). Morgan (1997) suggests using a focus group discussion to generate a survey questionnaire.

The third use is a multi-method study (no one primary method drives the use of others) that combines two or more methods of data collection. In this situation, the focus groups “typically add to the data that are gathered through other qualitative methods” (p. 3). I used the focus group as a primary means of collecting data with the goal of using the data as one of the sources for developing the 16 stems for the survey.
Number of Groups

While Morgan (1997) proposes that three to five groups are needed to reach saturation, I used one focus group as well as data from the literature review. Generated content from the focus group discussion was compared to the data from the literature review to develop content for the survey questionnaire in the quantitative portion of the research.

I used a focus group as a supplementary source of data. Because the literature lacked a usable definition of principal support, the focus group interview was used to elicit elementary teachers’ perception of principal support.

Group Size

Group size addresses the issue of using a smaller group versus a larger group. Morgan (1997) contends that one major factor for group size is how much each participant has to contribute to the discussion, and he gives the following risks and benefits of small and large groups. Small-group discussion is less active if members have a low level of involvement with the topic or if they are sensitive to the dynamics of the individual participants.

Small groups work best when participants are interested in the topic and are respectful of each other. In addition, small groups are more useful for getting a clear sense of the participants’ reaction to the research topic, because each participant has more time to talk. In large groups, on the other hand, there is greater difficulty in managing group discussion without a higher level of moderator involvement, which generally requires an experienced moderator who can control the dynamics without continued efforts at discipline.
I used a small group of 8 members to get a clear sense of the participants’ reaction to the research topic.

Purposive Sample

Selecting focus group participants and controlling group composition are two sampling concerns. Morgan (1997) posits that it is beneficial to select focus group participants with an emphasis on minimizing bias rather than achieving generalizability. Because focus groups use purposive samples in which members are recruited from a limited source, bias becomes problematic only when ignored through “interpreting the data from a limited sample as representing a full spectrum of experience and opinions” (p. 35). The shift from generalizability, Morgan (1997) continues, means moving from random sampling to purposive sampling for two reasons. One reason is a matter of group size being adequate to represent a larger population. The second reason is that a randomly assembled group is “unlikely to hold a shared perspective on the research” (p. 35). Consequently, I used a self-selected sample for focus group participant selection.

Controlling group composition to match carefully chosen categories of participants is called segmentation, and such composition ties into the emphasis on homogeneously composed focus groups that allow for free-flowing conversations (Morgan, 1997). Homogeneity of backgrounds is the goal, warned Morgan, not homogeneity of attitudes. For this study, the common background of the participants is that they are new teachers with a few weeks to 5 years of experience who teach in a rural school district in north-central Pennsylvania.

In addition to the background issues, there is the issue of group composition consisting of strangers versus acquaintances. Morgan (1997) stated that strangers versus
acquaintances could generate different group dynamics, with the deciding factor coming down to the nature of the research goals. The basic criterion is whether the group comfortably and usefully discusses the topic. The teachers were acquainted with each other.

Recruitment

Morgan (1997) contended that inadequate recruitment effort is a common problem in focus group research and that it is imperative to develop a plan that ensures enough participants will show up. I sent a letter to the superintendent requesting permission to conduct the focus group research on my topic within his district. Upon approval, I then asked that he alert the principal that I would be contacting him via email to set up a time to meet with teachers who qualified for group participation. I met with the teachers on site and explained my study to them; in the meeting, I explained my research topic and asked whether they would be willing to participate. I left my email address so that teachers could contact me confidentially. Teachers who were willing to be a part of the study emailed me to let me know they were interested in participating in the study. Nine teachers responded. Because there were nine responses, I decided to meet with all nine and increase the group number to nine; however, on the day of the focus group meeting, one member decided not to come. I met with the teachers off of school property so they could remain anonymous to the administration and to encourage free discussion of the questions. To ensure that data were collected accurately, I recorded the session.
Interview

Morgan (1997) recommended a structured group process when there is a “strong, pre-existing agenda for the research” (p. 39). Structured signifies a standardized interview with a higher level of moderator involvement. Because the data from the focus group discussion were to be used for items on a quantitative survey, I served the moderator and was then able to pose questions that helped keep the discussion concentrated on the topic.

I moderated the focus group as recommended by Morgan (1997):

1. Discussion lasted 1½ to 2 hours.
2. The discussion topic was organized with loosely phrased questions.
3. The topic was introduced in an honest but general fashion with a few ground rules.
4. Discussion began with an ice-breaking question.
5. The ice-breaking question was followed by a discussion-stated question that encouraged each person to make an opening statement so that everyone was on record before consensus started to occur. I suggested to the group that they may want to write notes prior to responding verbally. There were no notes written.

After the discussion, I compared responses to the list of principal support actions from the literature review in case there was a need to spur further discussion. I did not feel the need to use the list to promote discussion.

I used the following questions for the focus group interview:

1. Please reflect back on your teaching experience and describe to me what principal support for teachers looks like to you.
2. If you said the principal did not support you, what would support look like to you?

After the session, I transcribed the interview.

Qualitative Data Analysis

“When focus groups serve primarily as a preliminary, exploratory technique, the analysis and reporting of the data will be typically driven by the needs of the larger research project” (Morgan, 1997, p. 58). The purpose of this focus group was to combine the data from discussion with data from literature review to identify elementary teachers’ perception of principal support. In my study, the focus group discussion was transcribed, and transcriptions were shared with a curriculum/instruction coordinator and a former curriculum/instruction coordinator from a neighboring school district. Both coordinators and I had experience as teachers and one coordinator and I had experience as principals.

Investigator triangulation (Denzin, 1970), the use of more than one researcher to gather and interpret data, was conducted by having each of us individually review the transcription and identify phrases or wording that described principal support. We then met, shared our notes, and developed a list of principal support actions (see Appendix B) from the transcription using only the phrases upon which all three of us agreed. I combined the focus group list of principal support actions (Appendix B) with the principal actions from the literature review list (see Appendix A). I then grouped the actions into 16 themes and shared them with the same two individuals. They agreed with me upon the themes. These themes were used to generate a survey questionnaire, to a larger population, of elementary teachers’ perception of principal support.
Generalizability

Eisner (1998) posited that generalizations can occur through the modes of skills, images, and ideas. Eisner continued that images have “a powerful instrumental function” that is “an expression of their generalizing capacity” (p. 199), and in that generalizing capacity of the image, the researcher is led to look for certain qualities rather than others. Once an image of excellence is acquired, it can then be applied to other aspects of the world to which it is believed to be relevant (Eisner, 1998). For this study I generalized through the mode of images that emerged from words—the words and phrases describing principal support that were generated from the focus group discussion. The image of a supportive principal that was created from the focus group and the literature review became a prototype for appraisal of administrative support for new teachers. The means by which the images are applied are as follows:

1. Formal inference: This is ideal for generalizing within scientific inquiry, when random selection is used to make it possible.

2. Attribute analysis: The image of specific attributes that marks a particular class of objects can be used to identify their presence in our experience.

3. Image matching: There is a generalized image and what is being sought can be found by matching a pattern seen with an image remembered.

The attribute analysis is the appropriate method to apply for generalization. I specifically articulated what teachers consider to be principal support—in other words, attributes of a supportive principal. I asked the focus group to identify such attributes to classify a supportive principal.
Reliability and Validity

Reliability, in the traditional sense, refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. Merriam (1998), however, contends that reliability in qualitative research refers to the extent to which there is consistency within the findings, and this is enhanced by triangulation of data. Investigator triangulation (Denzin, 1970) was employed to gather data from the focus group interview. Then the focus group data were compared with data from literature review about teachers’ perception of principal support.

Quantitative Data

F. Fuller’s (1969) conceptualization of teachers’ concerns posits three phases:

1. A pre-teaching phase of non-concern
2. An early-teaching phase of self-concern
3. A late-teaching phase of pupil-concern.

In phase 2, self-concern, one concern involves the teachers trying to “estimate how much support will be forthcoming from the school principal” (p. 220). The literature review reveals that lack of principal support is one of the reasons a revolving door of migration and attrition exists.

In step two of the sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2003), a survey was conducted to apply teachers’ perception of principal support to a larger population. The quantitative data were collected with an assessment tool derived from data collected from a focus group discussion of elementary teachers’ perception of principal support and literature review about what is teachers’ perception of principal support. According to Gay and Airasian (2003), studies “designed to describe current conditions are called
survey or descriptive research” (p. 10). Gay and Airasian further assert that the purpose of a survey is to collect data to answer questions about the current status of issues or topics.

Pilot Study

Because there was no existing questionnaire, I had to develop my own survey instrument. Pilot studies are often conducted to test a new questionnaire (Patten, 2004). From the focus group and literature review, 16 themes were developed. The 16 themes were used to create 16 questions for a pilot study to test the viability of the definition. Carmines and Zeller (1979) posited that in education, the alternative-form method is used “extensively” (p. 40) to assess reliability. To address reliability, the pilot study conducted two pre-surveys using the alternate-form method, positive-posed questions and then negative-posed questions.

Likert scales measure attitude to determine what the participant “believes, perceives, or feels about self, others, activities, institutions, or situations” (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 131). In the Likert scale, the respondent indicates his or her level of agreement to a series of statements, and the responses are associated with a point value. Adding the point value of each statement then totals each survey; point values are reversed for negative statements (Gay & Airasian, 2003; Patten, 2004). Both pre-surveys used a Likert scale. The range for the Likert scale for the survey is shown in Table 1.

Internal consistency reliability can be measured by calculating Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (Litwin, 1995). When numbers are used to represent responses on a Likert scale, analysis for internal consistency can be done with Cronbach’s Alpha (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Using SAS (Statistical Analysis System) software for the pre-surveys,
Table 1

Range of Likert Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Numerical Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very likely to leave the school</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much more likely to leave the school</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat likely to leave the school</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat likely to stay at the school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much more likely to stay at the school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very likely to stay at the school</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

two instruments were used to test for reliability: Cronbach’s Alpha and Item-Adjusted Total Correlation. Both surveys asked for feedback on clarity of questions and length of survey. Participants were given the opportunity to share information or comments on both pre-surveys.

Description of Participants

Participants of the pilot study were recruited from a rural elementary school in north-central Pennsylvania. All subjects were currently teaching.

Recruitment

I first contacted the superintendent by phone to see if he would be willing to let me conduct the first pre-survey with his teachers. The phone call was followed by a letter. The superintendent replied with a letter permitting me to conduct the pilot survey.

I met with the teachers after school to explain my research and ask if they would be willing to participate in the survey. The survey, with all positive-posed questions, was handed out and the completed surveys were returned in an envelope to me. Twenty teachers participated in the first pre-survey.
Pre-Surveys

Below are the 16 questions in the first pre-survey which contained all questions in the positive voice. The Likert scale with words and numerical values was at the top of the survey just above the first question..

1. The principal provides resources and materials to me in a timely manner.
2. The principal encourages and shows appreciation for me as a teacher.
3. The principal understands and respects the demands on my time.
4. The principal shows interest by stopping by my classroom on a regular basis for non-evaluative purposes.
5. The principal values my input.
6. The principal assigns me to an area that ensures my success.
7. The principal supports me when dealing with parents.
8. The principal supports me when dealing with student discipline.
9. The principal clearly communicates expectations to me.
10. The principal respects my expertise.
11. The principal builds trust with the teachers at the school.
12. The principal is a leader of a collaborative team.
13. The principal is an educational leader.
14. The principal is fair to me.
15. The principal is accessible to me.
16. The principal is a respected role model.
Feedback Question and Responses to First Pre-Survey

At the end of the survey were questions for feedback on the survey. In response to the question, How clear were the questions? no one believed they were unclear, 3 thought they were somewhat unclear, 1 believed they were somewhat clear, and 16 thought they were clear. When they were asked which questions were unclear, only four participants chose to answer the question. Respondent 4 wrote that the “format was a little vague” and respondent 6 said that “all were clear.” Respondent 5 answered “none” and respondent 7 answered “no” to the question. When asked why the questions were unclear, respondent 2 stated that the “scale was difficult to comprehend in relation to the questions.” For that reason, I chose to put the worded Likert scale under each question in the second pre-survey instead of the number value.

The fourth feedback question asked whether, given the length, teachers would be willing to take the survey. Three respondents (1, 2, 8) said somewhat likely and the rest of the respondents said very likely. The last feedback question asked for any other comments or information the respondents would like to share about the survey. There was only one response. Respondent 9 wrote that “sometimes you stay because you love your job.”

Cronbach’s Alpha and Item-Adjusted Total Correlation using SAS were performed to test for reliability of the first pre-survey in the positive voice. Table 2 depicts the results.

Overall, for the 16 positive questions, the Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.9733. All questions appeared to be good measures of the same construct.
Table 2

*Positive Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Omitted Variable</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Item-Adjusted Total Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>0.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>0.751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>0.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>0.972</td>
<td>0.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>0.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>0.799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>0.972</td>
<td>0.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>0.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>0.972</td>
<td>0.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Q = question.

About one month later, I returned to the school and asked the teachers if they would be willing to participate in the second pre-survey that used all negative questions (alternate-form). Fourteen teachers were willing to participate in the second pre-survey. Again, the survey was handed out and completed surveys were returned to me in an envelope.

The second pre-survey, in the negative voice, was given as an alternate form to the first pre-survey of all questions in the positive voice. Responses were scaled on a Likert scale as follows: Very likely to leave the school rated -3. Much more likely to leave the school rated -2. Somewhat likely to leave the school rated -1. No impact rated 0. Somewhat likely to stay at the school rated 1. Much more likely to stay at the school rated 2. Very likely to stay at the school rated 3.
Because of Respondent 2’s comment from feedback from the first pre-survey, I chose to use a worded Likert scale beneath each question as opposed to the numerical representation of the worded scale. The survey questions in negative form follow in Table 3.

Table 3

Negative Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>The principal does not provide resources and materials to me in a timely manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>The principal does not encourage and does not show appreciation for me as a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>The principal does not understand and respect the demands on my time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>The principal does not show interest by stopping by my classroom on a regular basis for non-evaluative purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>The principal does not value my input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>The principal does not assign me to an area that ensures my success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>The principal does not support me when dealing with parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>The principal does not support me when dealing with student discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>The principal does not clearly communicate expectations to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>The principal does not respect my expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>The principal does not build trust with the teachers at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>The principal is not a leader of a collaborative team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>The principal is not an educational leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>The principal is not fair to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>The principal is not accessible to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>The principal is not a respected role model.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Q = question.

The survey asked for feedback on clarity of questions and length of survey. The survey also asked for comments or information that the subjects would like to share. At the end of the survey were feedback questions. The first feedback question addressed the clarity of the survey questions. Three respondents (3, 4, 9) said that the questions were
somewhat unclear. Respondents 2, 7, and 11 said that the questions were somewhat clear. The eight other respondents said that the questions were clear. When asked for feedback on which questions were unclear, there were no responses. However, when asked why questions were unclear, Respondent 3 stated, “All questions asked in negative” and Respondent 9 stated, “Have to think very generally and almost the opposite.” The fourth feedback question asked whether, given the length, how likely teachers would be willing to take the survey. Respondent 11 said somewhat unlikely and respondent 7 said somewhat likely. The other 12 respondents said very likely.

Cronbach’s Alpha and Item-Adjusted Total Correlation using SAS were performed to test for reliability of the pre-survey in the negative voice. Table 4 depicts the results of the negative survey.

Although all 16 questions had a Cronbach’s Alpha score of 0.9000 and above, the Item-Adjusted Total Correlation score for questions 6 and 14 in the negative survey had a score below 0.7 and did not seem to measure the same construct as the other 14 questions. Because Questions 6 and 14 in the positive survey did have an Item-Adjusted Total Correlation score above 0.7, those questions were stated as positive questions on the final survey, thus, making the final survey consist of 10 positive questions and 6 negative questions.

Survey

Quantitative research for this study was conducted through a teacher survey, which requires less time and is not as expensive (Gay & Airasian, 2003). Using structured items, the authors continued, facilitates data analysis and allows for objective and efficient scoring. The Likert scale is a scaled-item questionnaire dealing with a single
Table 4

Negative Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Omitted Variable</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Item-Adjusted Total Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>0.9605</td>
<td>0.7196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>0.9586</td>
<td>0.8238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>0.9587</td>
<td>0.8433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>0.9584</td>
<td>0.8379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>0.9581</td>
<td>0.8572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>0.9687</td>
<td>0.3182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>0.9590</td>
<td>0.8025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>0.9598</td>
<td>0.7873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>0.9560</td>
<td>0.9585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>0.9593</td>
<td>0.8194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>0.9574</td>
<td>0.8881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>0.9573</td>
<td>0.8895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>0.9597</td>
<td>0.7639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>0.9622</td>
<td>0.6050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>0.9603</td>
<td>0.7323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>0.9590</td>
<td>0.8033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Q = question.*

concept and should be worded as clearly as possible (Gay & Airasian, 2003; Patten, 2004). The response choices on a Likert scale can range from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Gay & Airasian, 2003; Patten, 2004).

Both positive and negative statements should be provided to reduce response bias (marking the same answer to all responses), and administering the survey anonymously addresses the issue of social desirability bias (portraying an organization in a favorable light) (Patten, 2004). Evenly balancing the number of positive and negative statements helps avoid the problem of response bias (Page-Bucci, 2003). Statements in a Likert scale “should be derived from an analysis of the possible components of the attitude” (Patten, 2004, p. 81). The statements were derived from the data of the focus study group and the literature review. The pilot study analysis revealed that two of the negative-voiced
questions did not appear to measure the construct. Ten positive questions and six negative questions were used for the survey.

**Ethical Considerations**

To ensure ethical research, this proposal was submitted to the Andrews University Institutional Review Board for approval. Upon approval, the administration in each school district in the survey received, via email, a letter asking permission for the survey to be conducted. The only biographical data collected were years of service and gender. Pseudonyms are used for the individuals interviewed as well as the schools and districts.

**Population**

The population consisted of all of the public elementary teachers from nine school districts in two north-central counties of Pennsylvania.

**Description of Participants**

Participants of the survey were recruited from rural elementary schools in north-central Pennsylvania. All subjects were currently teaching.

The total sample population, of the six school districts, was 408 elementary teachers. Of the 408 teachers, 329 (80.63%) teachers participated in the survey. By individual district the distribution of participation ranged from 66.66% to 91.89%. Table 5 depicts the percentage of respondents from the possible sample by individual district and as a whole.

**Demographics of Respondents**

The survey asked for gender and the number of years of teaching experience. There was a total of 46 males (14%) and 283 females (86%). Table 6 depicts the
Table 5

*Percentage of Participants From Each District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total Faculty</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>91.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>76.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>81.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>91.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Districts</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>80.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

*Distribution of Years of Experience for Males*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

distribution of years for males. The median was 11 years of experience and the mean was 15.19 years of experience.

Table 7 depicts the distribution of years for females. The median for females was 14 years of experience and the mean was 15.08 years of experience.
Table 7

*Distribution of Years of Experience for Females*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedures

I contacted the superintendents of the school districts in two north-central Pennsylvania counties with a letter requesting permission to survey elementary teachers. All nine superintendents gave their permission for the survey to be given. I then contacted each principal via mail or e-mail to request their permission to survey teachers in their respective building. Seven of the nine principals agreed to let me conduct the survey; I did not get a response from the last two principals. I set up a time to meet with each faculty to conduct the survey of 16 questions of 10 positive-posed and 6 negative-posed questions. Because of bad weather I was unable to survey one school district (even though we had set up two different dates).

I went to the six districts and met with the teachers to explain the study. Participants were informed that the surveys would be collected by schools for demographic comparison of the sample population; however, the schools were not identified by name but by letter. That identification letter was assigned after survey completion so that the schools were not identified in the data analysis. The survey
consisted of 16 questions and also asked for descriptive data of gender and years of experience. Completion of the survey implied consent. The completed surveys were submitted to me in a manila envelope.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

**Generalizability**

Because this study looked only at rural populations, it cannot be generalized to urban or suburban populations. The findings of this study can be generalized only to the extent that other school districts are similar in culture and character to the schools studied.

**Reliability**

In order for the survey to establish reliability over time within and across sites (test-retest), two metrics were used to discern consistency of response within and across sites. The first metric, Cronbach’s Alpha, compared the average of the items site-to-site (10 sites) and to the survey as a whole. The Cronbach’s Alpha was .85, establishing internal consistency for the survey. The second metric, correlation coefficient, was calculated for each item site-to-site. Depicted in Table 8 is the correlation-coefficient. A correlation of less than 0.3 suggests the item does not measure the same construct. With the exception of site 10, all sites had a correlation between 0.5 and 0.9. Although the correlation coefficients for site 10 are somewhat lower than sites 1-9, they were in the acceptable range of 0.3 or above.

Another way to look at the reliability is the scatter plot in Figure 1. The average score by site is plotted against each other; a straight line of dots would indicate a perfect correlation. While there are no straight lines, sites 1-9 of the plots do indicate a moderate
Table 8

Correlation-Coefficient Matrix for the 10 Survey Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

to fairly strong correlation site-to-site. Comparatively, site 10 has a weaker correlation as was indicated in the correlation coefficients.

Once the analysis for the mean was performed, only the five questions with the greatest mean were used as points of discussion for the interviews; therefore, data for the remaining 11 questions were not used. Protocol for the interview was developed after the survey was completed.

**Qualitative Data**

The third and final step for the mixed-method sequential procedure (Creswell, 2003) was conducting interviews. Names of participants (from rural elementary schools in north-central Pennsylvania) who were willing to be interviewed were collected during the survey process. Participants for the interviews were randomly chosen. I chose one female and one male with less than 5 years of experience and one female and one male with more than 5 years of teaching experience. All the participants were over 18 years of age and were currently teaching.
From the consent forms that were turned in from the survey process, I separated the forms into four groups. Group one was males with 5 years or less of teaching experience. Group two was males with more than 5 years of teaching experience. The third group consisted of females with 5 years or less of teaching experience, and group four was females with more than 5 years of teaching experience. A name was drawn from each group.
The four individuals were contacted by phone and asked if they were still willing to be interviewed. The initial name drawn from group two (males with more than 5 years of experience), after repeated attempts, did not return my call. Therefore, I randomly chose another name from group two to contact. The first contact from the other three groups (groups 1, 3, and 4) agreed to be interviewed and the second contact from group two agreed to be interviewed.

I met with the interviewees at their convenience and recorded the interviews. There were two opening questions for each interview:

1. What is your name and what subject or grade do you teach?
2. How long have been in your current position?

The opening questions were followed by the key question: Please look at the five top principal support actions that emerged from the survey and identify an experience for each that helps me understand why teachers chose these as one of the top five. The ending question asked if there was anything else about principal support that the teacher wanted to share with me.

I then transcribed the interviews and sent the transcriptions to the same individuals who reviewed data from the focus groups—the former curriculum/instructional leader and the current curriculum/instructional leader from a neighboring district. They, along with me, individually read the transcriptions and independently pulled out data that described principal support and the effect of the support or lack of support on the participants. We met and shared our findings.
Summary

In addition to retirement, teacher attrition and migration account for the teacher shortage in the United States. Johnson et al. (2005) have expressed that there is a lack of in-depth research that specifically explains what principals do to positively or negatively influence teacher commitment. This study employed a sequentially mixed-method approach to explore the role of the principal in rural elementary teacher retention and migration. Focus group data were combined with literature review to identify rural elementary teachers’ perception of principal support, a survey was conducted to apply rural elementary teachers’ perception of principal support to a larger population, and finally, interviews were conducted to clarify the top five results of the survey in an effort to understand what the results actually mean to rural elementary teachers as they relate to principal support and retention (qualitative).
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter 4 gives a brief summary of the study followed by the results of the focus group, the survey, and the interviews. Since my study consisted of three distinct parts, I will briefly reiterate those three aspects of the study and then detail the results of each of the three parts.

This research study was conducted to determine the role of the principal in teacher retention and migration in rural counties of north-central Pennsylvania. Because the literature review revealed that principal support meant different things to different people (Robertson et al., 2006) and because Johnson et al. (2005) feel that there is a lack of in-depth research that explains “specifically what a principal does to positively or negatively influence teachers’ commitment to the school and the profession” (p. 71), a focus group was used to identify rural elementary teachers’ perception of principal support. The focus group data were triangulated with literature review data. From the combined focus group data and literature review data, 16 themes were developed that described principal support. The 16 themes were used to develop a Likert-scaled 16-question survey. The purpose of the survey was to apply rural elementary teachers’ perception of principal support to a larger population. In 2011 the survey was conducted in elementary schools in north-central Pennsylvania. After the survey, interviews of rural
elementary teachers were conducted and data gathered to gain insight into the role that the principal plays in teacher retention, migration, and attrition.

**Focus Group Results**

Focus Group Interview

Following are the responses to the focus group questions. The number in the parentheses indicates a phrase from the focus group list (see Appendix B).

**Question 1**

When you were hired, were there expectations about what support you would be getting from the principal?

When first-year teachers were asked if there were any expectations about what support they would get from the principal when they were hired, responses appeared to center around concerns of getting ready to teach. There were 12 phrases (see 1-12 below) that emerged from the responses concerning expected support from the principal. One male teacher expected that the principal would try to “make things go as smoothly as possible” (1). He referred to support as help getting the classroom ready (2), help getting the materials he had requested and getting the classroom “up to running as soon as possible” (3). He expected that if the principal said he was going to do something, “then [he would] get it done” (4) and in a timely manner (7). The teacher was also expecting the principal to maintain a positive atmosphere, knowing what was “going on with the teachers” (5) and to “create a positive relationship” (6). He shared that when he first came to the position, he expected that the administration would work as a team with the teachers (8).
A second male teacher expected that the principal would share the curriculum plan and “integrate” him into the plan “so that we all can work as a unit rather than individual teachers do our own thing” (9, 10, 11, 12).

Question 2a

Would you be willing to share experiences that occurred where principal support was important?

There were 10 principal-support actions (see 13-22 below) that emerged when the group was asked about sharing experiences that occurred where principal support was important.

The dean of students responded that it is nice when administration comes down and says “these are the rules and this is the way it’s going be” when dealing with “pretty unreasonable parents” (13). He also admitted that sometimes the situation has been “the other way” where he has been “yelled at and we let them [parents] yell and they [parents] walk out.”

A physical education teacher felt supported when he came to the principal with a new idea of putting up a rock wall in the gymnasium. He reported that the administration was more than helpful, saying, “Let’s go; let’s do it” (14). He felt that he was supported with new activities he tried to “integrate into phys ed.”

Question 2b

Would you be willing to share experiences where lack of support was important?

When asked about experiences where there was a lack of support, a pre-Kindergarten teacher said she had experienced lack of support at retention meetings. She felt that as she discussed with parents the difficult situation of having to retain a pre-
Kindergarten student, she was “on her own” and “was not supported by the principal” (15). She expressed her wish to have been supported; for as the children were passed on and not retained, they had “floundered and struggled.” She felt that if she had been supported “a little bit more that then maybe things would have been different.” She went on to say that when asked an opinion about something in your professional field, “they [administration] would think more of your opinion” and that when stating what you think is best for the child “you [she] would like some support” (16).

A first-year teacher felt a lack of support because he had a classroom for only half of the day and then had to use a storage room as a classroom. When he reported for the first day of school, that storage room was loaded with “junk computers, piano, tables, and all kinds of stuff.” He was told it would be cleaned out but “it didn’t and it didn’t and it didn’t, and then finally it got cleaned out a little bit” (17). After the room was cleaned out it “got trashed again.” He stated that the cleaning/trashing cycle happened three times. His job was supporting struggling readers, and he wanted the room to remain clean and uncluttered each day so the students would not “freak out if their desk was in a different spot.” He expressed frustration over having to copy everything by hand, for he had been asking for an overhead projector (18) for a month and the response had been “I’ll do it immediately per se” (19). He admitted to a “chunk” of time at the beginning of school when he felt really frustrated and he wondered why he was there. He felt there was no encouragement for him to want to become a good teacher (20).

A veteran teacher spoke up to support the first-year teacher, saying that when he asked for “things—and it would take an extended amount of time”—he learned quickly that “when I wanted something or wanted something to get done, I would just take the
initiative myself and do it” (21). He also shared that if he needed principal approval to do something he would secure the permission, but then would do it on his own (22). The first-year teacher agreed that asking for something to be done (and “it takes forever for anything to happen”) is difficult, and he felt it was equally difficult to “step over anyone’s boundaries” (22).

In addition to previously identified principal support actions, 14 (see 23-36 below) different principal support actions were identified from Question 3.

**Question 3**

If you were a principal, what would you do to support teachers in your building?

Question 3 asked what you would do to support teachers if you were the principal in the building. There were 14 phrases that emerged from the data.

One teacher responded that she would communicate on a daily basis inquiring how “things are going,” finding out “what’s working for you, what’s not,” and asking what the principal could do to “make things better.” She said that if not done on a daily basis, he would at least come to the room on a weekly basis (23). Another teacher responded that even though visiting the room was good, it would be important to come to the classroom, stay for the whole period, and then “maybe give some pointers—say this is good, or maybe you shouldn’t do this so much.” He would try to help them out “on a professional level to be a better educator” (24). He felt that this sets an example to the students that the principal is serious and supports the teacher, that “this is important for everybody involved” (25).

Another female teacher responded saying that she would be in the classroom more with the teachers “not so much to criticize—but to show them that you are there to
support them and show them that they are an important part of a team in the school.” Tell them you liked the lesson; if students are giving you a rough time, “Why don’t you try this with them, just try to help them out a little bit” (26). Another response was that if you are going to be a principal and make decisions about the classrooms and about the entire school, it is important to be in the classrooms “seeing what’s going on.’ He felt that as a principal it is hard to make decisions about the classroom if you “don’t know what it is like in the classrooms too” (23).

A first-year teacher responded that, as a principal, when giving advice to new teachers, “cut the power-trip approach.” He would not be threatening someone if they needed improvements (27). In addition, one teacher related an experience of being called into the principal’s office and being only negatively critiqued; there was nothing positive. What was most bothersome was although she received negative critiques, the principal had never been in her classroom. There had been no informal or formal observation for the year (28). If she were principal, along with the negative critiques, she would give positive feedback as well (29).

The first-year teacher said he would make building expectations known (30), tell teachers the rules (31), and define procedures (32) from the very beginning of the year. He would also communicate changes to the staff (33). As principal, he would communicate directly with the teacher about an issue, not the staff as a whole (34). He related that currently there are “certain students and families” who, lately, are always supported on an issue instead of the teacher. If principal, he would “number one—make sure my teachers come first” (35). “Not to not support the parents, but to make sure that you really get to see both sides before you take a stand for one or the other” (36).
Question 4

Please reflect back on your teaching experience and describe to me what principal support for teachers looks like to you.

The group was asked to reflect on their teaching experience and describe what principal support looked like to them. Three new themes (see 37-39 below) emerged from the responses.

A veteran teacher began by saying it is as simple as “good job, a pat on the back” (37); giving some positive reinforcement (while all the others in the group were shaking their heads in agreement). Another veteran teacher felt that being hired as a professional, it was embarrassing to not be supported when making a professional recommendation (15) (there were many shaking heads in agreement). He could not understand why the person who hired him to educate students would say, “That’s not what we’re going to do.” He wondered why he should even try to “help a student by giving them an extra year of learning in this grade so they can be prepared for the next grade knowing that my principal is going to override that anyway” (15). While he did not describe what it did look like, he did describe what it did not look like to him.

Honesty (38) was another response to what principal support looked like to the first-year male teacher. He repeated that if a principal promises to get something done, it does not have to be done that day but “at least show signs that you are putting the effort forward” (4, 7). He related that teachers are expected to be consistent, so he felt the principal should be consistent as well (39).

The pre-Kindergarten teacher related that she was criticized for having a 30-minute bathroom break before lunch; she was told it was too long. However, she felt it
comes back to the fact that she was “trained with that age group” (16) and having 15 preschool students, that time frame allowed only 2 minutes per child and she was “doing something with the rest of the students that aren’t going to the bathroom.” If she did not take a break before going to the cafeteria, the students would be asking to leave the cafeteria to go to the bathroom. She felt that her professional judgment was not appreciated (15). She also related that she asked for examples of effective use of the time and the principal had nothing to offer (29).

From Question 5, four (see 40-43 below) new themes were identified.

**Question 5**

If you said the principal did not support you, what would support look like to you?

If the respondents said the principal did not support them, they were asked to tell what support looked like to them. Four new themes emerged.

A female teacher responded that “just someone having a clue of what you’re actually doing.” She felt it was easy for a principal to sit back and say “Well, you’re not doing this, you’re doing this wrong, but if you’re not in the classroom, if you’re not talking to the teacher then you don’t know what somebody is doing and it’s easy to criticize and you don’t know what you’re talking about” (24, 28, and 40). She stated that the former principal was a principal who supported. He would walk into the classroom, stay for a while, then give a positive comment before leaving. She said that “he was aware of everything the teachers were doing and not just the ones that he liked, it was everybody,” “even if you were doing something wrong” he knew it (5, 6, 20, 24, 27, 28, 29, 37).
The first-year male teacher felt that support meant building rapport with the faculty, not just on a professional level, but building a relationship with them, “getting to know them on a personal level” (41). He felt that if you knew the administrator on a “more personal basis you could actually trust them a little more.” He then went on to talk about difficulty “revamping” the curriculum as a first-year teacher. He felt that the principal should “step up” for “there’s no way I’d be able to do it on my own” (5, 42).

To close the interview, I asked them, “Of all the supports mentioned, which are most important?” One answered that all were important (all others shook their heads in agreement). They felt that the supports were interrelated; if you take one away then “the others suffer and when the others start suffering, then you are left with almost none of them.” They compared it to an ecosystem. After the camera was shut off, one teacher mentioned that when he was a new teacher, the principal came around to shake his hand and it made him feel good. When he later taught in Virginia, the principal did not even “know who he was.” All in the group thought that it was important for the principal to know the teacher (43).

The codes from the focus group (Appendix B) were combined with the data from the literature review (Appendix A). I grouped the combined data into 16 groups and then sent the grouping to a former curriculum/instructional director and the current curriculum/instructional director of a neighboring school district for verification. Tables 9-25 illustrate the themes grouped and put into a statement of principal support.

The themes from these 16 tables became the questions for the survey as depicted in Table 26.
### Table 9

**Group 1 Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal provides resources and materials in a timely manner (Q1)</td>
<td>Get room ready(1)</td>
<td>Help teacher find resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get what teachers ask for(3)</td>
<td>Make sure teachers have materials needed to get started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide good support materials(18)</td>
<td>Provide appropriate physical working environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide things in a reasonable amount of time(21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10

**Group 2 Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal encourages and shows appreciation for the teacher (Q2)</td>
<td>Create positive relationships(6)</td>
<td>Notes/accolades/private compliments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage me(20)</td>
<td>Make teachers feel valued/appreciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide personal support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be encouraging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relay compliments from parents/students/colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leave a positive note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Value the teacher as an individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11

**Group 3 Data**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal understands and respects the demands on the teachers’ time (Q3)</td>
<td>Do things in a timely manner(7)</td>
<td>Respect teacher time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Say going to do something, get it done(4)</td>
<td>Keep meetings brief/focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do not place non-instructional unnecessary demands on the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow through(19)</td>
<td>Protect teacher time from demands of the district office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be helpful when dealing with the district office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special events are well-planned in advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In the first year, limit out-of-classroom experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 12

**Group 4 Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The principal shows interest by stopping in the room on a regular basis for non-evaluative reasons (Q4)</td>
<td>Open, frequent, face-to-face communication (23) Frequent quality time in the classroom (24)</td>
<td>Visit the classroom to see special things Drop in and meet weekly Use your presence to show interest in teachers’ work Show interest Use your presence to show interest in academic program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 13

**Group 5 Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal values input from teachers (Q5)</td>
<td>Support me when trying something new (14)</td>
<td>Give teachers voice in things that affect them most directly Take seriously and support innovative ideas Let teachers participate in decision making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 14

**Group 6 Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal assigns the teacher to an area to ensure success (Q6)</td>
<td>Understand what teachers are doing Assign new teachers to areas where they will succeed Do not give new teachers the most challenging assignments Orient new teachers at the beginning of the year Understand issues teachers face Provide help/information related to teachers’ specific issues Assign new teachers to same grade level/subject taught when a student teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15

*Group 7 Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal supports teacher when dealing with parents (Q7)</td>
<td>Support me consistently when with parents (13)</td>
<td>Be helpful when dealing with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Help resolve conflicts with community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide guidance with parent relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When dealing with parents, stand behind the teacher when they are right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support teacher with parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16

*Group 8 Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal supports teacher when dealing with student discipline (Q8)</td>
<td>Help with classroom management in the classroom setting (26)</td>
<td>Back teachers up in discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support teachers in matters of discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Help teachers devise solutions to discipline problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide guidance with classroom discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assist teachers in applying discipline strategies in the classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Results**

The purpose of the survey was to apply rural elementary teachers’ perception of principal support, as derived from the focus group data and data from literature review, to a larger population. The survey consisted of 16 questions developed from the 16 emergent themes from the data of the focus group and the literature review. (See Table 25.) A Likert scale was used to evaluate rural elementary teachers’ perception of the extent to which the principal or the principal’s role affected a teacher’s decision to remain
### Table 17

**Group 9 Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal clearly communicates expectations (Q9)</td>
<td>Tell me the building expectations at the very beginning(30)</td>
<td>Establish clear school routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tell me the rules at the beginning(31)</td>
<td>Over-all environment is calm-business like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Define procedures(32)</td>
<td>Help resolve conflicts with colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate changes(33)</td>
<td>Be clear about expectations from new teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide a clear chain of command(22)</td>
<td>Communicate school’s culture/policies/procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Help new teachers learn the lay of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Make things go smoothly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide clear chain of command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keep teachers included/informed of what is going on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Let teachers know what is happening and how it affects them and their students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 18

**Group 10 Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal respects the teacher’s expertise (Q10)</td>
<td>Support my professional decisions(15)</td>
<td>Respect the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value my expertise(16)</td>
<td>Respect/value teacher as a professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help teachers’ credibility in front of students(25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respectful of the teacher in front of others(35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 19

**Group 11 Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal builds trust with teacher (Q11)</td>
<td>Build trust with teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocate for new teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Let new teacher know principal is invested in their success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust teachers to do job without a great deal of oversight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20

Group 12 Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal is the leader of a collaborative team (Q12)</td>
<td>Work with teachers – team work(8)</td>
<td>Develop culture of collaborative problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is leader of a team(10)</td>
<td>Help teachers solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate directly with the person on the issue(34)</td>
<td>Create interaction among schools’ teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide collegial learning opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21

Group 13 Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal is an educational leader (Q13)</td>
<td>A professional developer(9)</td>
<td>Be instructional leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has a plan of where building is to go (vision)(11)</td>
<td>Provide professional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor progress of the building(2)</td>
<td>Provide guidance with curriculum development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not critique without first observing(28)</td>
<td>Provide guidance with teaching style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give positive feedback along with critique(29)</td>
<td>Fund programs for new teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledgeable of curriculum(42)</td>
<td>Define goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Effectively monitor the nature of the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exercise quality control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Carefully choose personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong instructional leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Create structures of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive instructional leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Help teachers find growth opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support continued professional growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guide new teachers in making professional development decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in a teaching position or migrate. The same range of responses was used for this survey as in Table 1.

The mean was calculated for each of the questions. Table 17 depicts the mean for each question on the survey.
Table 22

*Group 14 Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal tries to be fair on all issues (Q14)</td>
<td>Build rapport(41)</td>
<td>Be welcoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigate both sides of an issue before making a decision(36)</td>
<td>Introduce teachers to the larger community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collegial—non-threatening(27)</td>
<td>Be friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research when unsure(40)</td>
<td>Be fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know what is going on with students/teachers(5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know your name(43)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23

*Group 15 Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal is accessible (Q15)</td>
<td>Be accessible</td>
<td>Be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be willing to listen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24

*Group 16 Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal is a respected role model (Q16)</td>
<td>Set the example(39)</td>
<td>Resist compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honest(38)</td>
<td>Be strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be worthy of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be a role model that cares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be honest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Chapter 3 reliability of the survey instrument was established by calculating Cronbach’s Alpha site-to-site and to the full survey (0.85), calculating the correlation coefficient site-to-site (see Table 8), and by a scatter plot (see Figure 2). The means of the positive-posed questions range from 1.82 to 2.3. The means of the negative-posed
Table 25

*Questions Used for the Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>The principal provides resources and materials to me in a timely manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>The principal <em>does not</em> encourage and <em>does not</em> show appreciation for me as a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>The principal understands and respects the demands on my time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>The principal shows interest by stopping by my classroom on a regular basis for non-evaluative purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>The principal <em>does not</em> value my input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>The principal assigns me to an area that ensures my success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>The principal <em>does not</em> support me when dealing with parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>The principal supports me when dealing with student discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>The principal clearly communicates expectations to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>The principal <em>does not</em> respect my expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>The principal builds trust with the teachers at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>The principal is a leader of a collaborative team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>The principal is <em>not</em> an educational leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>The principal is fair to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>The principal is <em>not accessible</em> to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>The principal is a respected role model.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Q = question.

Table 26

*Mean Scores for Survey Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PQ1</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQ2</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>-1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ3</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ4</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQ5</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>-1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ6</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQ7</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>-2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ8</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ9</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQ10</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>-1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ11</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ12</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQ13</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>-1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ14</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQ15</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ16</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Q = question. P = positive-posed question. N = negative-posed question.
Figure 2. Hypothesized relationship between positive and negative survey questions.

Questions range from -1.35 to -2.00. As in the pre-surveys, the means of the negative-posed questions are slightly lower than the means of the positive-posed questions, indicating that the instrument measures two different constructs. That a teacher would be very likely to stay because the principal was fair does not indicate that the teacher would be very likely to leave the position because the principal was not fair. Leaving the position would require more activation energy than the decision to stay in the position.

Although the survey results indicate that the principal appears to have an effect on the decision to stay in the position, the survey does not conclusively find that the principal is the reason to stay. The principal could make a difference, but the principal may not be the difference. The survey results indicate that the principal does have an
impact on teachers, but the negative means indicate that leaving might not be a function of the principal’s support or lack thereof. The principal is helpful to the teacher, but the lack of a principal action might not be a reason for the teacher to leave. The principal is a component of the teaching position but not a determining factor of the position.

In the pre-survey, phrasing the questions in the positive and negative voice (to address response bias) meant considering the possibility that the scale would measure two different constructs. In designing the survey, the expectation was that when respondents answered the question in the positive voice with a 1 (somewhat likely to stay at the school), they would answer the same question in the negative voice with a -1 (somewhat unlikely to stay at the school). If that were the case, where absolute values of the positive-voiced questions would mirror the absolute values of the same question in the negative voice, then changing the sign of the negative-voiced questions (for example, changing the -2 to a 2) would result in relationship between the positive- and negative-voiced questions as shown in the Figure 2.

The null hypothesis becomes:

\[ H_0: \text{Slope is } -1 \text{ and intercept is } 0. \]

To test the hypothesis, the relationship between the pre-survey positive-voiced and negative-voiced questions was examined. In the pre-survey, when the means of the positive-voiced questions were compared to the means of the negative-voiced questions, the responses to the negative-posed questions were lower in value than the positive questions, which meant that the respondents answered with a lower magnitude for negative-voiced questions. Figure 3 shows the relationship between the positive-voiced questions and the negative-voiced questions. The negative questions have a shallower
slope, which indicates that the principal can be somewhat non-supportive and the teacher will choose to remain in the position as opposed to leaving the position.

In Figure 4, the 95% confidence interval for the slope estimates the value to be between -0.52 and -0.15, which eliminates a slope of -1. The 95% confidence interval about the intercept estimates the value between 1.63 and 2.13, eliminating a zero intercept, thus, the null hypothesis of a slope of -1 and intercept of 0 is rejected.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis. See Figure 4. However, the model shows a statistically significant relationship between the means of the positive-voiced survey and the negative-voiced survey. In Figure 4 the $p$ value is 0.0018, which says the model is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which means there is a 0.18% chance of randomly getting a relationship this strong. If the model

Figure 3. Positive vs. negative pre-survey results.
was applied, it becomes possible to provide estimates that could cast the negative-voiced scores into their positive-voiced score counterparts. Multiplying the negative-voiced scores by 0.334381 and then adding 1.8788608 produces an estimate of a respondent’s positive-voiced score equivalent for that survey item. It can be expected that the predicted score to be valid to within plus or minus 0.375 giving adequate resolution to distinguish, for example, a score of 2 from a score of 1.

A question emerges: Do the pre-surveys accurately reflect the results from the full survey such that there is a level of comfort applying a transformation to the negative-voiced questions of the full survey to put everything on the same scale? The attempt to justify follows.
Negative-Voiced Pre-Survey Results vs. Full Survey Results

Hypothesis:

H₀: Negative-voiced pre-survey results are consistent with negative-voiced full survey results.

In looking at the relationship between the average scores for the negative-voiced pre-survey and the full survey, the expectation is that the slope is 1 and the intercept is 0, which leads to a null hypothesis of:

H₀: Slope is 1 and intercept is 0.

The results of the questions in the negative voice in the full survey were isolated. These results were compared to the corresponding questions from the negative-voiced pre-survey and found that they are fundamentally equivalent. See Figure 5 and the ensuing justification.

Note in Figure 5 there is a difference in the \( y \)-intercept term, between the Line of Perfect Agreement (LOPA), the green line, where the slope=1 and the intercept=0, and between the actual regression line (red line) where slope=0.997 and the intercept is -0.53. This has the effect of making the regression line appear parallel to the LOPA. Note that the regression line is roughly equivalent to the LOPA within the noise of the data (shaded blue area). To be more specific, see Table 19 and following analysis.

In Figure 6, the 95% confidence interval about the slope estimates its value to be between 0.17 and 1.82. Since 1.0 is feasible within the range of 0.17 and 1.82, it can be concluded that the respondents answered on the full survey negative-voiced questions with a measure of consistency with the negative-voiced pre-survey. The 95% confidence interval for the \( y \)-intercept of the model is estimated to be between -1.5 and 0.45, which
Figure 5. Negative-phrased full survey questions vs. corresponding negative pre-survey questions.

is a range that includes zero. Since the interval for the slope includes 1 and the interval for the intercept includes zero, I can conclude that the negative-voiced questions of the full survey were consistent with their corresponding negative-voiced pre-survey questions. In other words, the results of both surveys are consistent and on the same scale. See Figure 6.

To complete the negative-to-positive voice pre-survey relationships in the full survey required determining that positive-voiced questions of the full survey items scores were not significantly different from the positive-voiced pre-survey. The hypothesis becomes:

\[ H_0: \text{Positive-voiced pre-survey results are consistent with the positive-voiced full survey results.} \]
Figure 6. ANOVA from negative full survey questions vs. negative pre-survey.

In looking at the relationship between the average scores for the positive-voiced pre-survey questions and the full survey results for positive-voiced questions, the expectation is that the slope is 1.0 and the intercept is 0, which leads to a null hypothesis of:

\[ H_0: \text{Slope is 1 and intercept is 0.} \]

In Figure 7, there is a slight disagreement, visually, between the LOPA (green line), where the slope=1 and the intercept=0, and the actual regression line (red line) of slope=0.493 and intercept=0.954, which makes the regression line appear skewed relative to the LOPA. The regression line is roughly equivalent to the LOPA within the noise (shaded blue area) of the data.

To be more specific, see Figure 8 and following analysis.
In Figure 8, the 95% confidence interval for the slope is between -0.001 and 0.99. Since 1.0 is effectively the upper end of this range, the conclusion can be made that the respondents answered the positive-voiced questions of the full survey in a consistent manner with the positive-voiced questions of the pre-survey. The 95% confidence interval about y-intercept is -0.197 and 2.11, which includes zero. Since the interval about the estimated slope can be interpreted to include 1.0 and the y-intercept interval includes
Figure 8. ANOVA from positive full survey questions vs. positive pre-survey.

zero, I can conclude the positive-voiced questions of the full survey are consistent directionally with their corresponding positive-voiced pre-survey questions.

Table 27 lists the five questions with the greatest means. These questions were used for discussion for the interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to clarify rural elementary teachers’ perception of principal support as it relates to the principal’s role in retention and migration.

Interview Results

Participants for the interviews were from rural elementary schools in north-central Pennsylvania. Names were randomly chosen from the sample of survey participants who agreed that they would be willing to be interviewed. I chose one female and one male with less than 5 years of teaching experience and one female and one male with more
Table 27

Top Five Means From the Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q6 The principal assigns me to an area that ensures my success.</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11 The principal builds trust with the teachers at the school.</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14 The principal is fair to me.</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8 The principal supports me when dealing with student discipline.</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9 The principal clearly communicates expectations from me.</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

than 5 years of teaching experience. All participants were over 18 years of age and currently teaching.

From the consent forms that were turned in during the survey, I separated the forms into four groups. One group was males with 5 years of teaching experience or less, the second group was males with more than 5 years of teaching experience. A third group was females with 5 years of teaching experience or less, and the fourth group consisted of females with over 5 years of teaching experience. Purposively, one name was drawn from each group and contacted by phone. In the male group of over 5 years of experience, the first name drawn did not return my call, so another name was drawn from the group. I met with the four interviewees at their convenience and recorded the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and sent to a former curriculum/instructional leader and the current curriculum/instructional leader from a neighboring district to pull out data describing principal support and the effect of the support or lack of that support upon the participants. We met and shared our findings.

There were two opening questions for each interview:

1. What is your name and what subject or grade do you teach?
2. How long have you been in your current position?
Table 28 depicts the demographics. To protect privacy, names have been changed to participants A, B, C, and D.

The opening questions were followed by the key question: Please look at the five top principal support actions that emerged from the survey and identify an experience for each that helps me understand why teachers chose these as one of the top five. The ending question asked if there was anything else about principal support that the teacher wanted to share with me.

**Action 1**

*The principal assigns me to an area that ensures my success.*

Participants D and B saw the importance of the principal being a part of their success; however Participant B thought it was “odd that this was number one.”

Participant D shared that it might be difficult as a principal to always know where a teacher would be successful. She suggested that the principal might want to look at circumstances (such as coming back from a maternity leave and now having children) and consider a less stressful position. She admitted to having the experience of being moved to another position (“to strengthen the position”) without being warned and for a “brief instant” considered she “might not stay” because she was very unhappy about leaving that particular team of teachers. Participant D decided the move was all right after she got involved with the decision.

At the time of the move, there was a lot of turmoil in the building that included many rumors. The rumors suggested that she was being moved for several reasons. Having no discussion with the principal prior to the move, the rumors became “hurtful,” causing hardship within the position. Because she had a “good enough relationship with
Table 28

Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Subject/Grade</th>
<th>Years in Current Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the principal” she went to him and discussed the situation. She asked that he be honest with her about the reason for her move to another position. Was she moved for the reasons talked about in the rumors? She felt that giving a teacher a reason for the move and then “supporting through that move would be important.”

When Participant D was asked if the transition to another position was fairly successful, she replied, “Yes,” but the transition was difficult. She recognized that teachers get “stale” in a position and might need to be moved; however, if someone is happy with their team and the team is working well together, then “that needs to be considered before moving a teacher to another position or another building.” She felt that consideration for how long the teacher had been teaching should be a factor in the decision to move him/her to another position as well as considering the success of the teacher. She felt she was doing a good job in the first position so that was why she was moved to the second position—to strengthen the team. She considered that a back-handed compliment. She had been working with her first team, doing all the things she was supposed to do, was happy in that position, and now was “going to have to start all over again.” She said it was “tough.” With all that was going on in the district right now
(extensive Learning Focused Schools training and having twins that are not yet in school) if she were to be moved again, she “would be really angry.” It would be “exhausting.”

She expressed that if one were “flip-flopped from spot to spot to spot in the district” without success in those areas, one could become quite frustrated. Participant D also stated that moving a teacher will not make a poor teacher a good teacher. She felt that sometimes principals think that will make a difference, “but it does not.”

Participant C stated that because she teaches a special K-12 in the building, there was little chance of her being moved. However, this year due to budget cuts, there had been several teachers who were moved to new positions within the district. Although she had not been moved, her peers related to her that they did not like the new placements for they were put in positions where they did not think they would be successful. They had been moved from the positions where they were experiencing success. They did not feel the move was “set up for success.” In some positions, while certified to teach, they had not done so for over 20 years. An example she shared was moving from learning support to an elementary position.

In response to this principal action, Participant A shared that the principal was specifically looking to hire a male teacher to replace the retiring male teacher; it was part of the decision to hire him. He felt that the principal assigned him to the right area that assured success for him. He wanted to be in the primary grades; he felt a young male would be good for the boys at that age level.

**Action 2**

*The principal builds trust with teachers.*
Participant D said that it is the principal who builds trust in the building and that “has a big impact”; that trust is not only a characteristic of the principal but of the building climate. It was important to know that the principal “has your back when they should.” She stated that when the principal does not hold all teachers accountable for the same standard, it affects trust. She gets frustrated when “you are working so hard and the person next door is just skimming by.” It “kind of diminishes trust in that principal if they’re not setting the bar where it needs to be and I feel the bar should always be set high.”

Participant D trusts her principal, because when she asks for help there is follow-through. She related that she can go to the principal with a problem, get help with the problem, and that the problem will remain confidential. She goes to the principal and shares “what is going on” and she knows it will “not be just brushed under the rug” and the principal will “not tell her what she wants to hear” so that nothing becomes of the discussion. She thinks that the brushing under the rug and telling what is wanted to be heard frustrates many teachers. She stated she hears about that from other colleagues (I assumed she meant from other schools). She again reiterated that the principal sets the climate and builds trust. Participant D went on to question whether or not a teacher who is assigned to a different position is the being welcomed or not. She recognized that cliques exist and being the new person poses the problem of being accepted by the clique. The principal, she surmised, must recognize the situation and build the trust. Although the team was happy with “the way things were before,” the principal has the responsibility to make sure the team includes the newly assigned teacher. It is important that the principal build trust as a faculty through the whole school. Later in the interview,
Participant D also stated that backing the teacher with parents and keeping confidentiality builds trust.

Participant C felt that trust needed to come from the top. Her principals have backed her whether in the public or with a student. If her principals had an issue with her as a teacher, they would never let the public know that. She stated that one way principals can build trust is for the principals to “have her back.”

Participant B stated that trust was needed on “both sides.” He felt trust was important in a small school. While the principal needs to build trust, the teachers have to remember the principal is the “boss.” He shared that building trust and yet having to be the boss made the principal’s job difficult. He felt it was important for the principal to “be honest and forthright with the faculty.” He felt building trust was the number one principal support action.

Participant A shared that through the principals he had been under, all had built trust. Most of the principals had come from within the district, so he stated that “that plays a part in the trust issues” when it is someone you know. He shared that his school “was unique in that we are really a tight group” and that the principals had developed the tightness. A principal who built trust was “somebody you could lean on.” He felt that if the principal solved problems in a timely manner, trust is built quickly.

**Action 3**

_The principal is fair to me._

Participant D reiterated (as in Action 1) that the principal having the same expectations for everybody was important to being fair. She felt that all three principal actions (placement for success, building trust, and being fair) “kind of connect and
She said that the expectations should be the same for everyone; a “blind eye” should not be turned on someone who was going to retire, or a new teacher should not be “dumped on.” The principal should be “fair all across the board.” Fairness was also important in evaluations with all teachers receiving constructive feedback along with the “you’re doing a great job.” She felt “all those things are really important and they kind of tie into being fair.” She felt that fairness meant expecting the same from everybody—she did not mean equal, but expecting the same amount of effort from everybody. She stated that the principal should listen to everyone’s ideas and that formal observations should not look all the same for each teacher.

Participant C could not imagine working in a place “where you don’t think you are being treated fairly. . . . It seems like common sense.” All the principals with whom she has been involved have been “very supportive of teachers.”

Participant B shared that when an issue came up that involved the entire faculty, he would address the entire faculty and not just talk to one or two teachers. He felt that some principals sometimes just wait for the teacher to make a mistake and then addresses the whole faculty. He stressed, however, his principal on the other hand addresses the individual, not the entire faculty. Participant B said that his principal was always sure to make opportunities available to all staff, which he considered was being fair.

When I asked if being fair has some amount of influence on whether to stay in the position or not, he responded “Yes, I think.” He then shared that he felt a comfortable atmosphere is “probably the most important thing as a teacher.” He stated that he never wanted to feel uncomfortable coming to work. The discomfort that he was talking about did not have to do with students, but from “someone looking down at me or waiting for
me to make a mistake.” He stated that if a mistake was made, his principal would deal with the individual. If the mistake was on a building level, the principal would deal with the entire faculty. “He deals with it as it needed to be dealt with. So the principal being fair to me is a big deal.”

With all the principals he had served under, Participant A could not think of any situation where he personally felt the principal had not been fair. He reiterated that he could not think of a principal who had put him in a position where he could not succeed. His principals had always given him “a fair shake.” When I asked if fairness was important to him, he replied it has “been very important.” He thought that “fairness builds trust.”

**Action 4**

_The principal supports me when dealing with student discipline._

Participant D began this discussion by saying that her principal not only supports her when dealing with students, but also when dealing with parents. She shared that those teachers who are friends from across the country share the issue of parent discipline and principal support. She felt that lack of principal support when dealing with these two issues would be the number one reason for teachers to leave a position.

She went on to say that that if a teacher were new and had not had opportunity to “develop a backbone” to deal with disruptive students, “that would be really difficult.” She said that she has had more difficulty with parents than with students, which had caused her to say “this isn’t worth it.” And, she had been supported in those situations. She related that there had been times when parents came to the room to confront her in
the presence of students. If she had not been supported (and she had been), she felt that she would have “probably walked right out of the door.”

She admitted that sometimes things get a “little blurred” for she felt that the parents and/or child should have been handled “more firmly”; by her words she is “fairly strict and has high expectations.” Support, she added, can make a difference. If there is not a good relationship with the principal, which she felt related to the principal action about being fair to her, then the trust factor is also affected (another previous principal action). Participant D continued, saying that if there is no trust between the principal and the teacher, then how can the teacher believe what the principal says about the discipline? She wondered if the principal would take the time to deal with the discipline issue. “Do you believe what they [principals] say they did to help you with the situation?” She pointed out that she feels there is “interconnectedness” between the trust, the fairness, and the support for discipline because “they really are related to one another.”

Participant C did not always feel supported. She teaches a special K-12 and has two principals. One of her principals does not always support in matters of discipline, she related, and because of that students “work the system” for they are aware of the lack of support as well. “It’s kind of like you’re just left hanging.” She felt that lack of support not only affected teachers, but was felt systemically.

Participant B shared that this year was a fairly rough year with student discipline. The class has been one that is “rather unruly” in their behavior; however, the principal, along with him, has “tried to go every route we can.” The principal was there for parent/teacher conferences at his request. The principal has sent a particular student home on several occasions due to behavior issues. There are times this student will not listen
unless the teacher invokes the principal’s name and the principal has supported him. His process was to call the parents, then go to the principal after the conversation to get feedback and enlist support. He shared that in the experiences with this difficult student, without the support of the principal he would have not made it through the year. Participant C had heard from teachers in other school districts that principal support with student discipline was important. When I asked if backup was important, he replied yes, it was important to know that “he’s on my side if I do something.”

The respondent decided to share about a very difficult student who, at the beginning of the year, refused to do work. He emailed the principal asking for suggestions. The principal said to give her an ultimatum—if this continues to go on, then she will be sent home. The student tested the ultimatum a few times, but backed down when she was told her parents would be getting a call and she would be going home. The teacher related he could have done nothing and let her go on, but he decided to deal with it and in calling the principal, the principal took care of it. He said the principal, for a lack of a better word, “made it easier.” When I asked if that support from the principal was important, he said yes.

Two years prior, there was a difficult student who had several suspensions. Without the support of the principal, he does think he would have made it through the year. He shared that he truly considered moving to Florida and opening a shop on the beach. Because the year had been so tough, he was wondering if teaching was what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. “Do I want that kind of stress?” He shared that principal support, along with the support of other teachers, made the difference and he decided to stay in the position. Because his principal gets involved with the discipline, it
is easier to deal with the students. He appreciates the suggestions from his principal about what to do in situations or suggestions that would help him improve the next time the situation arises.

When I suggested that support might be crucial, he agreed. He felt that the stress in teaching is high. He said that sometimes it is more important to have the principal support, or even a thank-you or you are doing the right thing from the principal than what a teacher gets paid.

Participant A felt it was important to have principal support in meetings with parents/students, especially for IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings for identified students.

**Action 5**

*The principal clearly communicates expectations from me.*

Participant D stated that because the superintendent of the district was not clear in communicating expectations, the principal would have to have debriefings to try to clarify expectations; it was very frustrating when “in the in-services we are told one thing and then a memo comes about something else and then this building is doing this and this building is doing this and it’s very, very confusing and very overwhelming with everything that is going on.” The lack of consistency was frustrating. She placed communicating with consistency, fair expectations, and everyone doing their part on the same level. If that did not happen, then a few people are doing everything and “that’s not good.” As a 10-year veteran, she is not afraid to ask for clarification. Participant D went back to building trust helps to make you feel comfortable enough to ask for help. She
stated that if the trust is not there, then “you don’t feel comfortable even asking for help; that’s a big problem.”

When I asked if there was anything else she would like to share about principal support, she thought that being fair, being visible in the classroom, knowing who is doing things well, who needs support or who needs a good kick to get their act together is “really important.” She felt it was helpful to do things that help morale. That included assigning teachers to an area where they will experience success. She felt one of the biggest frustrations “across the board” involved those who do what is expected of them versus those who just shut the door and do not do what is expected of them, which results in students being passed on from year to year “with deficits.”

Participant C felt that sometimes “it is hard to know what is expected.” She stated that “to not know what is needed, but having the willingness to do it” is a struggle for her.

Participant B talked about how his principal emails details on how and when to implement new initiatives. (This principal has 3 different buildings that are several miles apart.) The details in writing enable him to know the “specifics” of what his principal expects. His principal stresses what he wants to see; he clearly communicates verbally, especially in relationship to observations and expectations. In the Learning Focus Schools initiative, the principal stated what he was going to look for in the lesson and shared when he would be coming to observe to evaluate the completion of the expectation.

Participant B liked knowing what was expected and when it was expected. He preferred knowing what was going on instead of not knowing and then “hitting way off the target.” Participant B also related that if something was communicated to him and he failed to do it, his principal “does not hesitate to say okay this is where you could have
done better and he never—it’s not like he docks you for it or gives you an unsatisfactory, he just shares.”

Participant B did not appreciate surprise observations or evaluations, for he felt they were not fair. “Knowing what your principal wants makes your job a lot easier.” He felt not knowing what the principal wants was like walking on eggshells. “You are scared.” He just wanted “to know what’s expected, so that he could meet that expectation.”

When I asked if there was anything else he wanted to share about support, he replied that beyond discipline with students, supporting teachers with parents is important. He felt that the principal supporting a teacher who has made the right decision questioned by parents is “huge.” If the teacher was going to have a parent/teacher conference and was nervous about the conference, the principal would be there “beside” him and “backing” him up instead of there “playing sides.” Support that says you are doing the right thing was “more important” to Participant B “than anything.” He was surprised that the principal action of “Assigns me to an area of success” had the greatest mean in the survey. He reiterated that support was the biggest issue to him. If the principal supports the teacher, all the other things will come—being fair, trust.

Participant A talked about all the expectations coming from the state, so that makes the job easier. He felt the principal needs to be sure that teachers are adhering to the state expectations. When I asked if he had an experience where expectations had not been clearly communicated, he replied that he could not think of any.
Summary of Results

The results of the survey showed that respondents answered with a greater degree of magnitude for the positive-posed questions than for the negative-posed questions, indicating that the survey measured two different constructs. If a respondent was very likely to stay in a position because the principal was fair, the survey revealed that a respondent would not necessarily be very likely to leave a position because the principal was not fair, indicating there may be a greater activation energy required to leave a position than there is to stay in a position. Although the survey did not show cause and effect, the statistical analysis did reveal a correlation between the principal action and teacher retention. The literature review revealed that dissatisfaction with principal support was an influencing factor on teacher migration and retention. However, because the mean responses to the positive-posed questions were significantly higher than the mean responses to the negative-posed questions, the findings of the survey suggest that the principal is a component of but not a determining factor of the teacher’s decision to remain or leave his or her position.

Interviews

Principal Action 1: *The principal assigns me to an area that ensures my success.*

One finding from the interviews is that the principal’s decision to move teachers causes teacher concern for teaching success. Only Teacher D shared the experience of considering for a “brief instant” leaving the school as a result of a move to another grade level and leaving the current team of teachers. Teachers D and B expressed the importance of the principal in their success; however, Teacher D suggested that it might be difficult for a principal to always know where a teacher would be successful. Although
Teacher C had not experienced a move to another area, his/her peers had been moved and had expressed their concerns of success at being placed in an area where they had little experience. While concerns of success were expressed, only participant D mentioned leaving the position. She did later say that with all going on in the district, if she were to be moved again, it would really make her angry.

**Principal Action 2: The principal builds trust with the teachers in the school.**

A finding of the interviews was that all four teachers saw specific actions of the principal as building trust and having an impact on the teacher. Principal actions mentioned included asking for help and getting that help, holding all teachers accountable for the same standard, backing the teacher with parents/public/students, and solving problems in a timely manner. Teacher B felt building trust was a number one principal support action. However, none of the four teachers mentioned at what point lack of trust could or would influence a decision to leave the position or stay.

**Principal Action 3: The principal is fair.**

One finding of the interviews revealed that fairness was important. Teacher B stated that “the principal being fair to me is a big deal.” He stated that fairness contributed to the atmosphere of coming to work and feeling “comfortable.” Both Teachers B and D mentioned specific issues of fairness: same opportunity for every teacher, same expectations for every teacher, evaluations, and addressing individuals about their mistakes instead of the entire faculty. Teacher C could not imagine working in a place “where you don’t think you are being treated fairly.” While Teacher C did not specifically say that lack of fairness would mean leaving the position, the words “could not imagine” imply strong feelings about fairness. Teacher B thought that the principal
being fair did have some influence on a decision to stay in a position. A second finding, stated by Teacher D, was that fairness, trust, and placement for success “kind of connect and relate and the principal should not play favorites.”

**Principal Action 4:** *The principal supports me when dealing with student discipline.*

This action generated the most conversation by the four teachers. One finding was that all four teachers believed that support was critical in dealing with student discipline (Teachers D and B included dealing with parents). Teacher D stated that support with discipline “can make the difference.” There had been times when dealing with parents she had thought that “this is just not worth it.” With a couple of particularly difficult parents, if she had not had the support of her principal, she might have walked out the door. She wondered that if there was no trust between the principal and teacher, could the teacher believe what the principal said about discipline?

Teacher C stated that lack of support not only affects teachers but the entire school system. Teacher C did not always feel supported. Teacher B stated that principal support with students made the difference to stay in the position. He questioned whether he wanted to continue teaching for the rest of his life and feel this kind of stress. He was looking to move to Florida and open a shop on the beach. Had he not had the support from the principal, he would not have made it through that rough year.

A second finding was that support with discipline was “interconnected” with trust and fairness. Teacher B said that if a principal supports the teacher, then trust and fairness will come.
A third finding was that Teacher D felt that lack of support with students and parents would be a “number one reason for a teacher to leave the position.”

Principal Action 5: *The principal clearly communicates expectations from me.*

This action generated the second longest conversations with the four teachers. One finding from the interviews was that lack of clear communication produces frustration. Teacher C shared that not knowing what was expected but having the “willingness to do it” was a struggle. Teacher D expressed frustration and a sense of being overwhelmed when dealing with lack of clarity from the superintendent. The teacher relied on the principal to clarify communications.

A second finding was the appreciation for clear expectations and suggestions on how to improve performance. Teacher B detailed how the principal made an effort to be clear with communication, especially when observing or stating expectations. Teacher B really appreciated knowing what was expected. In addition, he appreciated that when he did not meet an expectation, his principal would give suggestions on how to improve his performance.

A third finding was that trust affected communication. Teacher D related that it was important to have trust with the principal in order to feel comfortable enough to ask the principal for help with clarification of communication with the central office. Teacher B talked about the principal as being “really good” about the communication and that the principal “just shares” without intimidation and that process makes the “job a lot easier.” Teacher B’s words suggest trust between the two.
Summary

This chapter discussed the results of the focus group, the survey, and the interviews. Sixteen principal-support themes emerged from the focus group data and literature review data that identified rural elementary teachers’ perspective of principal support. Those 16 themes were used to develop the survey that applied rural elementary teachers’ perspective of principal support to a larger population. The findings of the survey revealed that while the principal is a component of the teaching position, the principal is not a significant factor about staying in the position. To clarify rural elementary teachers’ perception of principal support, the five questions with the greatest mean from the survey were used to conduct interviews with four individual teachers.

The four interviews revealed that one teacher, for a brief moment, considered leaving her position because the principal had moved her to another assignment. When the principal explained she was needed to strengthen the team assigned to her, she understood and accepted the decision. A second teacher considered moving to another state and opening a business when he experienced stress in dealing with some difficult students and their parents but did not follow through because the principal was very supportive in dealing with the students and the parents. Both principals, as components of the teaching positions in these two instances, addressed concerns/stresses mentioned in the research on the phases/stages of teaching, which resulted in the teachers deciding to stay in the positions. Responses to the interview questions are illustrative of what has been presented in the literature on phases/stages of teacher development.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of my study, a summary of the results, a discussion of the implications of the study, and finally a list of recommendations for further research.

Literature review indicated that although the United States produces more certified and qualified teachers than it hires, since the 1990s the annual number of exiting teachers exceeds the number of entrants by an increasing amount (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The teaching profession is inflicted with a chronic and relatively high turnover rate, and turnover is particularly high among teachers in the first few years of service (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Luekens et al. (2004) report that, in the NCES’s results of the teacher follow-up survey, in 2000-01 38% of the movers were dissatisfied with administrative support. Johnson et al. (2005) feel that there is a lack of in-depth research that explains “specifically what a principal does to positively or negatively influence teachers’ commitment to the school and the profession” (p. 71). F. Fuller (1969), Katz (1972), Burden (1982), Burke et al. (1984), Moir (1990), Stroot et al. (1998), and Littleton and Littleton (2006) developed research that identified the phases of teacher development. Within the research they addressed the concerns of teachers about principal support. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the principal in teacher
retention and migration as perceived by elementary teachers in rural school districts of north-central Pennsylvania.

**Summary of Procedure and Findings**

A mixed-method approach was used to conduct the study. The first step of the study was to identify rural elementary teachers’ perceptions of principal support using a focus group. The group was selected from a small rural district in north-central Pennsylvania. A letter was sent to the superintendent to secure permission for the focus group. Upon gaining permission, an email was sent to teachers with a few weeks to 5 years of experience, asking if they would be willing to participate in a focus study group. Permission forms were sent to the participants; they were signed and returned before I met with the focus group. The following questions were used with the focus group:

1. When you were hired, were there expectations about what support you would be getting from the principal?
2. Would you be willing to share experiences that occurred where principal support was important? Where lack of support was important?
3. If you were principal, what would you do to support teachers in your building?
4. Please reflect back on your teaching experience and describe to me what principal support for teachers looks like to you.
5. If you said the principal did not support you, what would support look like to you?

For triangulation purposes, the transcription of the focus group study was shared with the former curriculum/instructional director and the current curriculum/instructional
director of a neighboring school district. From the transcripts, phrases were pulled out that describe principal support and then the lists were compared. Only phrases upon which the two curriculum/instructional directors and I agreed made the final list (see Appendix B) that was compared with data from the literature review (see Appendix A). We then grouped the phrases into 16 common themes. The themes were used to develop 16 statements of principal support actions for a survey. The purpose of the survey was to apply rural elementary teachers’ perception of principal support to a larger population.

To address reliability of the survey instrument, two pilot surveys were conducted using the alternate form method. The first survey used positive-posed questions; the second survey used the negative-posed form of the questions. The results of the pilot study showed that teachers answered the positive-posed questions with a greater magnitude than the negative-posed questions. Cronbach’s Alpha and item-adjusted total correlation coefficient were used to establish reliability of the instruments. Two of the negative questions were eliminated because item-adjusted total coefficient indicated they did not measure the same construct. The survey instrument resulted in 10 positive-posed questions and 6 negative-posed questions. Analysis showed statistically significant relationship between the means of the positively-voiced survey and the negative-voiced survey.

The survey was given to rural elementary teachers in north-central Pennsylvania; participation in the survey implied consent. In addition to the survey, a form was handed to participants asking if they would be willing to be interviewed. The signed forms were collected with the surveys.
To establish reliability, the survey was given to 10 sites over a period of time. Two metrics were used to measure reliability. A Chronbach’s Alpha of .85 established internal consistency. A correlation coefficient was calculated site-to-site. Nine of the sites had correlation coefficients of 0.5 and above. One site had a correlation coefficient of 0.3 and above.

Positive- and negative-posed questions were used to address response bias. Using both types of questions introduced something not intended. Posing the questions in both forms resulted in the respondents not answering the negative-posed questions as strongly as the positive-posed questions. However, statistical analysis of the relationship between the means of the negative-posed pre-survey questions and the negative-posed questions of the full survey found that they are functionally equivalent. Analysis of the relationship between the means of the pre-survey positive-posed questions and the positive-posed questions in the full survey found that they were also functionally equivalent. The survey indicated that while the principal is a component of the teaching position, the principal is not a determining factor about the position.

In this sequentially mixed-methodology of qualitative-quantitative-qualitative process, the five questions with the greatest means were pulled from the survey to be used as questions for and to help guide the follow-up interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to clarify rural elementary teachers’ perceptions of principal support.

The five items of the survey with the top five means were:

1. The principal assigns me to an area that ensures my success.
2. The principal builds trust with the teachers in the school.
3. The principal is fair.
4. The principal supports me when dealing with student discipline.

5. The principal clearly communicates expectations from me.

For the follow-up interviews, I randomly selected a female and male with less than 5 years of experience and randomly selected a female and male with more than 5 years of experience. The selected names were called to set up an interview. The interviews were conducted with the following questions:

1. Please look at the 5 top principal support actions that emerged from the survey and identify an experience for each that helps me understand why teachers chose these as one of the top five.

2. Is there anything else about principal support that you would like to share with me?

The interviews were transcribed and shared with a former curriculum/instructional leader and the current curriculum/instructional leader of a neighboring district. We independently read the interviews and then met to share our findings. Only findings common to all three of us were considered usable data.

In the discussion of the principal action of assigning a teacher to an area to ensure success, one participant (D) shared the experience of being moved from a position where she felt successful and part of a very successful team to a position where she did not want to go. Participant D briefly considered “not staying” in the school after being moved to the new position; however, after being involved at that particular grade level, she came to accept the decision. She expressed that a teacher could become quite frustrated if flip-flopped from one position to another without success in the position. In this instance, the principal did not explain why he was moving her to another position and, therefore,
inadvertently, did not provide her with support. He did hint later that he moved her to bolster the weaker team. She did share that if she were moved again, she would be angry.

Participant C had not been moved but shared that peers had been moved without consultation into new placements and felt they would not be successful. While the peers of Participant C were concerned about a possibility of lack of success, none chose to migrate to another position.

Of the four participants, only one (D) stated that she considered the possibility of leaving (migration). The responses to this principal action indicate that while a teacher wants to be in an area where they feel successful, when moved, without consultation, they accepted the move and did not (even though Participant D briefly entertained the idea) choose to leave the position. Although the principal’s role in the decisions to move a teacher to a different assignment caused concerns, the teacher did not choose to migrate. This lends support to the survey. Leaving required greater activation energy than staying in the position. Whereas the principal was a component of the teacher’s position, he was not a determining factor of the position.

Principal Action 2 of building trust with teachers was viewed as important by all four participants. Participant D stated that it was the principal who builds trust in the building and the presence of trust becomes part of the climate. Participant C felt that trust needed to come from the top, whereas Participant B stated that trust goes both ways. Participant B stated that building trust was a number one principal support action. Participant A felt that solving problems in a timely manner built trust.

While building trust with teachers appeared to be important or very important, no participant shared that lack of trust with the principal prompted thoughts of migration or
attrition. There was no indication that lack of trust with the principal resulted in a
decision to migrate or leave the profession. No one mentioned at what point in the job the
lack of trust would become a consideration for migration or attrition. Again, this lends
support to the survey: The principal is a component of the teaching position but is not a
determining factor of the position.

Principal Action 3, being fair to the teacher, was a “big deal” to Participant B. He
felt his principal was fair to all staff. He noted that the principal tried hard to show
fairness by addressing an issue with the individual instead of the entire faculty. The
purposeful actions to be fair made the school atmosphere comfortable for Participant B.
He admitted that one thing he would never want to see is a “feeling of being
uncomfortable” coming to work. He did share that he thought being fair would have
“some” influence on a decision to stay in a position. Participant C could not imagine
working in an environment where she was not treated fairly. Participant D felt that
fairness was connected to placement for success and building trust.

While these participants felt that fairness was very important, only one of them
suggested that fairness could influence a decision to stay in a teaching position.
Participant B did hint that fairness was a consideration for working in that position for he
could not imagine working in an uncomfortable place. He stated that his principal was
always fair and that made him feel comfortable.

Again, these responses lend support to the survey: The principal is a component
of the position but not a determining factor of the position.

Participant D was surprised that lack of support when dealing with student
discipline, principal action four, was not the question with the greatest mean; she felt lack
of support in dealing with student discipline could be the number one reason for a teacher to leave a position. She also felt that support with parents was just as important. There had been several occasions where dealing with parents had caused her to consider if the job was worth it. In one case, if it had not been for the support of the principal, she probably would have walked out the door. Again, she felt that support with student discipline and with dealing with parents was connected to fairness, building trust, and placement for success. In her words they are “related to one another.”

Participant C did not always feel that she had principal support with student discipline, which allowed students to “work the system.” She felt that this condition not only affected the teachers, but the entire system. However, there was no mention that lack of support prompted thoughts or actions of migration or attrition.

Participant B, on the other hand, stated that the principal support he received when dealing with student discipline actually affected his decision to stay in the position. Because of the rough year with a student with difficult behaviors, he contemplated leaving teaching all together and moving to another state to start his own business. He appreciated that his principal would offer suggestions on how to handle a disciplinary situation. He felt that such support helped him to improve the next time a similar situation arises. He shared that the principal’s support as well as the support of other teachers influenced the decision to stay in teaching.

Participant A felt that principal support was important.

The responses indicate that the role of the principal in supporting teachers when dealing with student discipline could affect migration and/or retention. This one principal action did not lend support to the findings of the survey. In this case, the principal is a
component of the position but could also be a determining factor of whether the teacher leaves or stays in the position.

Participant B articulated that clearly communicating expectations was one of his principal’s strengths. He said the clear communication enabled him to know the “specifics” of what the principal expected, especially when it was written communication. Participant D expressed frustration about the fact that the superintendent was not clear in communications and that the principal often had to have debriefings to clarify expectations. She stated that as a 10-year veteran she is not afraid to ask for clarification and stated that the principal having earned her trust made her feel comfortable enough to ask for clarification if she needed it. She felt that if the trust was not there then “you don’t feel comfortable enough to ask for help.” Her comments show how the actions are interrelated.

Participant C said that sometimes it was hard for her to know what was expected and that not knowing what to do (when she was willing to do whatever her principal wanted) was a struggle. Participant A talked about expectations coming from the state making the job easier. While all participants appreciated clear communication of expectations, none expressed thoughts that the clear communication was a reason to stay or that lack of clear communication was a reason to migrate. The responses indicate that the principal is a component of the teaching position but not a determining factor about the position, as was found in the survey.

Assigning teachers to a position where they will be successful was the question with the top mean in the survey. In the interviews, respondents expressed anger and concern about being transferred to new positions without being consulted as well as
concern about being successful in the position. Burke et al. (1984) posit that teachers who are moved to another grade level again experience the induction stage and feel stress to be accepted by the new peers and students while trying to achieve a comfort level and security.

The survey also revealed that building trust with teachers and being fair to teachers were the second and third highest means. Katz (1972) posited that the needs of the second stage of teacher development included on-site help, assistance in conducting mutual exploration of a problem, and having give-and-take conversations. A principal who takes the time to provide that type of assistance will build trust and a sense of fairness with the teacher. Moir (1990) described the phase or stage of disillusionment, where the teacher experiences a dip in morale, is questioning his/her commitment, and is experiencing self-doubt. If the principal builds a sense of trust and treats the teacher fairly, he/she could help the transition from the disillusionment phase/stage to the rejuvenation stage where the teacher has a better understanding of the system, has a sense of accomplishment, has developed coping strategies (perhaps as shared by the principal), and developed skills to reduce, prevent, and manage problems. Burke et al. (1984) contended that if the school has an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, then there will be a negative effect on the teacher’s career cycle.

The question with the fourth largest mean from the survey addressed principal support for the teacher when dealing with student discipline. One respondent replied that she was surprised this was not the question with the greatest mean from the survey. Another respondent admitted that he probably would not still be teaching if it had not been for the support of his principal while dealing with a group of very difficult students.
and parents. F. Fuller (1969), Burden (1982), Moir (1990), Watzke (2003), and Littleton and Littleton (2006) address teacher concern about student discipline in at least one phase/stage of teacher development. Collectively, the researchers posited that support with classroom management and student discipline helped to move a teacher to the next phase/stage of development.

Clearly communicating expectations was the question with the fifth highest mean from the survey and the last topic of discussion in the interviews. Respondents expressed appreciation for clear communications and expressed frustration when they felt communications were unclear. Burden (1982) posited that stresses experienced in the mature phase/stage (5 years and up) included stress about educational expectations.

Stroot et al.’s (1998) review of literature and theories of teachers’ developmental phases/stages found that it is important to “understand the stages of development in order to provide adequate assistance” for teachers (p. 1). A principal willing to take the time to learn about the phases/stages of teacher development and the stresses related to those phases/stages could provide essential support for helping the teacher to successfully move from one stage to the next.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the principal in teacher retention and migration as perceived by elementary teachers in north-central Pennsylvania.

The data from four of the five interview questions (assigns the teacher for success, builds trust, is fair, clearly communicates expectations) supported the findings of the survey: The principal is a component of the teaching position but not a determining factor
of the position. Data from a fifth question (support teachers when dealing with student discipline) did not support the findings of the survey and suggest that the principal is a component of every teacher’s position and could be a determining factor of whether to stay in or to leave the position.

In addition, data from the interviews suggest that principal actions were not independent of each other, but that the principal looking out for teacher success, building trust, being fair, supporting with student discipline, and clear communication about expectations were all interrelated. Participants often would talk about more than the one principal action addressed in a particular question.

The triangulated data indicate the following:

1. The differences in the positive means and negative means of the survey and four of the five questions of the interview indicated that the principal is a component of the teacher’s position but the principal is probably not the determining factor in deciding whether to stay in or leave the position. While several times the participants hinted at thoughts of migration, only in one action, supporting a teacher when dealing with student discipline, did a participant specifically speak of considering leaving the position, and because of the principal support decided to stay in the position. The interviews support the findings of the survey: Leaving appears to require greater activation energy.

2. The principal actions discussed in the interviews are connected; it was often difficult for some respondents to separate them into single actions and determine the effect of the single action. One participant said that building trust affected the perception of fairness, which in turn affected the perception of being assigned to an area of success.
Participant D mentioned more than once that the five actions discussed are interrelated and that one action will affect another.

3. The survey and interviews suggested that teachers are willing to endure some lack of support but perhaps there comes a tipping point where they are no longer willing to stay because of lack of support in more than one area. Data from the survey showed that corresponding positive responses and negative responses did not have the same magnitude of response (negative being the lower) and they did not mirror each other, suggesting that greater activation energy is needed for the decision to leave a position. Hence, teachers might be willing to endure some lack of principal support. It appears to be easier to stay and endure some lack of principal support than to migrate or leave the profession.

Programmatic Recommendations

A review of literature on teacher recruitment and retention by Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) found that teachers in schools that provided autonomy and administrative support had lower levels of teacher migration and attrition. Darling-Hammond (2003) found that crucial to beginning teachers determining whether to stay in the profession were teachers’ feelings about administrative support, resources, and their input into decision-making. Berry et al. (2008) reported that the Center for Teaching Quality, with support from the National Education Association, over a 3-year period conducted population and web-based surveys. Over 250,000 teachers participated and one trend that emerged consistently over time was that “new teachers who have quality support are more likely to report they will remain in teaching” (p. 2). From the interviews in my study, administrative support was deemed important to teacher success; one
participant felt that lack of principal support in dealing with student discipline would be a number one reason for teachers to leave a position. One teacher clearly expressed her frustration at not having input into the decision to assign her to another position with another team. She also shared that supporting a teacher after the move was important, especially for new teachers. Principals might want to consider teacher input for assignments and then purposefully designing support for the teacher after the move—support from the principal and support from other staff as well.

From the interviews, strength of language and length of discussion made it apparent that support with student discipline was important to teachers. Farber (2010) suggests that principals need to support teachers who deal with challenging students. Farber stated that teachers need a strong administrator who can “help make the tough decisions” (p. 129) to support the teacher and all who are involved. Participants shared reactions to discipline situations ranging from without the support the teacher would not have completed the year, to a teacher considering walking out the door, to lack of support was a systemic problem in the school. Schools would benefit from its leaders planning their professional development that develops a disciplinary plan that strongly supports teachers, especially those who are new to the profession. Although teachers seemed willing to endure some lack of principal support in more than one area discussed, this particular issue could possibly be a tipping point. Whether explicitly stated or implied, having the principal cover their backs was important. This suggests that principals would greatly benefit from conveying teacher support with students and parents in word and in action. The principal and the teacher need to become a team.
Haar’s (2007) study of a rural teacher who was a recipient of the National Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching showed that the teacher felt the principal was a key player in the retention of quality teachers. In addition, a teacher reported that the best part of the supportive principal was the feeling of trust. That sense of trust came at a crucial time when she was contemplating her profession and its value. She stated that “the support of the principal plays a big part in the survival of the challenges of teaching” (p. 30). The interviewees of my study expressed the importance of trust between the teacher and the principal at great length and with some of the strongest language in the interviews. Principals would clearly benefit from interactions and decision-making that promoted trust with their teachers; such action should be intentional and specific.

Professional development that specifically addresses teacher migration and retention would be beneficial. Also, administrators would benefit from specifically planning interactions that promote trust, would consider teacher success when making assignments, would be fair, would give support when dealing with discipline, and clearly communicate expectations. Principal certification programs could benefit from specifically designing courses that address support of teachers in reference to attrition and migration. However, Boyd et al. (2009) posited that data did not provide opportunity for the authors to clearly identify “policy levers for reform” (p. 22) to guide principals in their role as supporter.

In the interviews it appeared that the teachers had some difficulty in articulating an exact support. Several times in the interviews in this study, it was pointed out that the five principal supports discussed were linked and relative to each other. Until further
efforts are made to identify and clarify the supports, principals may have to rely on literature that is available as well as seek advice and help from fellow administrators.

The research of F. Fuller (1969), Katz (1972), Burden (1982), Moir (1990), Stroot et al. (1998), and Littleton and Littleton (2006) on the phases of teacher development are a tremendous resource for principals. Principal professional development designed to focus on each phase of teacher development could be very effective in addressing the needs and concerns of teachers—a proactive approach to providing meaningful and effective support for teachers.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study looked at rural elementary teachers’ perception how principal support affected teacher migration and attrition in rural schools of north-central Pennsylvania. This study does not represent urban schools or all rural schools, and the results make no implications for other rural schools in Pennsylvania. Because this study looks at only rural schools, the findings can be generalized only to the extent that other school districts are similar in culture and character to the schools studied.

This study did not survey or interview teachers who had left the profession; it focused on retention and migration. Research that focused on “leavers” only might be considered.

Literature review revealed that principal support means different things to different people. While this study attempted to develop a definition of principal support, it only scratched the surface. Consideration for further research to refine the definition of the term *principal support* could be beneficial.
In addition, when looking at the stages of development of a teacher (F. Fuller, 1969; Moir, 1990; Littleton & Littleton, 2006), principal support for a brand-new teacher encompasses different concerns than to a veteran of any number of years. New teachers are the most likely to migrate or leave the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Marlow et al., 1997). F. Fuller’s (1969) stages of teaching address the concerns of teachers in the pre-teaching phase and the early teaching phase. Research that looks at each developmental stage of a teacher, with its ensuing concerns, in relationship to the principal could be of benefit to beginning teachers. Varrati and Smith (2008) posit that principals may want to consider looking at earlier involvement with new teachers during pre-service experiences.

This study did not look at why administrative support is important to teachers. Investigation into “why” could possibly help to understand the decision for migration or attrition. From the interviews, teachers articulated that the principal supports they were discussing were inter-related. Further research that looks at the relationships between principal actions could be beneficial.

The results of this study did not reveal the tipping point for the decision to leave a position because of lack of principal support. Although teachers expressed frustration and thoughts of leaving, no one actually followed through with making the decision to leave. Further research that could explore combinations of principal actions might give greater insight to a tipping point of migration.
APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF DATA FROM LITERATURE REVIEW ON

DESCRIBING PRINCIPAL SUPPORT
SUMMARY OF DATA FROM LITERATURE REVIEW ON DESCRIBING PRINCIPAL SUPPORT

1. Visit classrooms to see special things
2. Work to understand the issues teachers face
3. Work to understand what teachers are doing
4. Use your presence to show interest in academic program
5. Use your presence to show interest in teachers’ work
6. Back teachers up in discipline
7. Help teachers devise solutions to discipline problems
8. Assist teachers in applying discipline strategies in the classroom
9. Be helpful when dealing with parents
10. Be helpful when dealing with district office
11. Help teachers find resources
12. Help teachers solve problems
13. Help teachers take advantage of growth opportunities
14. Support continued professional growth
15. Provide help/information related to teacher’s specific problems/needs
16. Show appreciation – notes/accolades/private compliments
17. Make teachers feel valued/appreciated
18. Keep teachers included/informed on what is going on in the school
19. Let them know what is happening and how it will affect them/students
20. Give teachers voice in things that affect them most directly
21. Respect teacher time
22. Keep meetings brief/focused
23. Do not place non-instructional unnecessary demands on teachers
24. Protect teacher time from demands of district office
25. Establish clear school routines
26. Special events are well planned in advance
27. Overall environment is calm, business-like
28. Respect the teacher
29. Build trust with the teacher
30. Be a role model that cares
31. Assign new teachers to areas where they will succeed
32. In first year, limit out of class-room activities
33. Develop culture of collaborative problem-solving
34. Mentor new teachers
35. Advocate for the new teacher
36. Be the instructional leader
37. Help new teachers learn the lay of the land
38. Provide professional support
39. Provide personal support
40. Help resolve conflicts with colleagues
41. Help resolve conflicts with community members
42. Provide guidance with curriculum development
43. Provide guidance with teaching style
44. Provide guidance with parent relations
45. Provide guidance with classroom discipline
46. Fund programs for new teachers
47. Do not give new teachers the most challenging assignments
48. Align new teachers with same grade level/area taught when student teacher
49. Orient new teachers at beginning of the year
50. Give teachers data about students prior to first day of school
51. Make sure teachers have materials needed to get started
52. Be clear about expectations of the new teacher
53. Let new teacher know principal is invested in their success
54. Drop in and meet weekly
55. Introduce new teachers to larger community
56. Guide new teachers in making professional development decision
57. Communicate school’s culture/policies/procedures
58. Be welcoming
59. Be friendly
60. Show interest
61. Be encouraging
62. Be accessible
63. Relay compliments from parents/students/colleagues
64. Leave a positive note
65. Define goals
66. Effectively monitor the nature of the curriculum
67. Exercise quality control
68. Carefully choose personnel
69. Resist compromises
70. Be strong
71. Be fair
72. When dealing with parents, stand behind the teacher when they are right
73. Value teacher as an individual
74. Take seriously and support innovative ideas
75. Trust teachers to do job without a great deal of oversight
76. Support teachers with parents
77. Support teachers in matters of discipline
78. Respect/value teacher as professional
79. Be honest
80. Be worthy of respect
81. Be available
82. Be willing to listen
83. Create structures of support
84. Create interaction among the schools’ teachers
85. Let teachers participate in decision making
86. Strong instructional leadership
87. Supportive instructional leadership
88. Provide collegial learning opportunities
APPENDIX B

CODING FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Get room ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Make things go smoothly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Get what the teacher asked for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Say going to do something, get it done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Principal knows what is going on with teachers and with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Creates a positive relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Does things in a timely manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Administrators work as a team with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Principal is professional developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Principal is leader of a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Principal has plan of where building is going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Principal monitors progress of building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Supports me consistently when with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Supports me when I am trying something new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Supports my professional decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Values my expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Provides appropriate physical working environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Provides good support materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Follows through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Provides encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Provides things in a reasonable amount of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Provides clear chain of command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Open, frequent face-to-face communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Frequently spends quality time in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Principal helps teacher’s credibility in front of the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Helps with classroom management in the classroom setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Principal is collegial, non-threatening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Does not critique without observing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Gives positive critique along with the negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Tells me the building expectations at the very beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Tells me the rules at the beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Defines procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Communications changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Communications directly with the person on the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Principal is respectful of the teacher in front of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Principal investigates both sides of an issue before making a decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Principal encourages me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Principal is honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Principal sets the example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Principal researches when unsure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Principal builds rapport with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Principal is knowledgeable of the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Principal knows your name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCE LIST
REFERENCE LIST


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Education

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2004 St. Bonaventure University  St. Bonaventure, New York
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1999 Bucknell University  Lewisburg, Pennsylvania
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1995 Mansfield University  Mansfield, Pennsylvania
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1984 Mansfield University  Mansfield, Pennsylvania
   Bachelor of Science in Music Education

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   Principal

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