

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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March 17, 2017

WHY CAN'T WE RETAIN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN OUR SCHOOLS?

Abstract of capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
At Morehead State University

By

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March 17, 2017

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WHY CAN'T WE RETAIN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN OUR SCHOOLS?

For some time in the United States, attaining employment as a school administrator or teacher meant obtaining a reliable and most likely permanent educational position. School administrator and teacher retention has become a problem in education, as they are not staying in the classroom nor the school they currently work in. Nearly half of all teachers are currently leaving the classroom within their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003). This capstone was to determine what issues exist that might cause school leaders to leave their schools within the first two years as well as what issues contributed to teachers leaving their schools. Factors studied included the culture and achievement of the school and the field experience provided to teachers and aspiring school leaders. The areas of leadership, support, and work environment will all be factors in this study. A random survey was issued to Kentucky educators to receive their feedback, which was used to create solutions to the issue of retention rates.

KEYWORDS: Administrator, Teacher, Retention, Turnover, Kentucky

Candidate Signature

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CAPSTONE

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DEDICATION

Brandon Richards

I would like to dedicate this paper to my family. My wife, Ashlyn Richards for putting up with me throughout this process and continuing to remind me that it will all be worth it. To my Mother, Trudi Shaffer, who has always been my biggest supporter. To my Dad, Eli Brad Richards who always believed I could do this, even when he didn't want to admit it. To my Step Parents, Barb, Cheryl, and Donald Shaffer, thank you for being my parents and setting examples for me to follow. To my sister, Tricia Smith and her husband Jay, for realizing that it is not bragging, but trying to push the family further. To my step-brother and his wife, Warren and Marcy Shaffer, though you didn't go into education, I know how proud you are of me for going into education and carrying on Don's legacy. To my brother and his wife, Matthew and Elizabeth Richards, for listening to me talk about this even though it is not exciting and for being family. To my nephew, Dylan Smith, Uncle BE is motivated to show you that you can do anything! To my in-laws, Dickie and Alisa Bruce, thank you for your daughter and all the support. To my sister-in-law, Amber Bruce, for always asking how school was going. To my wonderful dogs, Scooter and Sadie, you are my escape from reality. To my friends and mentors in education, you will never know the impact you truly had on me becoming me. Finally, to Crystal Fultz, for being the best partner and friend a guy could have through a doctoral program and life.

Crystal Fultz

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Historically, as Americans, a unifying element that links us together is our educational system. From the early days of colonial schoolmasters to one-room schoolhouses to online educational opportunities, education has factored into our cultural identity (Sadker & Sadker, 2003). As with any institution, education has had its critics and problems such as inadequate funding, disagreements on educational standards, and the debate over standardized testing. With media and educational research focused on those issues, another problem, teacher and administrator turnover has been an overlooked issue that has potentially far-reaching impacts on not only students but also the entire nation.

For some time in the United States, attaining employment as a school administrator meant obtaining a reliable and most likely permanent leadership position. School principals were a consistent element within a school, along with teachers who seemed to teach there forever. Students could anticipate being taught and led by the same teachers and principals that their parents had had when they were in school. Recently, however, this scenario has become a novelty in education, with fewer educators remaining in the same school, district, or even the profession than ever before (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). This disturbing trend has unfortunately become the norm in education. What is the cause of the tendency? What are the implications of inconsistent leadership upon the students and faculty?

What can be done to reverse this trend to prevent future school leaders from moving from school to school?

Likewise, teacher retention and teacher turnover are key topics in the world of education (Hanushek et al, 2004). Why are teachers leaving the classroom? Is it the training and development of teachers? Is it the work environment? Have the students really changed and made teaching more difficult than it was in the past? All of these are valid questions, but what remains constant is that the typical teacher is leaving the classroom within the first five years of being in it (Ingersoll, 2003). Addressing the issue of teacher retention and determining how to grow and retain teachers should be the focus of all school administrations to help strengthen their buildings and improve relations between all stakeholders.

Statement of Problem

Teacher retention has become a problem in education as teachers are staying in neither the classroom nor the school they currently work in. Nearly half of all teachers are currently leaving the classroom within their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003). While much of the public discussion concerning the success of schools has focused on retaining quality teachers in the classroom, school administrative retention is just as much of an issue for schools (Fuller, 2012). This capstone was to determine what issues exist that may cause school leaders to leave their schools within the first two years as well as what issues contribute to teachers leaving the school at which they currently work and what factors caused them to stay in the classroom. Factors studied include the culture and achievement of the school

and the field experience provided to teachers and aspiring school leaders. The areas of leadership, support, and work environment were factors in this study. Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to offer possible courses of action in order to maintain more qualified leaders and teachers.

Significance of the Problem

School principals play a very important role in the overall health of a school. As a result, when there is high school administrator turnover, all aspects of the school can be affected, most notably student achievement and teacher satisfaction. Teacher retention causes schools to replace teachers on a yearly basis. Teachers play an important role in the school, be it in instruction, professional development, coaching of sports and clubs, or relationships with students. Because of high teacher turnover, all facets of the school can suffer negatively, especially the student body. Budgets are also negatively affected. Replacing staff on a yearly basis can cost a school from \$4,000 per teacher who leaves a district and needs to be replaced, to upwards of \$17,800 (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, n.d.). To replace a principal, some districts can expect to spend up to \$75,000 to search, hire, and train a new leader (Superville, 2014).

The significance of this study was to provide suggestions for improving the retention rate of teachers and principals through support methods, guidance, and structures to help encourage and support all teachers and principals, as well as to provide suggestions for improving the support measures available in limited degrees

to aspiring leaders. One desired outcome of this study was to offer guidance and support to school leadership teams to help retain teachers and administrators.

Background of Problem

Principals. School leaders are a critical component of the success of a school. Given that the average length of service for a school administrators three to four years, the opportunity to fully develop the potential achievement of both the faculty and student body of a school is drastically reduced (Hull, 2012). Without quality leadership, evidence has shown a detrimental effect on the academic achievement of the students due to the lack of consistent leadership toward a collective purpose (Béteille, 2011). As a result, schools that are performing at lower levels often have an even higher school administrator turnover rate, in some cases as high as 30% (Hull, 2012). The high turnover rate is especially detrimental in areas with high levels of poverty. (Béteille, 2011). There is also strong evidence to suggest that the leadership of a school has a direct impact on the culture and academic climate of a school (Norton, 2002).

For example, the impact of a school leader on the cultural health of a school has been evident at Montgomery County High School (KY) since August 2012. Since then, the high school has had 10 changes in school leaders. The impact of such changes has been apparent in the most recent test score data.

As of 2014, the district ranked in the 91st percentile in the state. However, Montgomery County High School ranked in the 24th percentile in the state and is in the category of “needs improvement” (KDE, 2014). This designation could stem

from the lack of consistent leadership at the high school. Since 2012, the school has had two head principals, six assistant principals, and three curriculum specialists. Of the five administrative team members for the 2014-2015 school year, four of them were new to the district and three of them had no prior administrative experience. The high turnover of school leadership has not established a clear vision of success for either the teachers or the students.

The need for a plan of action to ensure that school leaders are given the support necessary to maintain their positions will improve the overall health of the school as a whole, including the retention of highly-skilled teachers. There is a connection between school administrator retention and teacher retention. According to the Center for Public Education, there is a 17% greater chance that a teacher will leave a school when a new school administrator is hired. In schools where the principals remain more than five years, teachers are also more likely to remain as well (Hull, 2012).

Teachers. Teacher retention: Perhaps no words are spoken more in education today. Teachers are currently leaving the classroom within their first five years of the profession, which is a rate of nearly 50% (Phillips, 2015). When looking at this rate, you have almost half of all teachers leaving the classroom, creating a gap in education, as well as a gap in the relationships between students and teachers. More troubling is the fact that “one third of the teaching force in the United States turns over each year,” (Heineke, Mazza, & Tinchor-Wagner, 2014).

What has caused this retention issue to formulate in the profession of public education? In the 1980s, states began to respond to the shortages of teachers by creating alternative certification programs (Ingersoll, 2001). Today, nearly half all certified teachers in America complete their program through one of these alternative certification programs (Heineke, Mazza, & Tinchor-Wagner, 2014). These programs have made the pathway to teacher certification easier and require less time to complete. By having less time invested in a program, people are more apt to leave the profession.

According to Ingersoll (2001), several of the issues with teacher retention can be traced back to the 1990s when the “baby boomers” began to retire from the profession, while children were still being born at high rate. This created a shortage in highly qualified teachers that would lead to people who were not qualified, as well as the education industry looking to other avenues, i.e. “troops-to-teachers” and “Teach for America,” to generate enough teachers to fill the shortages in the industry (Ingersoll, 2001).

For example, Montgomery County Schools has experienced significant teacher turn over from the end of the 2010 school year through the end of 2015. Several people credit this issue to the leadership, or lack thereof, in the district. During this time, there were three different superintendents in the district. Others credit this issue to teachers who were not happy in the district and wanted to work outside of the Montgomery County district. During this time, students have had trouble creating lasting and meaningful relationships with their teachers. The

frustration of students knowing who their teachers will be from year to year has been evident to those teachers who have remained there during this time.

There are many reasons for people to leave the classroom. Though it takes various reasons for various teachers, researchers list the lack of professional support, negative working condition, low salaries, ineffective administrations, and emotional burnout (Heineke, Mazza, & Tinchor-Wagner, 2014). What can be done to correct these deficiencies in educational retention, and how can educational programs adapt to help meet the demands of the teachers of the 21st century?

In order to achieve and maintain the highest quality teachers and school leaders, more needs to be done to retain the services of the best and brightest for America's schoolchildren. The intent of this study was to determine what elements influenced employees to leave a district, and what is necessary to ensure that both highly qualified teachers and principals are offered the best possible support to ensure their success in their assigned positions.

Local Context

The Commonwealth of Kentucky has 173 public school districts throughout the state. The majority of the districts are county schools in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, although some are independent school districts. There are 466 elementary schools, 60 elementary/middle schools, 157 middle schools, 50 middle/high schools, 240 high schools, 194 P-12 schools, and 10 preschools (KDE, 2016). The average length of the school year is 185 days.

Within the 173 school districts, there are 41,588 teachers, with the breakdown at 78% female and 22% male. The teachers' ethnicities are 96% White and 4% Minority. During the 2015-2016 school year, the average years of teaching experience for teachers is 11 years and 9 months (KDE, 2016). The average teacher salary in the commonwealth of Kentucky is \$51,635.

Kentucky has an internship program called the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP), which is designed to help first year teachers grow in their professional duties and responsibilities. All new teachers in Kentucky, and out of state teachers with less than 2 years' experience, must participate in KTIP in order to receive their professional certification. There were 2,494 teacher interns in the commonwealth of Kentucky in the 2015-2016 school year. However, new principals are no longer required to complete an internship process like KTIP.

In 2016, Kentucky school enrolled 655,642 from various backgrounds (KDE, 2016). The state graduation rate is 88%, while the state retention rate is 1.8%, and the dropout rate is 1.5%. The Commonwealth of Kentucky changed the dropout age of students from 16 years old to 18 years old in 2015 (KDE, 2016). Students successfully transitioning from high school to attending college, technical schools, enlisting in military service, or employed is at 93.2% according to data from 2013-2014 (KDE, 2016).

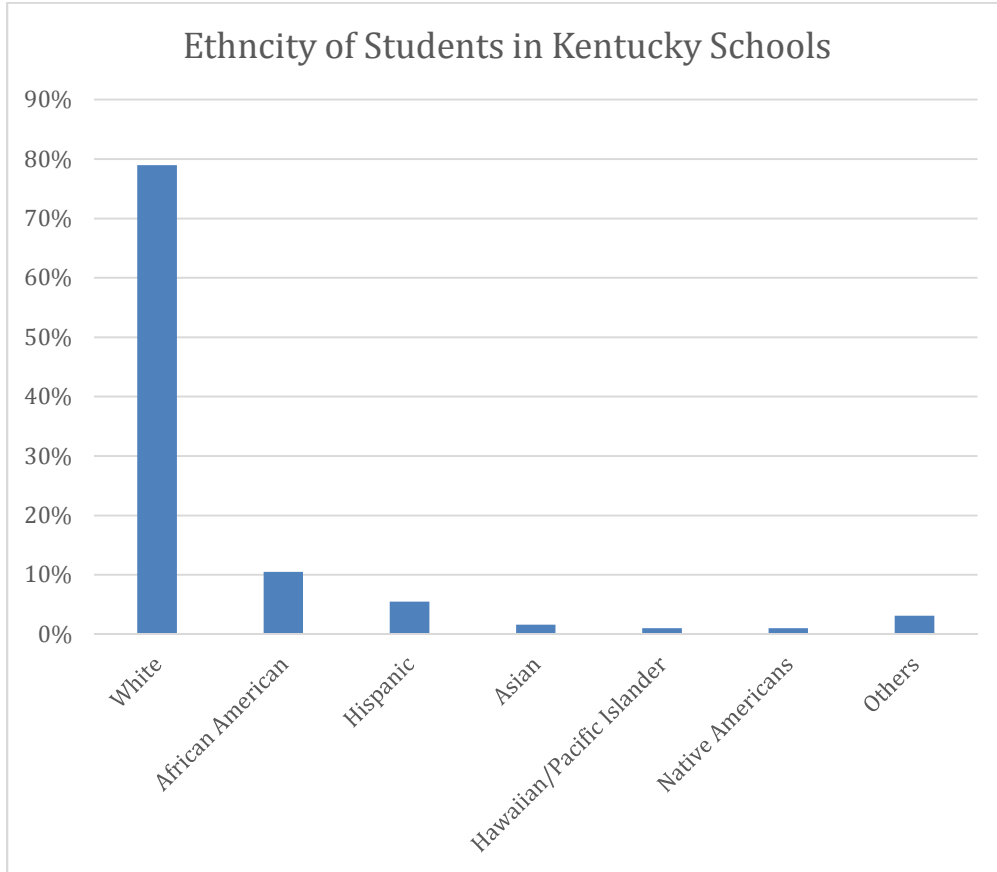


Figure 1: Ethnicity of Students in Kentucky Schools

Funding in Kentucky public schools is derived from three sources: local, state, and federal. The local education revenue provided to public schools is \$2.5 billion; state funding accounts for \$5,015,541,600 a year in public schools, while \$888,387,200 comes from federal funding. Kentucky has a program that provides additional funding to public schools called Support Education Excellence in Kentucky, or SEEK. This funding provides for transportation costs as well as for

special needs students in districts. On average, \$13,276 was spent per student in Kentucky Public Schools.

Kentucky public schools rank 13th in the nation in academic standards in 2013 (KDE, 2016). This was an improvement from 34th in 2010. The change has been addressed through higher educational standards, professional developments, and adoption of new standards. Throughout this process, frequent turnover persists in Kentucky public schools, both from the administration side and the teachers in the classrooms (KDE, 2016).

Research Questions

What is causing this constant turnover of teachers and administrators? What factors contribute to teachers and administrators leaving the school setting? Conversely, with so many of their peers leaving, what causes the others to stay and continue in the field of education? The capstone project attempted to answer the question of the primary causes of the lack of retention among school leaders and teachers. The hypothesis for this study was that the primary cause of the high turnover for school administrator positions is the lack of preparation and support that school leaders receive prior to and during their first few years as principals. The hypothesis for the high teacher turnover was that the lack of support and constant change of administration impacts whether people stay in their school district or seek employment in another district. The study will also develop a solution to those causes in order to provide more support for emerging leaders so that they will be more successful within their districts.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

Public school employment is no longer the stable field it once was. Both teachers and administrators alike are leaving the field in record numbers. In this chapter, we will focus on previous studies and research into the role that school principals and teachers have in schools as well as potential causes for the high turnover.

Principals

School administrator retention. Public school principals and assistant principals play a major role in the success of a school. Yet, according to a study conducted in Texas by the National Education Policy Center, the retention rate after three years for middle school principals is 50% while high school principals was only 30% (Fuller, 2012). The turnover for assistant principals is even more striking, with 60% of novice assistant principals leaving their original schools after just five years (Viadero, 2010). This problem is considerably worse in lower socioeconomic districts, where the impact of high quality principals and assistant principals is needed the most. Research indicate that in schools with 75% or higher free and reduced lunch programs, the turnover rate of school leaders is somewhere around 27% (Winginstitute, n.a.).

The true impact of administrative turnover is critical due to the role that principals play in the success of a school. According to the Wallace Foundation,

school leaders are second only to teachers in terms of the important role they play in a school (Leithwood, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). While much discussion is made of the impact of teacher turnover, school administrators turnover is just as critical due to the role that principals play not only in the steadiness of the school staff, but on test achievements as well.

Impact on school's performance. The Center for Public Education study "The Principal Perspective: Full Report" (2012), presented evidence to support the claim that a quality level school administrator can improve a school's achievement rating by up to 25%. In one study conducted in British Columbia, math and reading scores were markedly improved for students in a school with a high quality skill level principal, as much as .2 standard deviation points in both reading and math (Dhuey & Smith, 2011).

School environment. Traditionally, school leaders are vital to successful schools in five key areas. One of these areas is the creation of an environment of success. As school leaders, principals have the responsibility of establishing the expectations for not only the teachers in the building but for the students as well. Students will meet the challenges set before them, and if the expectations are high, success will follow. Another key area for success is the maintenance of a safe environment for all individuals within the school. Students and teachers cannot realize their full potential if they are more concerned about their safety while on school grounds rather than focused on academics. Developing teacher leaders within the school is yet another key area on which it is vital for school leaders to focus.

Encouraging teachers to become more involved in leading the school will create a more inclusive environment both the teachers and students. Additionally, the school administrator is also responsible for maintaining a consistent focus on the curriculum and instruction of the school and overseeing the day-to-day functions of the school. Depending on the size and population of the school, this area can be very time-consuming for the principal, but without steady oversight, student success will be very difficult to achieve (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Positive school culture. Yet, perhaps the most critical responsibility of a school administrator is to create a positive school culture (Habegger, 2008). The Huffington Post describes school culture as “a shared sense of purpose and values, norms of continuous learning and improvement, collaborative collegial relationships.... and sharing experiences” (Haberman, 2013). The principals should be seen as the standard-bearer of success for the school and should work to be the model of encouragement to achieve higher. By instilling in teachers and students a shared set of beliefs about success, the school administrator sets the tone of what the school should be about (Reavis, Vinson, & Fox, 1999). All of these areas are crucial if the school is to be a success. Without a high-quality leader, schools will be without a focus and may struggle to meet the challenges it faces.

Due to the important fundamental role that a school administrator has within a school, other key areas are also affected by a high turnover rate within the leadership ranks. According to an article in the *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, schools with high school administrator turnovers are also plagued by

high teacher turnover. There is a correlation between the type of leader a school has and the retention of its teachers (Ghamrawi & Jammal, 2013). Schools with a new school administrator find that their teacher turnover rate tends to be 8.7% more than in schools with experienced, stable principals (Béteille, 2011). According to a study conducted by Boyd, Grossman, Hamilton, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff, 40% of the teachers surveyed indicated that their reason for wanting to leave their current position was their dissatisfaction with the leadership of the school while only ten percent of the Acsame study indicated that their school leader was effective as a communicator (2009).

Impact upon teachers. Teachers want leaders who are not only visible but also approachable as a sign of their ability to effectively lead the school (Gibbs & Slate, n.a.). School leaders are expected to create an environment where teachers feel respected as professionals and instill a sense of ownership within the teachers of the successes of the school. While it is true that the school administrator does not have a direct impact on the academic progress of students, it is through the retention of quality teachers that principals can have an influence on the success of their students (Stronge & Leeper, 2012).

School administrator turnover. School administrator turnover can be attributed to several reasons. The professional stress of the position is a critical factor for many to leave the profession, with as many as 58% citing the stress of the job, according to one study (Sorapuru, 2012). Another study found that 58% of school principals also cited the lack of appropriate school funding was a major professional

stress (Hardy, 2004). The inability to provide the services that students and teachers need in order to comply with state and federal education guidelines creates a sense of helplessness in the school leader. “Unfunded mandates,” such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), accounted for 88% of the stress reported by principals (Hardy, 2004). Many school leaders do not realize the time that will be devoted to the position prior to accepting the job. According to one study, 53% of school principals reported that the job took too much time to handle (Sorapuru, 2012). Surprisingly, according to the same study, only 37% cited salary as a factor in their dissatisfaction with the job (Sorapuru, 2012). Additionally, some leaders are not satisfied with the reality of their roles as school administrator (Hardy, 2004). The pre-service ideals of what it is like to be a school administrator is sometimes not realized and the disappointment may lead some to rethink their career decisions.

Another suggested reason for the high turnover rate for school leaders is the lack of proper training prior to accepting the position. The criticism of training programs offered at college and universities is that the admission criteria are often lenient, compared to other fields (Lee, 2012). This can have a definite impact on the quality and character of the leaders who are applying for positions in school districts. Other critics of the education leadership programs contend that such programs do not adequately prepare these future leaders for the variety and scope of modern students and educational issues (Lee). Additionally, there are discrepancies between what is generally taught and the reality of school leadership (Lee).

While most of the attention on the impact of high school administrator turnover has been on academics and the school environment, there is a monetary side effect. According to one study, the typical district spends on average \$75,000 to hire and replace, train, and develop a new school leader (Superville, 2014). These funds could be better spent on hiring additional teachers and new programs for students.

Reasons to stay. Despite the research that suggests that school administrator positions are always routinely in a state of constant flux, there are a number of documented reasons why principals might choose to stay located at the same school for an extended period. Although limited in scope, principals report several factors that could be a consideration when choosing to leave or stay in a school or district. One of the factors is that there must be clear and consistent support from the central office (Luebke, 2013). Without support from key central office personnel, including the superintendent, the school administrator will not have the confidence to make decisions and to adequately lead their schools.

Successful principals have a positive relationship with superintendents and are able to communicate effectively the needs of their schools. When principals feel valued by those in authority, they are more likely to remain at their schools. Strong relationships with their students and faculty members are other factors that can lead a school administrator to remain at a school (Coyeman, 1998). Principals who feel that they are serving a higher purpose or fulfilling a professional goal by remaining in a school are more likely to stay for a longer period. This can be accomplished by

developing a positive and healthy relationship with those they are serving and believing that their presence is the cause for any improvement to the school.

A final factor is the authority given to successful principals to hire and develop their own faculty and staff (Luebke, 2013). This autonomy allows the school administrator to have a greater stake in the success of the school and generates a great sense of pride in their accomplishments. When a school administrator is content in their placement and feel that they are really making a difference in the lives of others, they have more of an incentive to stay.

There is no question that principals and assistant principals are vital to the success of a school. In order to ensure that the most qualified candidates are applying for leadership positions, admission to training programs must become more selective (Lee, 2012). The desire to be a school leader does not always equate to good leadership. Those wanting to be trained should meet certain requirements and possess attributes that will be beneficial to the schools in which they will serve. The training programs should also be designed to provide the future leaders with not only theoretical practices, but also practical ones encompassing conflict management as well as the day-to-day management of their buildings (Lee, 2012). In a study completed by the Charlotte Advocates for Education completed in 2004, principals were asked what they wished they would have known prior to becoming a school leader. Responses included time-management skills, community outreach, and relationship building within the school (Carnes, 2004).

In order to serve the needs of all leaders, there should be opportunities for state-based assistance to receive additional training and accreditation so that it does not become a burden on the leader's personal finances (Lee, 2012). By basing the training on standards that are accepted statewide, the training would be more consistent and not limited to only a few.

In order to retain these leaders, there needs to be more support offered to guide them in the process of leadership. Research suggests that the more successful school leaders received some form of school administrator mentorship in their first few years of service (Lee, 2012). Several states have developed internship programs to provide support for novice principals to assist in their transition into a leadership role. These internship programs are very similar to those that are in place to help beginning teachers. The beginning school administrator are paired with an experienced school administrator within the district. The supervising school administrator would then create opportunities to not only advise the novice leader but to also demonstrate what an effective leader should be doing. Periodically throughout the first year, there would be benchmarks that would need to be achieved in order for the beginning leader to continue. At the end of the first year, there would be committee hearing to determine if the novice leader should be allowed to continue in his or her role as a principal. This allowed for many opportunities for the beginning leader to receive assistance should there be issues or concerns.

Kentucky Principal Internship Program. In the Kentucky version, which was created as a result of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), the Kentucky

Principal Internship Program, or KPIP, had one main goal: to provide an opportunity for novice leaders to learn under the direction of an experienced leader as well as provide continuous support throughout the career of leader (KPIP, 1990).

Kentucky, however, is one of the states that has had to suspend such a program due to budgetary reductions, which are set to resume in June of 2016 (KPIP, 2015). Because of the suspension, novice school leaders in Kentucky are now without quality guidance to assist in their progress of becoming skilled leaders. A study conducted in 2000, provides evidence to suggest that internship programs do provide necessary support to aspiring leaders (Ricciardi, 2000). This is especially of importance when, according to Ricciardi, teachers moving into school administrator position account for nearly 56% of the leaders in Kentucky's schools (2000). Of those principals, most came from an insulated position as an elementary teacher, which goes to explain why an internship program of this type is so important to help connect the leader with other, more experienced leaders (Ricciardi, 2000).

The problem of providing such quality assistance is not a problem found only in Kentucky. Even states with such established programs in operation are still finding it difficult to provide the necessary assistance to school leaders. In an article written for American School Board Journal, Michael Hertting (2008) studied the role that internship programs played in the success of beginning principals and found that many were not sufficient in providing the type of help that many principals need. Only 56% of the principals he surveyed felt they were receiving the assistance that they needed to be successful, and of those, 62% said that they received help from

more than one person, such as other administrators within the district or personnel from within the school (Hertting, 2008). This supports other studies that suggest that support for novice principals and assistant principals should be less top down in nature (Beam, Russell, & Smith, 2014). In reality, if the leader is to be truly successful, support should begin before the school administrator or assistant school administrator is hired. There should be a system in place that identifies potential leaders and then works with them to develop the skills needed to become truly effective leaders. This system should target interpersonal skills and organizational skills that the leader will need (Beam et al.). Additionally, studies also indicate that mentoring programs should not only be offered from the state level, but should also have a tailor made local component to provide even more effectiveness for each district (McKibben, 2013).

There is also a connection between school administrator retention and teacher retention. According to the Center for Public Education, there is a 17% greater chance that a teacher will leave a school when a new school administrator is hired (Hull, 2012). In schools where the principals remain more than five years, teachers are also more likely to remain as well (Hull).

Conclusions for school administrators. Successful schools have consistent school leadership. When principals only remain at their schools for short periods, there can be little in the way of continuity in expectations and standards. Students under frequently changing principals experience little academic success and growth.

Likewise, teachers reluctant to remain in a school with constant changes in school leaders, also impact student success.

Teachers

Teacher retention. Teacher retention has become the focus of many in the field of education over the past several years. Quality professionals are leaving the classroom, new teachers are coming in, and the rate of retention is down in the field of education. There are numerous factors that influence the retention rate of teachers as well factors that influence teachers to stay in the classroom. Teachers are no longer staying at one school throughout their career as they seek employment in other districts. One such factor that many point to is how teachers are trained in the craft of education.

Training of teachers. In the 1980s, a nationwide teacher shortage triggered the development of new programs to help train teachers to address the shortage in the field of education (Brown & Wynn, 2009). The more teachers who are trained, the more competition there is in the field of education. However, many of these programs, such as post-baccalaureate, Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT), and *Teacher for America* focused on how fast they could train teachers and have them in the classroom, while traditional programs focused on qualitatively preparing of the teacher, not the quantity that are produced by the program (Brown & Wynn).

Teach for America, Troops-to-Teachers, and post-baccalaureate programs instituted through the American educational landscape in the 1980s and 1990s, changed how people could become teachers. The idea behind many of these

programs was to attract quality people to the field of education. Bonuses, forgiveness of student loan debt, and appealing working schedules were used to attract people to the field of education (Greenburg, et. al, 2015). Through these programs, there has been an increase of people into the field of education while adding more candidates to the pool of potential teachers for schools to choose from (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Quality of candidates. The quality of the applicant has always played a role in the retention rate of an employee, and education is no different. Quality applicants are typically employed quickly when they enter the market, while the less-appealing and less-experienced are left for the rest of the jobs. Brown & Wynn (2009) argue that part of the teacher retention issue in America is not the shortage of teachers, but the lack of quality applicants in the field of education (Brown & Wynn, 2009).

Quality teachers and teachers in general, continue to leave the classroom at an incredible rate. Currently, one-third of all new teachers leave the classroom within their first three years, while half of all new teachers leave the classroom within the first five years of being in the classroom (Brown & Wynn, 2009). While people leave jobs and professions every day, many do not affect the lives of children or the community as much as an educator does through their work.

Factors of retention. One factor that has affected teacher retention according to Ingersoll (2001) is the age of the teacher. Ingersoll points out that many of the teachers who are leaving the field of education in the highest numbers are those who are on the younger side and have just started their educational careers. One could argue that young people are more apt to change a profession than those who are more

experienced in life and are willing to try something different earlier on in their professional lives (Ingersoll).

Stressors. The teacher of the 21st century is faced with stressors that have not been seen previously in the classroom. Teachers today are dealing with classrooms that are now mainstreamed for all students, meaning students who would have been pulled for special educational services are now in the general classroom. Teachers have students who are classified by many different categories; English Second Language (ESL), English Language Learners (ELL), Special Education (SE), 504 plans, as well as various levels of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (McCarthy & Lambert, 2006).

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges and stressors on teachers in the classroom were the *No Child Left Behind* requirements enacted in 2002. Many schools and teachers began asking what would happen if they did not meet their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goal, and what could the school do to improve its standing in the new accountability system? In addition, new pressures were added to teachers on student accountability. One test began to define the success of a teacher, and changed how teachers taught content. Suddenly, the phrase “Teach to the Test” was born, and teachers across America were faced with standards and accountability. Several teachers feel that the increased pressures of performing on the NCLB tests have caused many to leave the field of education (Murnane & Papay, 2010).

Accountability is not the sole impediment to teacher retention. Classroom management and the behavior of students is nothing new in education, but they do

have an impact on whether or not people stay in the field of education. Classroom management is an area that many new teachers struggle to deal with and work to find techniques that work for them on a daily basis. The frustration of classroom management and the behavior of students can add stressors onto teachers that might affect their decision to stay in the classroom (Mee & Haverback, 2014).

Lack of resources and out of pocket, expenses have been discussed in several studies on teacher retention (Hentges, 2012). While many teachers come in with the expectation that they will have all the resources they need to be successful in the classroom, many find themselves paying out of pocket for everyday supplies such as pencils, paper, markers, and other necessary materials to have in the classroom. When coupled with the salaries that new teachers experience, the lack of resources, as well as the challenges of having students prepared for standardized testing, teachers are choosing to leave the field instead of staying in for the long haul (Hentges, 2012).

When looking at the challenges brought on by the lack of resources, classroom management, and standardized testing, one must also consider the stressors of leadership of the school. A lack of support by the leadership of the school contributes to why people are leaving the classroom within their first few years in the profession. In a study by Jasper (2014), several teachers felt that the lack of support they received from their supervisors has led many to leave the classroom. Teachers feel that they receive a lack of planning, or overcrowding in their classes, or a lack of communication, all of which can be traced to the leadership of the school (Jasper).

Administration. Leadership has to be strong within the building to ensure that the problems that could cause people to leave the school are dealt with quickly and professionally. Too often, leadership is seen not supporting teachers when problems happen in the classroom. According to Jasper (2014), teachers are the ones who are blamed when something goes wrong in the school. When one considers the pressure that this creates on teachers, it becomes clear that leadership has a tremendous impact on teacher retention, and that leadership begins with the school administrator (Jasper, 2014).

Principals play a key role in teacher retention. Principals need to create an environment that supports and nurtures the new teacher and the current teachers in the building. Providing a mentor, supplies, and appropriate class sizes can impact whether a new teacher is successful or not. The school administrator plays a tremendous role in all of these factors and can generally determine whether a teacher is successful or has the desire to return the classroom (Brown & Wynn, 2009).

Finding teachers who fit into your school and meet the criteria of what that school wants for your students can help increase teacher retention, according to a study by Brown and Wynn (2009). Within that study, the authors found that creating supports to help ensure that the teachers feel they have what they need to be successful would increase teacher retention. Building learning communities that support one another in the building is one of those supports that will increase teacher retention (Brown & Wynn, 2009).

Demographics. Could the gender of the teacher and grade level taught determine whether a teacher leaves the field of education? According to a study by Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill (2012), there was a statistically significant indicator that females were more likely to stay in the field of education past their first three years. In addition, the study showed that those who taught elementary school were more likely to stay in the classroom (Sedivy-Benton & Boden-McGill, 2012). Through these results, one can see that gender and grade level taught can impact whether or not teachers stay in the classroom.

Solutions. Several possibilities that could improve teacher retention are creating situations where people are treated as professionals, paying higher salaries, and reducing teacher workload. These changes would improve retention and is evidenced in districts with high rates of retention (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2010). Many people will point out that the pay of teachers discourages people from staying in the field, but if people do not feel valued in their workplace, they are more likely to leave it.

Teacher salaries have always been discussed whether in or out of the classroom, and several studies have shown that the salaries of teachers do impact retention. Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill (2012) found that salary was a statistically significant indicator if someone would remain in the classroom. Teacher compensation is always a key discussion point in the field of education, and, as studies have shown, has contributed to retention issues in schools (Sedivy-Benton, & Boden-McGill).

Teachers who stay. There are many factors that go into the issue of teacher retention; at the same time, there are reasons for people stay. The retirement system in many states offers people a chance to retire early in their 50's. In addition, people can receive reductions or the elimination of their student loans if they stay in the field of teaching and teach at a low-income school. While these factors are appealing, there are other factors that make teachers stay in the classroom and in the profession.

According to De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson (2015), teachers ultimately stay in the classroom because they like being there. While this may not seem like revolutionary or groundbreaking, happiness or “well-being” can be a major contributor in determining if someone stays in the classroom. People do not continue to go to jobs that they dread attending day after day. Creating a work environment that is positive and inviting can increase teacher retention and teacher desire to stay in the field (De Stercke, Goyette, & Robertson, 2015).

Teachers who stay in the field will point out that they have a strong intrinsic-attainment value, or their enjoyment and importance of the profession. Battle and Looney (2014) found that the main cause for teachers to stay in the field was that they truly enjoyed what they were doing in the field of education and their contribution to the school. When considering the issue of retention, creating positive environments where teachers enjoy coming to work should lead to a greater number of teachers staying in the field and at one's school. In addition, continuing to show teachers the importance of their job and how they impact the lives of youth should aid in retention (Battle & Looney).

Conclusion for teachers. Numerous factors do determine if a teacher stays in the classroom. From leadership, to work environment, to salaries, and to classroom management, various other factors that determine if someone stays in the classroom. While there is no simple answer, one thing is certain: teacher retention has become an issue in education. Whether it is because teachers leave one district for another, or they leave altogether, something needs to be done to help retain teachers that are high skilled and qualified by districts that wish to employ the best teachers that will help serve their student body.

Conclusions

Education has always been an important issue for Americans. The system provides opportunities for our children that some other nations can only dream of. However, there are still concerns about the future of our schools, and the concern is justified. With teacher and school administrator turnover rates continuing to rise, the quality of school educators and leaders is in question. The once idyllic notion of a person choosing to enter the teaching profession or to become a school administrator and remain in the same school for the rest of their career is no longer a reality. Rather, the norm has become to move from district to district and position to position. This mobility has created an almost crisis situation in our nation's schools with inconsistencies in both the classrooms as well as leadership roles. As a result, student performance, school culture, and positive educational relationships are all impacted. The key question is what can be done to reverse this trend and encourage more educators and principals to remain in their positions. More study needs to be done to

map out exactly what changes, programs, and assistance need to be incorporated into our school to create more stable, successful school educators and leaders.

The issue of teacher retention is not a simple issue or one clear-cut problem. It has been compounded by many different issues that arise throughout the educational field. Some studies, Brown & Wynn (2009), show that the issue is leadership, while others, Sedivy-Benton and Boden-McGill (2012), show that the issue is compensation. The one consistent finding in all of the studies is that teacher retention has become a problem, and what is causing teachers to leave the field has not truly been determined or clearly stated. There is evidence to support the need for stability within the ranks of school leadership, so the focus now shifts to what can be done to change this unfortunate situation (Brown & Wynn, 2009). The research question now shifts to what can be done to retain high quality leaders and educators in America's schools. The focus of this study was twofold: first to offer insight into what causes school administrators to leave a district, offering suggestions for increasing their retention; second, to offer insights into what causes teachers to leave a district, offering suggestions for increasing their retention.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

Every year, Kentucky public schools experience high numbers of teacher and school administrator turnover. Investigating the reasons why some school leaders and teachers have chosen to leave, provides a better understanding of what changes need to be made in order to retain highly qualified and skilled educational leaders. This capstone study was conducted to collect data to establish possible factors for low retention as well as to provide suggestions to counter those factors.

Research Procedure

The capstone was a descriptive study to determine the factors that led to the high turnover of school leadership and teachers in Kentucky. The capstone project included the use of a survey instrument to assess teacher and school administrator attitudes about their time in their former districts to provide a basis for why they chose to leave. Current school principals and teachers were included in the population of subjects. In order to contact the appropriate individuals, points of contact were made in each of the districts via either human resources or the superintendent's office in order to coordinate the distribution of the survey. The points of contact were asked to agree to forward the email with the imbedded survey to all certified personnel. Upon collection of their responses, an analysis of their responses was conducted to determine what factors has led to the low retention rate of school leaders

and teachers in Kentucky public schools since 2010. The data were used to determine potential actions that could be taken to retain school leaders and teachers.

Subjects and Sampling

All current school principals and teachers in Kentucky public schools from 2010 to 2015 were considered for the survey. Originally, to begin the study all 173 school districts in Kentucky, including public and independent schools, were assigned a number. Through the use of an online random number generator, the districts to be surveyed were selected. The first 70% of school districts were chosen to receive the school administrator survey while the first 50% of those districts were chosen to receive the teacher survey. Ultimately, a decision was made to include all 173 districts. In order to facilitate the distribution of the surveys in the most effect manner, appropriate individuals were contacted in each district with an email that was then to be forwarded to their teachers and principals. Via the forwarded email, individuals were then provided a link to a Google Form containing the survey instrument. Permission to participate in the survey was obtained by way of the first question of the survey instrument.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to obtain research information. Administrator data were secured using questions from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Principal Only Survey (North Carolina, 2014) in conjunction with the National Center for Education Statistics Teacher Questionnaire (U.S. Department of

Education, 2012). The combined teacher and school administrator survey instrument was distributed to all districts. All versions of the survey-included basic demographic questions such as gender and years in education, as well as factors that an individual's decision to leave his or her previous district's employment. The survey began by asking the subjects to indicate whether they had changed school districts between 2010 to 2016, limiting the respondents to those who had changed districts recently. The next question asked the respondent to indicate their job title at their current school. For any answer other than teacher or principal, the survey branched to the last item, which ended survey. A response of teacher or school administrator caused a branching to the appropriate section of the survey for that position. The teacher survey contained 4 demographic questions and 18 survey questions. The teacher section concluded with a question about any plans. The school administrator survey contained three demographic questions and 15 survey questions. The school administrator section also concluded with a question about any future plans.

Data Analysis

The results of the project will be descriptive in nature. No known test will be performed on the data to obtain results. The analysis illustrated the factors that have led some Kentucky public school principals and teachers to leave their previous districts. The results from the data were then used to construct a plan of action for Kentucky public schools to retain highly skilled school leaders and educators.

Chapter 4

Results and Findings

Introduction

The survey was constructed so that teachers and principals who had changed districts from 2010 through 2016 were able to identify the factors that led to their changing districts and produce data that was pertinent yet anonymous for this study. The results showed an interesting dynamic between the impact that principals and teachers have on one another in terms of retention rates.

The results were based on the 1,059 responses to the survey and, of those, 99.9% indicated that they voluntarily wished to participate. Of the 1,058 who agreed to participate, 748 (70.7%) indicated that they had not changed schools or districts from 2010 to 2016. The results of this study were therefore based on the 310 (29.3%) respondents who indicated that they had changed schools or districts during those years.

The survey was distributed to all certified staff within a school. This included the teachers, guidance counselors, principals and assistant principals as well as other designated certified staff. Of the 310 valid responses, 212 (68%) were teachers while 35 (11.3%) were principals and assistant principals. The remaining respondents included 12 (3.9%) guidance counselors and 51 (16.5%) other individuals. These two groups were eliminated from the analysis due to the scope of the study.

School administrator Demographic Data

Of the 35 principals or assistant principals responding to the survey, 53.5% were females while 46.5% were males. The largest percentage of principals surveyed were between the ages of 36 to 40 and 46 to 50 years, encompassing 26.2% and 23.8% respectively. There were 16.7% of the responses from the age group 31 to 35 years and 16.7% for the age group of 41 to 45 years. Only 2.4% of the responses came from the 26 to 30 years age group while the 20 to 25 years age group was reported at 0%. Principals and assistant principals aged 51 years or older made up 14.3% of the responses.

Gender	Total
Males	12 (46.5%)
Females	23 (53.5%)

Age	Total
20 - 25	0 (0%)
26 - 30	1 (2.4%)
31 -35	7 (16.7%)
36 - 40	11 (26.2%)
41 - 45	7 (16.7%)
46 - 50	10 (23.8%)
51+	6 (14.3%)

Table 1 *Administrator Gender and Age (N = 35)*

Employment demographic information collected centered on the number of years that the individual had been in an administrative position. 33.3% of the respondents indicated that they had been an administrator for 1 to 5 years while

23.1% had been in their positions for 6 to 10 years. The implication of this was that 54.4% of the principals who left their previous positions did not have more than 10 years of experience. The lack of leadership experience could be one of the extenuating circumstances why principals transfer from district to district. They lacked experience, but unfortunately, they did not remain in their districts long enough to gain more.

Years as an Administrator	Total
Less than 1 year	5 (12.8%)
1 – 5 years	13 (33.3%)
6 -10 years	9 (23.1%)
11 -15 years	6 (15.4%)
More than 16 years	6 (15.4%)

Table 2 *Employment History (N=39)*

The data indicated that 27 of the 39 administrators (69.2%) who changed positions had between less than 1 to 10 years’ experience. This supports the earlier stated research that new administrators find it difficult to remain in one school or district for extended periods of time (Viadero, 2010). The impact of this can be far-reaching, for the teachers and students within the school.

Principals Results and Findings

Q 1: How prepared do you feel you were for your role as an administrator when you first began? On a scale from *very prepared, prepared, and somewhat prepared*, only 4 (11.1%) indicated that they were very prepared when they assumed their positions. Approximately 44.4% indicated that they were

prepared for their new positions, while another 44.4% reported that they were *somewhat prepared*. There were no principals that reported that they were *not at all prepared* for their role as a school leader.

Level	Total
Very prepared	4 (11.1%)
Prepared	16 (44.4%)
Somewhat prepared	16 (44.4%)
Not prepared	0 (0%)

Table 3 *Level of Preparedness (N=36)*

The results are an encouraging indicator that they were adequately prepared for their positions. According to research, one of the potential factors causing administrators to leave their positions was the lack of training and preparation for leadership roles (Lee, 2012). Clearly, this is not the case for the principals surveyed.

Q2: Position Related Factors. The following items asked the respondents to indicate the degree to which the following factors had on their decision to change schools. The response ranges included *not at all*, *very little*, *to some extent*, and *to a great extent*.

Factors: Position-Related	Not at All	Very Little	To Some Extent	To a Great Extent
Current job is a promotion over previous position	14 (38.9%)	3 (8.3%)	6 (16.7%)	13 (36.1%)
Salary, compensation, and benefits	13 (36.1%)	7 (19.4%)	13 (36.1%)	3 (8.3%)
Number of hours spend on school related activities, before and after school	19 (36.1%)	9 (25%)	11 (30.6%)	3 (8.3%)
Job stress	13 (36.1%)	9 (25%)	7 (19.4%)	7 (19.4%)
Average Total: Position Related Factors Impact on Leaving Previous District	36.83%	19.423%	21.57%	18.02%

Table 4 *Position Related Factors Impact of Leaving Previous District (N = 35)*

Factor 1: Current job is a promotion over previous position. Principals and assistant principals begin their careers as classroom teachers. They were seen as being teacher-leaders and sought positions to further the needs and help students and other teachers have better educational experiences. However, the demands in the classroom differ greatly from the demands as a school leader. From the survey, 52.3% of the respondents indicated that the promotion and subsequent change in districts or position had *some* or a *great impact* on their decisions. However, for 47.2%, the change was *not at all* or was *very little impacted* by a promotion.

From these data, it can be concluded that the desire to gain a leadership position was important enough for the individual that they were willing to change districts. The promotion to either a school administrator or assistant school administrator could be seen as a necessary step to further the career aspirations of

the individual. Depending on the circumstances in the previous district, changing positions may have been the only option for advancement.

Factor 2: Salary, compensation, and benefits. According to 13 (36.1%) of the respondents, salary and benefits were *to some extent* the reason why they left their previous positions. However, 55.5% of the respondents indicated that benefits had *very little to no impact* on their decision to change their positions. Of all of the respondents, 8.3% said that their salary and other benefits *greatly impacted* their decision to change positions. This factor includes the benefits of the position, including wages, leave, and medical insurance.

While benefits such as sick leave and insurance are fairly standardized statewide, salary and compensation can vary from district to district. It is expected that when someone assumes a leadership position, an increase in benefits will accompany the promotion. When this does not occur, individuals will seek employment elsewhere. For 50% of those surveyed, this appears to be the case. However, for the other half, the benefits and compensations were adequate and not the main cause for their decision to leave their previous district. This suggests that there are other more important factors causing principals and assistant principals to change positions.

Factor 3: Number of hours spent on school related activities before and after school. The amount of time spent on school related activities had *very little or no influence* on 61.1% of the respondents' decisions to leave their previous

positions. For 30.6%, it had *some influence*, but for 8.3% it had a *great impact* on their decisions to relocate.

Many new principals and assistant principals were surprised by the amount of work and time that is expected and necessary to do the job effectively. Extended work schedules and activities, both before school as well as after, can be very time-consuming and tedious. There is an accepted understanding that with becoming a school administrator or assistant school administrator there will be an increase in the amount of time at work, even though the actual amount of time varies by grade level and type of school.

Factor 4: Job stress. Job stress can include the stress associated in dealing with students, parents, and teachers, as well as the stress associated with the increased amount of responsibility. Job stress was *not at all* a factor for 36.1% of the respondents and, for 25%, it had *very little impact* on them. However, 19.4% said that it had *some impact* and another 19.4% said that it had a *great impact* on their decisions to change positions.

As the leaders of a school, principals and assistant principals are expected to maintain the working and learning environment, which can naturally lead to stresses. While the majority of the respondents indicated that job stress was not a factor in their decisions, 38.8% felt that the stress of the position was unacceptable and sought employment elsewhere.

	Not at All	Very Little	To Some Extent	To a Great Extent
Greater demand for accountability	15 (41.7%)	12 (33.3%)	8 (22.2%)	1 (2.8%)
Increased instructional responsibilities	13 (36.1%)	10 (27.8%)	9 (25%)	4 (11.1%)
Changes in students (population, economical, linguistical, racial, and developmental)	18 (50%)	13 (36.1%)	5 (13.9%)	0 (0.00%)
Average Total: Factors – School Operations	44.6%	32.4%	20.36%	4.63%

Table 5 *Factors: School Operations (N=36)*

Factor 5: Greater demand for accountability. Leader of a school, principals and assistant principals are responsible for creating successful learning environments for their students. Expectations for doing so can vary from district to district. Roughly 75% of the respondents said that the demand for more accountability was *not the cause* or had *very little impact* on their decision to leave their previous positions while 22.2% said that it had *some* degree of impact on that decision. Only 2.8% indicated in fact that this was to a *great extent* the reason they left.

Based on this data, the level of accountability for those surveyed was not a significant factor in their decision-making. For the principals and assistant principals surveyed, the job expectations and responsibilities were typical of their anticipations associated with the position. The responsibilities of principals and assistant principals include the general operations of the school, supervision of teachers, and maintaining discipline and order, forming the basis for the

accountability of those positions. The central office establishes the expectations for school leaders and judge their performance based on the parameters of the anticipated accountability.

Factor 6: Increased instructional responsibilities and workload. Recent changes to education, such as the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES), has led to an increased amount of work for principals and assistant principals. These changes have included more instructional observations, curriculum development, and ensuring teacher effectiveness. Of the respondents, 36.1% said that having more instructional responsibilities and an increased workload had *no bearing* on their decision to leave their previous position. For 27.8%, it had a *very small impact*. However, for 25%, it had some influence on their decision and for 11.1%, it was a *great factor* motivating them to change positions.

The data are an indication that the demands being placed on current school leaders are a contributing factor to why some are leaving the profession. As the importance of accountability increases, the expectations for school leaders also increases. While most of the demands are mandated at the state level, school districts need develop strategies and programs to assist principals and assistant principals in order to keep them.

Factor 7: Changes in students (population, economical, linguistical, racial, and developmental. Each generation of students entering school is different from the generations before them. These changes include demographic, ability, and

interest. For 86.1% of the respondents, changes in students had *no* or *very little impact* on their decisions to leave their previous positions. Only 13.9% said that it had *some influence* on their decision. There were no responses that said it had a great impact on them.

While it is true that the learning styles and abilities of students have changed, the impact that these changes have had on school leaders has not. The same difficulties of school leaders that plagued them in the past are still prevalent today. For the principals and assistant principals in this study, dealing with the changes in students did not appear to be a major concern or factor in their decision to transfer districts.

	Not at All	Very Little	To Some Extent	To a Great Extent
Parents	23 (63.9%)	9 (25%)	2 (5.6%)	2 (5.6%)
Students	25 (69.4%)	10 (27.8%)	1 (2.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Administration	11 (30.6%)	7 (19.4%)	5 (13.9%)	13 (36.1%)
Average Total: Factors - Support	54.63%	24.06%	7.43%	13.9%

Table 6 *Factors: Support (N=36)*

Factor 8: Lack of support from parents. Parents are a critical component to the success of their students. The work of principals and assistant principals can only be accomplished with a healthy and positive relationship with the parents and guardians of their students. For 63.9% of the respondents, a lack of parental support did *not have* an impact on their decisions to change positions and for 25%, it had a *very little* impact. However, for others parental support did play a role. 5.6%

responded that it did impact them to *some extent* and 5.6% said it had a *great impact*.

This indicates that while most parents and guardians provide the necessary support for the work of school leaders, there were other situations in which the ability of principals and assistant principals to do their jobs were hindered by the lack of support by their students' parents and guardians. The relationship between parents and schools has changed over the years, encouraging more parental involvement. As a result, this can create tension between school leaders and parents because of the role that parents are assuming in the lives of their students. For 11.2% of the respondents, the relationship with parents were a contributing factor in their decision to leave their previous position.

Factor 9: Lack of support from students. As indicated in Factor 6, students today are different from students of the past, and they often present very unique situations. These situations can make the job of a school leader very difficult. However, for 69.4% of the respondents this had *no impact* and for 27.8%, *very little impact* on their decisions to change positions. Only 2.8% said that it had *some impact*, and there no responses indicating that it had a great impact.

This suggests that students and their problems pose little negative influences on school leaders' decisions to leave their positions and that other facts were more important. A school leader, anticipates that at some point difficult decisions will be made and not that all students will agree with administration. According to the survey, 97.2% of the respondents said that their interaction with students and

whether or not students supported those decisions did not play a role in their decision to transfer districts.

Factor 10: Lack of support of administration. While the lack of support from parents and students may not have been a definitive factor for the principals and assistant principals surveyed, the lack of support from central office administration was. For 36.1% of the respondents, the lack of backing from the central office was *a major factor* in their decisions to leave their previous positions or district, while another 13.9% said that it had *some influence*. On the other hand, 30.6% said that this factor had *no influence* at all and 19.4% said that it had *very little influence*.

	Not at All	Very Little	To Some Extent	To a Great Extent
Opportunity for advancement	9 (25%)	8 (25%)	10 (27.8%)	9 (25%)
Increased politics in school or district	12 (33.3%)	7 (19.4%)	3 (8.3%)	14 (38.9%)
Average Total: Factors Outside	16.75%	9.81%	18.5%	31.95%

Table 7 *Factors: Outside (N=36)*

Factor 11: Lack of opportunity for advancement. For principals, and especially assistant principals, the opportunity to go beyond their school leadership positions is a critical component of their career aspirations. The inability to advance or move into other positions may be enough for some to change districts or positions. This appeared to be the case for 25% of the respondents who said that this factor had a *great influence* on their decisions while 27.8% said it had *some impact* on their decisions. For others, 25% said it was *not a factor* at all and 22.2% said it had *very little impact*.

In Kentucky as well as other states, educators understand that in order to earn more in salary, a promotion from classroom teacher to school leader is required. Unfortunately, in many districts this is severely limited either by the lack of potential positions or school politics. For principals and assistant principals who have spent time and money to acquiring the appropriate training and certifications, the realizations that those advancements might not occur in one district leads them to seek employment elsewhere.

Factor 12: Increased politics in the school or district. The changes in education have brought about changes in the role of stakeholders such as community members, school board members, and parents. The opinions and voices of these stakeholders have become a critical component of the decision-making process within the school district. On occasion, their beliefs are at odds with the school leaders, creating a stressful, poor working environment. For 47.2% of the respondents, increased politics within the school or district had *some or great impact* on their decisions to leave their previous districts or positions.

This indicates that the increased politics within the district made the working environment of the principals and assistant principals difficult, resulting in their desire to seek employment elsewhere. On the other hand, 52.7% replied that this factor did *not at all* or *had very little* impact on their decisions. As with the 10th factor, not every district was the same and the experiences within those districts vary. In districts with a high amount of political anxiety, the ability of principals to effectively do their job is substantially decreased. There is a trickle-down effect to this anxiety. The uncertainty from year to year about the expectations of the principals leads to anxiety amongst the teachers and eventually to the students, creating a very poor learning and working environment for everyone involved.

Q 3: Did you involuntarily leave your previous position? Depending on the performance of the school administrator or assistant principal, school leaders can be asked to leave their position. In this survey, 77.1% of the respondents indicated that they chose to leave their previous district or school and sought employment

elsewhere without any overt actions by central office or any other entity. Only 22.9% indicated that they were forced to leave their school or district.

According to the respondent's explanations, the reasons included moving to a district closer to their family and home as well as to gain more experience in educational leadership. Many new principals will take leadership positions in schools not necessarily of their preference. Because of the mobility of the American workforce, it is common for workers, including principals, to transfer to new positions when one becomes available either closer to their families or in schools in which they desire to work. One respondent also indicated that changing positions would provide an opportunity to implement an innovative educational change working with at-risk students. Furthermore, transferring districts becomes necessary if more leadership opportunities are to be given. In many circumstances, situations do not present themselves for leadership advancement for everyone. Therefore, if the new school leader is seeking opportunities for promotion, moving to a new district will be required.

However, another respondent indicated that the decision to leave the previous district was involuntary. That respondent was forced to find employment elsewhere because the previous school was closed due to declining enrollment. As budgets become more strained and the communities that schools serve change, this factor has become more common. For others, the decision to leave was under much hostile circumstances with two of the involuntary leaves based on personnel decisions at the district level. One response indicated that the district's policies

included the dismissal or transfer of all school administrators every two to three years. With this trend in place, many potential school administrators could be very hesitant to accept school administrator or assistant school administrator positions knowing that their tenure would only last two to three years. For another respondent, the decision to leave the administrative position was based on the actions of a vindictive supervisor who made the working environment impossible. With no support from the district and being faced with a forced termination, the only option was to accept a demotion to a lower position within the district.

Did you involuntarily leave your previous position?

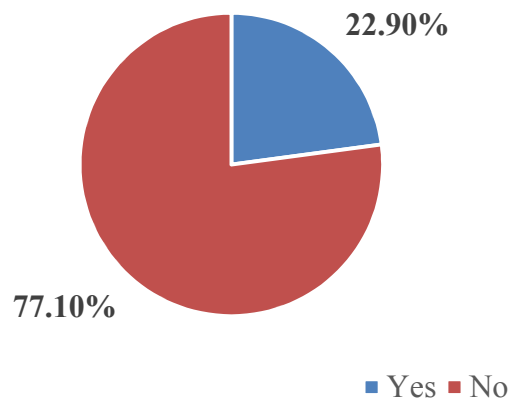


Figure 2: Percent that involuntarily left their previous position

Teachers

Demographic Data

The survey used to learn why teachers left a school was sent to all public school districts in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The survey had 1,059

responders, with 1,058 agreeing to participate in the study. Of that group, 310 had left a job in education to take a job at another district from 2010 to 2016 school years. A total of 223 out of the 310 individuals surveyed had previously been a teacher in their position that they had left. The 160 of the responders were female, 59 were male, and four did not respond. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 51+ years of age.

Gender	Total
Males	59 (26.4%)
Females	160 (71.7%)
Did Not Respond	4 (1.79%)
Age	Total
20 - 25	4 (1.79%)
26 – 30	30 (13.4%)
31 -35	45 (20.1%)
36 – 40	48 (21.5%)
41 – 45	39 (17.4%)
46 - 50	25 (11.2%)
51+	30 (13.4%)
Did Not Respond	2 (0.89%)

Table 8 *Teacher Gender and Age (N = 223)*

The participants in the survey were asked how long they have been teaching. The breakdown of data showed that of the 223 responders to the question, none had taught less than a year, 1 had taught a year, 22 of responders had taught 2-4 years, 79 of responders had taught 5-10 years, 71 had been in education for 11-15 years, 31 had taught for 16-20 years, while 17 of responders had taught 21 or more years, and two

did not respond. These teachers were asked what grades they currently teach, including if they teach multiple grades.

Grade Level	Number of Teachers
1. Prekindergarten	7 (3.1%)
2. Kindergarten	22 (9.8%)
3. First Grade	24 (10.7%)
4. Second Grade	23 (10.3%)
5. Third Grade	29 (13.0%)
6. Fourth Grade	24 (10.7%)
7. Fifth Grade	22 (9.8%)
8. Sixth Grade	23 (10.3%)
9. Seventh Grade	32 (14.3%)
10. Eighth Grade	38 (17.0%)
11. Ninth Grade	68 (30.4%)
12. Tenth Grade	71 (31.8%)
13. Eleventh Grade	68 (30.4%)
14. Twelfth Grade	63 (28.2%)
15. Ungraded (Special Ed)	7 (3.1%)
16. Did Not Respond	11 (4.9%)

Table 9 *Grades Taught (N=223)*

Results and Findings

The participants in the survey were asked a series of questions on what factors affected their decision to leave their previous teaching position for the one they are currently in. Teachers were asked to rate each question on a scale of not at all important, slightly important, somewhat important, very important, to extremely important. Each question was optional as teachers progressed through the survey. Teachers had the option to add their own explanation on why they left their previous district at the end of the survey. The purpose was to figure out what factors truly impact a teacher the most to leave a district they were employed.

Personal Factors

The personal factors that were addressed in this study ranged from issues that were of a personal nature for teachers in their decision to leave their previous district. Personal factors could range from location, to health, to pregnancy, to finally the opportunity to teach at their current school. The goal of these statements were to determine what personal factors influenced a teacher's decision to leave a district for employment at another district.

Statement 1: *Because I wanted to take a job more conveniently located to my home or because I moved.* The results of this questions showed that location of employment is a factor for teachers when deciding where they work. Of the responders to this question, 139 of responders listed location as at least slightly important when it comes to relocating districts for employment. What this information shows us is that location will play a key role in retaining employees as well as enticing new employees into the district. Employees prefer to be comfortable and have a desire to live where they want to, and are willing to change a job to make this possible. While a district cannot control if they are close to where their employees call home, they can work to market themselves as a desirable location to help attract the best possible teachers to their district. In addition, they can market the benefits of the town they are located in and highlight why people would want to relocate to the area, whether it is for raising children, work environment, or safety.

Statement 2: *Because of other personal life reasons (e.g., health, pregnancy/childcare, caring for family).* Family and personal health can play a

factor in the decision to stay in a district, and that is a factor that is out of the hands of the leadership of the school district. When looking at the data from this question, one would see that this factor impacted only 108 of the responders in their reason to leave the previous district of employment.

While it is true that districts cannot control health or personal issues that arise, they can work to offer support to employees before issues concerning personal health or health of family members occur in the workplace. One way to proactively support and retain district employees is in establishing childcare for employees at either a reduced fee or for free, depending on the financial health of the district. Doing so would help show that the district cares about the wellbeing of the children of the teachers as well as perhaps retain quality teachers if childcare is a concern. Conversely, districts could offer highly qualified employees extended paid leave for family or personal issues in return for a commitment that they will not seek employment elsewhere. Working closely with employees and having a strong human resources department could proactively help a district retain employees who are going through personal health and family issues.

Statement 10: *Because I wanted the opportunity to teach at my current school.* Desired location of employment is something that a school cannot control, but it is a factor that has influenced many in this research project when it comes to leaving their previous school. The most interesting statistic from this question is that only 67 individuals felt that the opportunity to teach at their current school was not a factor at all when leaving their previous district. That leaves 155 responders who felt

that the opportunity to teach at their current school was a deciding factor in leaving their previous school. What this shows is that a desirable location of employment can and does impact the decision of a teacher to leave a previous district. A school cannot control its location, but they can find ways to make itself more marketable to attract the best possible candidates. What this study shows is that the people who have left another school for their current one had their location picked out and wanted to be employed by that district.

	Not at All Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Did Not Respond
1. Because I wanted to take a job more conveniently located to my home or because I moved.	83 (37.2%)	40 (17.9%)	42 (18.8%)	34 (15.2%)	23 (10.3%)	1 (0.4%)
2. Because of other personal life reasons (e.g., health, pregnancy/childcare, caring for family).	113 (50.6%)	32 (14.3%)	29 (13.0%)	30 (13.4%)	17 (7.6%)	2 (0.8%)
3. Because I wanted the opportunity to teach at my current school.	67 (30.0%)	22 (9.8%)	47 (21.0%)	52 (23.3%)	34 (15.2%)	1 (0.4%)

Table 10 *Personal Factors (N=223)*

Financial Factors

Money and benefits are always discussed as the great motivators of people in education; but the question remains are these actually the motivating factors that cause teachers to change school districts. The financial factors that went into this survey dealt with the need for a higher salary, better benefits, job security, and

compensation to help determine how much these factors actually influence teacher retention.

Statement 3: *Because I wanted or needed or offered a higher salary.* The favorite discussion of many in and outside of education is that the money dictates where people will work. If a district does not pay well, it will not attract employees, or a district that pays more will attract all the best teachers. This discussion is one that numerous people have in education, but does it really impact where people work? According to this study, financial reasons are not the overwhelming motivator for teachers to leave a district for “greener pastures” as many will point to in education. Of the responders to this question, only 87 indicated that a higher salary was a factor on some level for them leaving a district. This shows is that while money is a factor, it is not the overriding factor to make someone leave.

Districts face tough decisions financially, whether it is how much to pay teachers, what to pay coaches, how much for school building operations, or what to budget for transportation. If districts could pay teachers more to retain them, it stands to reason they would. This is not a private business; it is a government agency on a fixed budget. Money will motivate some to leave a district, so the best paying districts will have an advantage over districts that are not as financially sound. What this data does show is that only a small number of teachers are truly motivated by money to leave a district. A district can however, make up for financial shortcomings elsewhere, as the data will show in this study.

Statement 4: *Because I needed better benefits than I received at my previous school.* For the purpose of this study, benefits are defined as personal time off, vacation time, health insurance, vision insurance, dental insurance, and/or retirement options. The responders to this question clearly did not see benefits as a reason to change schools like they had in previous questions. Of the responders to this question, 165 felt that benefits were not at all important when deciding to leave a district. One thing to consider is that many of the districts in Kentucky offer similar benefits. While some might not offer vision insurance, they all offer state health insurance, retirement and some form of personal time, though extended health care benefits can and will varies from district to district. Benefits are not a factor to motivate the majority of teachers to leave a district. While a district should ensure they offer a competitive benefits package, it seems that the average teacher is not interested in changing jobs over benefits.

Statement 5: *Because I was concerned about my job security at my previous school.* Job security is always an interesting discussion in education. With changes in leadership in a district come changes at all the schools that comprise a district. When a change in superintendents happens, there is a possibility that changes at the school administrator level can consequently happen as new superintendents may desire to have their “people” in place when taking over a district. What if these new principals have people they want to bring in their own teachers, would this motivate teachers to leave a district for a new job? The answer according to this survey is that job security was not a high factor for people leaving districts. There were 140

individuals who stated that job security was not at all important for their reason in leaving their previous district of employment. What the data shows us is that if employees feel safe and secure, they will stay in a district. Leadership changes will occur in a school, but that does not mean that there needs to be fear about job security. Creating an environment where people feel safe to share their ideas and understand that if they are doing a good job they have nothing to worry about can help increase retention.

Statement 17: *Because I was dissatisfied with how some of my compensation, benefits, or rewards were tied to the performance of my students at my previous school.* Kentucky has not been known for providing rewards to teachers for the performance of students on standardized tests. With that being said, this question saw 166 of the 223 responders stated that compensation for performance was not an important consideration in their decision to leave their previous school. Perhaps the responders who did say compensation did influence their decision to leave viewed the question to mean specifically more as salary and benefits, such as personal leave time, vision care, and other benefits that the districts offered. The results from this question provides little insight as to why people leave a district.

	Not at All Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Did Not Respond
1. Because I wanted or needed or offered a higher salary.	132 (59.1%)	26 (11.6%)	23 (10.3%)	27 (12.1%)	11 (4.9%)	4 (1.7%)
2. Because I needed better benefits than I received at my previous school.	165 (73.9%)	17 (7.6%)	22 (9.8%)	13 (5.8%)	4 (1.7%)	2 (0.8%)
3. Because I was concerned about my job security at my previous school.	140 (62.7%)	18 (8.0%)	28 (12.5%)	18 (8.0%)	13 (5.8%)	6 (2.6%)
4. Because I was dissatisfied with how some of my compensation, benefits, or rewards were tied to the performance of my students at my previous school.	166 (74.4%)	21 (9.4%)	22 (9.8%)	6 (2.6%)	6 (2.6%)	2 (0.8%)

Table 11 *Financial Factors (N=223)*

Classroom Factors

The classroom environment and factors that pertain to the classroom were addressed in this survey. The goal was to determine how much classroom factors actually influenced teacher retention rates. The areas of job description, assignment, autonomy, student behavior, intrusions on classroom time, and student discipline were surveyed to determine their influence.

Statement 6: *Because I was dissatisfied with my job description or assignment (e.g., responsibilities, grade level, or subject area).* This question is an interesting one when considering why people leave a district to seek employment elsewhere. Can extra duties, such as bathroom supervision, bus loop supervision, and cafeteria supervision impacts someone’s reason to leave a district? Does the grade level a person teaches determine if he or she leave for a job elsewhere? Could a

teacher having a dual certification that he or she does not wish to use, instead focusing on one subject area? Apparently, the answer to those questions is yes, it is a factor. There were 126 responders who stated that dissatisfaction with their job description has played some type of factor in seeking employment elsewhere.

What this tells us is that schools need to have a strong understanding of what people like in their job description and what could cause them to leave. A strong leader in a building will look to research this issue out with their staff to see what they like about what they do and what they are dissatisfied with then seek to make improvements. Unlike financial flexibility, job satisfaction is something a district can control. The responsibility falls on the leadership of the district to always understand what makes the teachers happy and what could cause them to seek employment elsewhere. Ensuring that people are assigned to grade level content they can teach and making sure the teachers are happy in that assignment could cut down on the amount of turnover a district faces.

Statement 7: *Because I did not have enough autonomy over my classroom at my previous school.* Control over one's classroom is an issue that many teachers talk about. Teachers like to have control over their classrooms and what they are doing in there on a daily basis. Can the lack of autonomy over a classroom lead some to leave a district? According to this study, this is a contributing factor teachers leave a district, as 119 felt this issue impacted their decision to leave their previous teaching assignment.

Teachers desire to have control over their classroom and what they are teaching in their classroom. An administrator needs to ensure this is not an issue in a district, as it could lead to the loss of quality teachers from a district. Leadership can and should work closely with teachers to maintain an environment in which teachers feel like they have the control over their classrooms that classroom success, while simultaneously, completing what is needed for the district to be successful.

Statement 8: *Because I was dissatisfied with the large number of students I was teaching at my previous school.* This question could be interpreted two different ways by those taking the survey. The first interpretation is that responders are being asked if classroom size impacts their decision to leave a district; the second, the student body is undesirable to teach. Whichever way one prefers to analyze this question, they will see that the strong majority of the participants to this question felt this was not an issue, as 142 of those surveyed said this was not a factor at all when leaving a district. The lesson here is that for the most part, teachers are happy with the students they are teaching. The teachers surveyed statewide have stated that the students are not a factor in leaving a school district most of the time. There will always be a few students who can make the teaching profession a bit challenging; the majority of students however, are manageable on a daily basis.

Statement 9: *Because I felt that there were too many intrusions on my teaching time.* Interruptions in the classroom are a challenge; there is no debating that. From fire drills, to bus drills, to phone calls, to students needing to go to the office or the nurse's station, intrusions on the time a teacher has with students can be

detrimental the outcome of the lesson and student success. The response to this survey question showed that 134 individuals felt this was an important factor in their decision to leave their previous district. The results show that intrusions can play a major factor in someone leaving a district, a factor that districts and leadership need to be aware of moving forward. Keeping in mind that teachers value the class time they have with students could be one way to ensure better retention rates in a district.

Statement 12: *Because student discipline problems were an issue at my previous school.* Student discipline and classroom management go hand in hand. One might postulate that student discipline could cause a teacher to leave a district, and this was the case for the majority, who said this was at least some element for their decision to leave their previous district. What this data does show is that the people who left because of student discipline felt very strongly about the issue of the lack of student discipline. The lack of student discipline cannot only create an environment that is not safe for students, but one that will cause teachers to leave a district. Student discipline should be handled in the classroom as much as possible, but when the issues progresses to the administration level, teachers need to know that they are supported by the administration with the issues they refer to the office. This study shows that many teachers felt they were not supported by their administrations and that student discipline was so out of hand at their previous school that they needed to seek employment elsewhere.

	Not at All Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Did Not Respond
1. Because I was dissatisfied with my job description or assignment (e.g., responsibilities, grade level, or subject area)	95 (42.6%)	30 (13.4%)	34 (15.2%)	34 (15.2%)	28 (12.5%)	2 (0.8%)
2. Because I did not have enough autonomy over my classroom at my previous school	100 (44.8%)	39 (17.4%)	37 (16.5%)	30 (13.4%)	13 (5.8%)	4 (1.7%)
3. Because I was dissatisfied with the large number of students I was teaching at my previous school.	142 (63.6%)	28 (12.5%)	31 (13.9%)	10 (4.4%)	9 (4.0%)	3 (1.3%)
4. Because I felt that there were too many intrusions on my teaching time.	88 (39.4%)	25 (11.2%)	34 (15.2%)	43 (19.2%)	32 (14.3%)	1 (0.4%)
5. Because student discipline problems were an issue at my previous school.	83 (37.2%)	14 (6.2%)	28 (12.5%)	30 (13.4%)	66 (29.5%)	2 (0.8%)

Table 12 *Classroom Factors (N=223)*

Administration

Leadership, whether in a school, or a professional setting, can impact the retention rate of employees. Leadership has a tremendous influence over all aspects of employment. For the purpose of this survey, teachers were asked how much of a factor, if any, administration played in their decision to leave a district. At the same time, did the opportunity, or lack thereof, to move into administration influence their decision to leave a district and seek employment at another district.

Statement 11: *Because I was dissatisfied with workplace conditions (e.g., facilities, classroom, resources, school safety) at my previous school.* Workplace conditions may sound like something that does not impact teacher retention, but this

survey lends credence to the fact that people want to like where they work, they want to have the resources needed to do the job well, and they want to feel safe. The data show that teachers need not only have the supplies they need, but also a safe and healthy environment in which to work, as 151 teachers implicated that workplace conditions did impact their overall decision to leave. When teachers feel these elements are lacking in a district, they will look for employment elsewhere. Teachers need resources, but they also need the right type of environment to work and flourish in. No one wants to work in an environment that is not conducive to success. A school can improve these areas in many different ways, as school culture can make or break the retention rate of teachers in a district.

Statement 13: *Because I was dissatisfied with the administration at my previous school.* Administration and leadership influence much of a school's culture, and they can make or break retention rates in a school. For this study, responders were asked how administration impacted their decision to stay in a district. There were 160 responders who indicated that administration did impact their decision to leave a district in some way. This response elicited the highest reaction of all the questions in the survey, demonstrating how much of an impact that administration has and how they could work to help improve retention rates on their own. Administration can make or break the employment of a teacher in a district and has the clearest impact on retention rates for a school. For this question to carry the largest number of responders indicating that administrative dissatisfaction impacted

their decision to leave confirms just how important is proper school leadership in retaining their best and brightest teachers.

Statement 14: *Because I was dissatisfied with the lack of influence I had over school policies and practices at my previous school.* Teachers like to feel that they have a voice in policies and practices at their schools. This is evident through this survey, where 133 teachers acknowledged they left their previous district because of their lack of influence over school policies and practices. When looking at the very and extremely important categories, one can reason that teachers prefer to have their voices heard, and when they are not heard, they are more likely to leave a district. A school can look to increase the influence of the staff by creating an environment in which all teachers have a say over policies. Doing so will create a close connection between administration and teachers.

Statement 15: *Because there were not enough opportunities for leadership roles or professional advancement at my previous school.* Opportunities to advance whether in the world of business, or the world of education, can be tremendous motivators for someone to seek employment elsewhere. While some respondents desired leadership opportunities, the majority were not worried about leadership opportunities in their school. Of the responders, just over half of all responders stated that opportunities for leadership was not at all important in their decision to leave their district. What this shows is that those who desired a chance to obtain more leadership opportunities took them outside the district, while others had not left the district for more leadership.

	Not at All Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Did Not Respond
1. Because I was dissatisfied with workplace conditions (e.g., facilities, classroom resources, school safety) at my previous school.	72 (32.3%)	22 (9.90%)	39 (17.5%)	28 (12.6%)	62 (27.8%)	0
2. Because I was dissatisfied with the administration at my previous school.	60 (26.9%)	21 (9.4%)	34 (15.2%)	37 (16.5%)	68 (30.4%)	3 (1.3%)
3. Because I was dissatisfied with the lack of influence I had over school policies and practices at my previous school.	88 (39.4%)	30 (13.4%)	40 (17.9%)	43 (19.2%)	20 (8.9%)	2 (0.8%)
4. Because there were not enough opportunities for leadership roles or professional advancement at my previous school.	114 (51.1%)	32 (14.3%)	38 (17.0%)	18 (8.0%)	18 (8.0%)	3 (1.3%)

Table 13 *Administration (N=223)*

Assessment

Student assessment and school accountability have been the driving force in education since *No Child Left Behind* was introduced to the American public school system. Testing and teaching to the test have prompted fierce debates in education. The purpose of these statements were to see how much student achievement influences the decisions of teachers to a leave district for another district.

Statement 16: *Because I was dissatisfied with how student assessments/school accountability measures impacted my teaching or curriculum at my previous school.* The interesting take away from this question is that student assessment/school accountability impacted the decision to leave a district of 121 of the teachers in this survey.

Testing and school performance are part of the job in the field of education, but when a school is failing or needs improvement, there is an increased focus placed in these areas. When the school needs improvement, the atmosphere is going to become more challenging to work in. Leadership needs to remember that testing and school accountability will be a major factor in the workplace satisfaction rate of teachers as well as a potential factor for their leaving a district.

Statement 18: *Because I was dissatisfied with the support I received for preparing my students for student assessments at my previous school.* Student assessment and achievement continue to be a tremendous part of education, as *No Child Left Behind* redefined how educational standards were met and how schools were held accountable. Some might argue that teachers need support and structure when it comes to how to best prepare their students for testing and how to ensure that the content that is covered. Others want the autonomy over their classroom to provide the best instruction they feel is possible with the least number of intrusions on the teacher. The responders to this question showed that for most, support for assessment was not a factor in leaving their previous school, as 110 stated it was not at all important in their decision to leave. This shows the position that half the teachers seem to want more support, while the other half would prefer to have autonomy over their classroom to do what they feel is best for their students. The results demonstrate there is a split in what teachers want; some need and want support when it comes to student accountability, while others do not see support with student

accountability as a reason for leaving. Perhaps some did receive support while others did not; unfortunately this question cannot be expanded upon.

	Not at All Important	Slightly Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Did Not Respond
1. Because I was dissatisfied with how student assessments/school accountability measures impacted my teaching or curriculum at my previous school.	100 (44.8%)	29 (13.0%)	33 (14.7%)	32 (14.3%)	27 (12.1%)	2 (0.8%)
2. Because I was dissatisfied with the support I received for preparing my students for student assessments at my previous school.	110 (49.3%)	31 (13.9%)	37 (16.5%)	25 (11.2%)	18 (8.0%)	2 (0.8%)

Table 14 *Student Performance (N=223)*

Other Factors

Realistically, the previous 18 statements may not have covered all the reasons someone might have left a district to seek employment in another school district. The purpose behind statement 19 was to give responders a chance to share their own story or reasons why they left a district to seek employment elsewhere.

Statement 19: *Because of other factors not included in previous items.* This open-ended question provided many interesting explanations for why people left their previous school districts. There were 58 responders who took the time to write down something extra that they wanted to share with this research study.

Employment Discontinued

Four of the responders stated that they were pink slipped from their previous position. One responder commented being “linked to the ‘old regime’” which is an interesting admission. Upon further analysis, political alignment can play a part in

teacher retention, according to this responder. Where and with whom teachers align themselves could determine if they are pink slipped or not at the end of a school year. In addition, several teachers spoke of their previous school being closed by their district, forcing those teachers to move. Such was the case of nine respondents.

One correlation to the rest of this case study is the fact that some of the participants simply left their previous school because they were looking to move up in leadership. Four responders stated that they left their previous district to move into administration, confirming that not all moves are negative. Sometimes there are no leadership or administration within a school. The teachers crave a new challenge; logically they will find the opportunity elsewhere.

Perhaps a more telling comment on why a teacher left a previous district is from this responder: "I left a highly regarded school for one not highly regarded at all because my philosophy is that all students deserve good and experienced teachers." What we have here is someone who left for some very unselfish reasons. That teacher wanted to ensure all students received a strong educational experience and removed themselves from what sounds to be a comfortable environment to one that would be more challenging but one that they could make very rewarding for the students and themselves.

Not all explanations were this "noble," however, one respondent reported, "Special education students, especially black students, were denied access to equal resource and opportunity to mainstream." Here is a situation that this teacher should take to a higher level of accountability. If this story is true, this is a case in which

students are denied their basic educational rights because of their race. Clearly, this teacher could not tolerate the actions and left the district because of this perception.

Workplace Environment

Teachers want to have a safe work environment as evidenced by one response: “unsafe student in my classroom.” This teacher felt threatened by an individual student. What could have been done to save this teacher? Administration could have worked with this teacher to either remove the student from the classroom, or created a support environment for the teacher and student. Obviously, we only know half the story, but this comment once again shows how much power administration has when someone chooses to leave a district.

Scheduling

Scheduling can determine if a teacher is satisfied or unsatisfied in a district, ultimately affecting teacher retention. Two comments confirm this factor: “We used trimester schedule, so I got new students ever 12 weeks”; “My position was divided between multiple schools and I had the opportunity to work at a single school”. There were several students coming in and out of the first responders classroom, which they did not like or feel was productive in the educational environment. The other responder was spread thin by the schedule and had a chance to have a permanent home instead of being on the road constantly.

One teacher admitted feeling job insecurity because of program participation. “Every year I had to fight administration to have an AP class. Because I could only get 18-22 students to enroll, the administration constantly threatened to cut my

program.” This individual clearly interpreted that the administration both the teacher expendable and the program expendable. The administration could have gone about this a different way, offering support and, at the same time, approaching the situation in such a more positive way that this teacher would still be with that district.

Administration

One interesting comment that came from this section was the fact that a responder stated, “I was dissatisfied with the district administration and their lack of judgment regarding what was best for my students.” Another commented, “It’s all about the administration.” Obviously, the teachers felt that their previous district’s leadership was not doing what was best for the students, so they could not stay in the district with such perceptions. Doing what is best for kids should be a motivator for all in education, but these responders showed that perhaps that was not the case in their previous district. When teachers perceive that a district or administration does not share a concern for what is in the best interest of students, those teachers are more willing to find a district or school that does.

Other respondents also commented about the negative impact administration had on retention. One responder stated the following: “the previous school administrator used intimidation techniques, cursed at employees, lied, threatened, and bullied to target established (tenured) teachers. He was even recorded saying that tenure was useless and that he would do whatever was necessary to remove any nuisances.” What a powerful statement from a responder that clearly shows an administrator who has lost touch with what it means to be an administrator and one

who was worried about getting their way by any means necessary. As it was proven in the study above, administration has a tremendous impact on teacher retention.

With that being said, the fact that this kind of administrator was in place in a district is troubling. While there are two sides to every story, this responder felt it necessary to share the experience to clearly state why they left their previous district. This sounds like the kind of work environment that would only be harmful not only to the teachers but to the students as well.

What happens when a school administrator is seen as a bully in a building? “I was being bullied by administration,” was another comment by one responder, but it was not the last. “The newly appointed school administrator forced 15 teachers, all middle aged women, to leave the school, otherwise we were threatened to be fired. I was among them.” The interesting thing to take away would be that these comments are not that different from the previous comments, which show all of which a work environment that would not be conducive to success. When teachers perceive school leaders as bullying their staff or creating hostile work environments, teachers are more willing to find employment elsewhere.

Administration and support of teachers can be crucial to teacher retention as another responder clearly stated in their response: “I was dissatisfied at the support given to teachers throughout the year to grow professionally according to our school goals and assessment accountability.” Teachers have stated throughout this survey that they desire support and structure, and here is a clear example of how the lack of structure and support throughout the year led to this teacher leaving the district.

Administration has a tremendous amount of responsibility, yet creating an environment where employees can grow and feel supported is one of many tasks that they must ensure happens on a daily basis.

Administration continued to be cited in this response: “administrative favoritism.” This individual left because an administrator had favorites, and this perception impacted the culture of the school. Three different responders indicated, “Poor leadership and discipline problems were a main factor.” Such a response confirms the findings for question number 12, that how an administrator responds to behavior and discipline can create an environment where teachers would rather not work.

Another respondent articulated, “most of the reasons teachers leave are listed, however, the lack of leadership in our schools is a major problem. I realize that many of the principal's hands are tied by district policy, which is another issue, but leadership within the schools has so much impact on student learning, teacher's happiness and parent involvement. Too many good teachers leave the classroom because it is difficult to teach in our classrooms today. Too many principals are allowed to jump ship whenever they want. That would not be a problem if the teaching staff had more impact on the school and what the school was all about. The way it is now, principals leave (good or bad ones) and the school falls apart. I cannot blame anyone for leaving an unsafe or unsatisfactory working situation, which is what most positions are in this district. The discipline is TERRIBLE! There is no accountability on students and too many people get into this profession for the wrong

reasons. There isn't much professional about this profession.” While there is a lot going on in this statement, it appears that in this situation, this teacher feels there is a lack of accountability from the top down that has created an environment that is not conducive to student success, teacher success, or administrative success.

Transfers

Transfers are going to happen in a larger district, but unrequested transfers can lead to teachers leaving a district. According to multiple responders, transfers led to their decision to leave the district. Several reported, “Supervisors in my district transferred me to another school within the same district. After a few years, the school was shut down due to structural concerns and consolidated with another school in the same district;” “was transferred without choice or reason;” “moved from my first school to my second school was due to budget cuts from the district. I was then reassigned to another school.” These teachers felt underappreciated because of their transfers, and did not accept that their transfers were a complement to their teaching style, but more of an indication that the district did not want them any longer; they consequently sought out employment elsewhere in education.

Transfers are going to happen in a large district, and typically, there are procedures in place to safeguard tenure for transfers. “I’m a special education teacher. My placement depends on the number of students with special needs per school. If the numbers drop, usually the person with the least amount of years teaching is moved to another placement. However, if you are a member of the SBDM committee, that membership trumps any seniority regulations. I was not the

one with the smallest amount of teaching experiences, but I was not involved in SBDM. That fact caused me to be the one to be relocated [sic].” Here is an example where policy had a loophole that led to a teacher being moved without their consent. This teacher clearly feels that the policy should not be circumvented for SBDM, but it was; and apparently, that is how the rules are written in that particular district.

Some transfers are for reasons related to classroom assignment, job title, and family. Another respondent noted, “There was a different type of teaching position offered in current school that was not being offered at the time at my previous location.” Another admitted, “I wanted to leave my athletic director position to go back to the classroom.” Yet someone else disclosed, “My spouse works at my current school.”

Some teachers change locations because of opportunities they seek in their own educational experience and for their own enlightenment. “I wanted to obtain an additional degree,” was a statement one individual commented, showing they moved for their own educational purposes. The respondent continued, “I was pursuing a higher education degree, and the current school matched what I was interested in studying.” Teachers are students as well and some will leave a district not because of any hard feelings or stressful work environment issues, but to further their own educational background.

Community

Community support was a factor in people leaving a district according to the individual responders. “Teaching math as an accountability area put increased time,

grading, assessment, and general paperwork far and above what was required from other content area teachers, with no additional support or compensation for the significant pressure and increase in workload complete lack of community and parental support.” Teachers want to know that they have the support the community and want to be able to make a difference. This teacher clearly states feeling that the amount of work was not appreciated nor did the community support it. A strong school board could work with the community to help provide support to teachers and secure buy-in from the community.

Teacher-Leaders

Teacher-leaders are a tremendous benefit to a school but they have their limits and can be spread too thin by demands from the staff and administration. One teacher admitted, “I have a strong work ethic but my workload became excessive over time while others did little. I was well liked in the building and accessed well. I simply wore out. Inner city populace with a school administrator poorly prepared or unwilling to address responsibly, I too frequently became the go to person for teachers to park misbehavior. I ran before school program primarily on my own as well. My new school provides a workload in keeping with my initial contract obligations.” Leaders need to be careful to not take advantage of teacher-leaders, ensuring instead that they are properly supported in order to retain them and see them succeed as well. Otherwise, schools and administrators risk losing highly effective teachers.

Location

Location was addressed before in this study, but for one respondent, “A natural disaster caused my family to reconsider our home location and my job.” This teacher left the previous district not because of anything the district was doing wrong, but because a natural disaster caused the family to reconsider what was really important and where they wanted to be located moving forward from the disaster. Could a district save this employee from leaving? Probably not, because such an event would be a tragic experience for most people who would naturally seek a new beginning elsewhere.

Athletics

Athletics were not addressed in the survey above, but perhaps they should have been after seeing this response from one of the responders: “importance on athletics.” One could only wish this respondent had expanded on that statement to give more insight. There are two interpretations of such a statement, the first interpretation is that there was too much emphasis placed on athletics and not enough on academics, causing the teacher to feel that if teachers were not part of the athletics programs, they were not needed. The other interpretation is that perhaps there was not enough emphasis placed on athletics and coaches felt like the district did not support them. This debate between athletics and academics emphasis is interesting to consider. Athletics and academic require a delicate balance; there must be some importance put on athletics, but too much can drive away good teachers, and too little can cost a program from developing.

Education Field

Here is an interesting take from one responder in regards to education and their current state in the field: “I am considering leaving for many reasons: excessive assessments, mandated assessment calendar, mandatory parental contact, lack of student accountability, student abusive language and threatening. The focus is so strong on common core and less on student whole child education. Students are passed on without mastering basic skills, such as reading and are sometimes given packets to complete or a computer program to click through instead of intensive tutoring on one on one assistance. Teachers also need to be trained psychologists to handle the multitude of diagnosed and undiagnosed mental issues.” While there is a lot going on in that statement, the statement reflects the tremendous number of intrusions and responsibilities that can overwhelm teachers. A good leader needs to assess what is important and what is not, or they risk burning out a teacher and losing them.

Compensation

Teacher pay and compensation were an interesting topic previously in this study, but one point that was not clearly stated was how teachers truly feel about pay and that of their superiors. One respondent noted that in that particular locale, “Teacher pay is well below the average of all surrounding school districts. Administrator and district staff pay is well above the average of every surrounding district. The district has continually grown the number of board employees each year and the number of teaching positions has diminished.” What a revolutionary revelation, that teachers were paid far less than the comparative districts around them,

yet the administrators were paid more than comparative districts. With teacher and administrative salaries being public information, administration has to be careful to realize that too much of a disparity in pay rates can lead to teachers leaving a district. Teachers do understand that administrators will be paid more as they deal with running the school on a daily basis and work more days than teachers do. With that in mind, if the board of education is paying teachers less than neighboring or comparative counties, but are paying their administrators more, such a practice will lead to problems throughout the buildings and district, as this responder clearly stated above.

Future Plans

Question 20: *How long do you plan to remain in the position of a pre-K-12 teacher?* This question was the conclusion of the survey and offered interesting insight into how people viewed their current position in the classroom and where they saw themselves moving forward.

	How long do you plan to remain in the position of a pre-K – 12 teacher?
1. As long as I am able	59 (26.4%)
2. Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job	86 (38.5%)
3. Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job.	1 (0.4%)
4. Until a specific life events occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage)	2 (0.8%)
5. Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along	35 (15.6%)
6. Definitely plan to leave as soon as I can	15 (6.7%)
7. Undecided at this time	23 (10.3%)
8. Did not respond	2 (0.8%)

Table 15 *Future Plans (N=223)*

Summary

There are numerous reasons why teachers leave a school district in search of new employment, but according to this survey, significant factors of teacher turnover were location, job description/grade assignment, autonomy over classroom, intrusions on my teaching time, opportunity to teach at my current school, workplace conditions, student discipline, administration, student assessment, and finally lack of influence at their school. When looking at these factors, one can reason that the majority of them, if not all, can be controlled by the administration of a building.

Administration can make the workplace conditions improve through various tactics and teambuilding activities to improve the culture. What teachers are teaching

and their grade assignments can be and are controlled through the administration of the building. Finally, teachers want to have a voice in what is taught and what policies are put in place in their building. Administrators can look to the teachers for guidance and support to help improve retention rates.

According to this survey, the three biggest factors that impacted a teacher's decision to leave the previous district are workplace conditions, opportunity to teach at their current school, and administration. While building administrators cannot control the location of a school, they can work to make their buildings more appealing to potential employees and to keep the ones they currently have. By creating a school that people want to work at, administrators will be able to not only retain the teachers they want in the building but also to recruit the best possible teachers to the district.

The interesting finding in this survey is that administration is the most significant reason why someone leaves a school or school district. This finding demonstrates administrators have the ability to make or break a building and influence who stays and who goes, not only through terminations and non-renewals of contracts, but also through the kind of atmosphere they create in the building. Administrators hold a tremendous amount of influence over every aspect of the school day, from teaching assignments, to student discipline, to the level of autonomy teachers have over their classrooms.

Finally, administrators need to realize that they are as much of a factor for someone staying in a district as they are for someone leaving a district. An

administrator has a great deal of influence over the daily operations of the school and need to find ways to help teachers feel empowered and at the same time supported.

This is no small feat to accomplish, and one that will determine how successful administrator are and how they affect teacher turnover moving forward. The results of this study demonstrate that teachers attribute retention to the administrators, yet the administrators do not realize how much responsibility they have over teacher retention and how much influence they wield in ensuring teacher success.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Teacher retention is an issue that many schools in the nation struggle with. This survey has shown the top reasons for people to leave a district for another school district in education. Whether it be administration, location, or the overall desirable environment of school, many factors play a key role in why someone leaves a district. The purpose of this study was to identify what causes individuals to leave a school, and without a doubt, administration is the top factor for someone leaving a district. What can be done to stem the tide of teacher turnover and what steps a district can take to improve the environment of teachers in order to retain their best and brightest should be the goal of all in administration.

Conclusion

The results of the study showed that the top factors for teacher turnover include autonomy over their classroom, student assessment, job description, lack of influence, intrusions on time in the classroom, student discipline, location, workplace conditions, opportunity at their current school to work, and finally the administration. This data showed that administration can control the majority of these issues simply by being effective administrators determining what is best for their staff and meeting the needs of the staff.

Administration plays such a tremendous part of what goes on in a building that they truly can make or break a staff. When teacher turnover is high, administration needs to reflect and determine if they misunderstood the needs of their

teachers, lost touch with what the students and stakeholders need, or are they not considering the needs of the teachers in the buildings. With so many individual responders consistently stating that administration is the key, there has obviously been some kind of disconnect between teachers and administration.

While other factors may seem trivial to some respondents, they were not for others. Teachers clearly do not want interruptions in their classrooms and they want to know that they are in charge of their classroom. Teachers want to feel that their opinion is heard. Teachers want to be teaching content and students they are passionate about. Teachers want to feel like they have the support of administration in the areas of student accountability and student discipline. Teachers want to work where there is a supportive workplace environment more than they want significant financial benefit. Overall, teachers want space, support, and a strong administration they can count on.

Implications

Principals. One implication of the study is that of those that responded they were not completely comfortable with the amount of preparation that they had prior to assuming the position; 88% self-reported feeling prepared or somewhat prepared to be a school leader with only 11.1% reported that they felt very prepared. Training is an important aspect of any job, especially that of a principal. While it is assumed that there will be somewhat of a learning curve when moving into this position, the more confident that a school administrator is, the more likely they will be successful and more willing to remain in the position.

Another implication from the study was the self-reported belief that school administrators do not feel supported by their central office leadership teams; 36.1% of those who responded did not feel that the support they received was adequate enough to keep them in their previous district. The relationship between school administrators and district personnel can either be a positive or a negative one. In a positive relationship, the separate leaders work in combination to ensure that all students are receiving the best possible education. However, in negative relationships, perceived hidden agendas and lack of trust inhibit principals' abilities to focus on students. On occasion personality clashes result in a difficult working environment for the principal, as was the case for one of the respondents. Often, this negativity continues until the school leader must seek employment outside of the district. While the removal of the stressors from the school was necessary, in the long run the school would only suffer because now a new school administrator must be sought and time allowed for the teachers and students to become accustomed to the new leader.

In conjunction with the lack of support by district personnel, increased politics within the school or district was a major factor in leaving for 38.9% of the respondents to this study. This increase in politics has been the result of personal agendas by stakeholders in the community having input into the decisions of the district. When these agendas and decisions are at odds with each other, problems develop. As indicated in Chapter 2 Literature Review, school leaders must believe that they are in control of their schools if they are to be vested in their success. This

control comes in the form of hiring staff, certain in-house decisions, and input in the direction of the future of the school. When outside forces threaten that control, principals are more likely to seek employment elsewhere.

However, one aspect of the results that conflict with the teacher results of the survey was the importance of the relationship between teachers and school leaders. According to the survey data, 63.9% of principals and assistant principals indicated that their increased role as instructional leaders and relationship with teachers was not a factor or had very little influence on their decision to change schools or districts. However, 72.7% of teachers responded that it was their dissatisfaction with their administrators that was a primary cause for their decision to leave their previous school or district. This illustrates a potential disconnect between principals and teachers that the principals may not recognize exists. Such a discrepancy between the two groups indicates several issues. Lack of clear expectations can influence the relationship between teachers and principals. While principals have a responsibility to ensure that educational standards are being maintained, the method by which this was accomplished can have a definite impact on the outcome.

From this analysis, one conclusion was that any increase in school administrator turnover could be connected to local factors and not related to a statewide trend. The differences in how districts not only prepare and support their school administrators but also cultivate the working relationships with them can affect the desire of school leaders to remain within the district. In addition,

community support and interaction with the principals could impact the likelihood the leader will stay.

Teachers. This study has offered an insight into what truly motivates teachers to leave school district. While many may think that money is the overriding factor, the reality is that this study has shown that the administration will largely influence if someone is likely to stay or go from a school district. The location of a school will play a significant role in a teacher's decision to leave for a more desirable location in another district. This study has helped to show what motivates a teacher to leave a district in Kentucky for another school district.

The clear impact of this study is that it shows what motivates teachers and how a school district can work to retain their teachers. While districts may not realize what problems exist in their schools, they now have an avenue in which to examine what teachers from throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky are state are their main reasons for leaving. Conversely, while this study may focus on teachers in Kentucky, it is applicable nationwide was the same issues more than likely exist in other states.

Teachers clearly want to know they have an administrator who can handle the task of being the leader of the school. Numerous comments ranging from "it's all about the administrator," to "when a school administrator leaves, it damages the school for two years, whether they were good or bad" confirm the importance of that demand. Teachers want a clearly defined leader who provides consistency and one

who is going to build a culture that encourages success for teachers and students, and who creates a work environment that caters to the needs of all stakeholders.

Teachers have stated numerous times in this study that without proper administration, they will be facing an environment that will not be conducive to being successful in and out of the classroom. Clearly, the focal point of a district that hopes to retain their best and brightest teachers is a district that will ensure they have the proper leadership in their buildings.

Limitations, Delimitations, Assumptions

Limitation. Overall, this capstone results are limited to the respondents to either survey. From the school administrator survey, there were a limited number of responses statewide from principals and assistant principals. Montgomery County High School experienced a dramatic increase in school leadership during the study time period over the apparent statewide status. From the findings of the study, leadership turnover does not appear to be as critical problem in public schools when compared to that of teacher retention. Of the 1,058 that agreed to participate in the study, only 11.3% of principals and assistant principals indicated that they had moved schools or districts during the study period. While the number of participants is small, nevertheless, the responses obtained provide important analysis of the status of school leaders in Kentucky.

From the teacher retention investigation, the results relates only to the districts and teachers that participated in the survey. No attempt was made to identify the district so the results of this capstone may not be generalizable to other districts in the

state. What this does by not knowing is that we cannot trace back to who participated, and at the same time we did not know who participated so we could not determine how many actual districts participated in the research study.

Delimitation. The first delimitation was who was contacted in the district to distribute the survey. The director of human resources was the first person contacted. From there, the superintendent was contacted through email to forward the survey to the staff. The person was chosen to make the distribution of the survey more efficient and create a central point in the district to use for contacting. The problem is that it is hard to say how many people never sent out of the survey nor read the email. In addition, there were probably missed participants by not sending the email out individually by the researchers to sample. This would have possibly created a higher pool of responders and more information in the study.

The survey had 18 multiple-choice questions dealing with reasons for leaving a district, and one open-ended question where teachers could share their personal opinions and experiences. While this may seem like an appropriate amount of questions, it is possible that a delimitation was created by not offering more choices or by how the survey was worded.

Assumption. There were assumptions made in the survey, such as assuming that people were honest in their responses and that districts would freely send the survey out. While this may sound obvious to some, there is no guarantee that districts participated nor is there a guarantee that people were honest in their answers. In addition, there is an assumption in place that people read the questions the same way

as the researchers. Questions can be interrupted and that could skew how people answer the questions. The reality is that without clearly defining the questions, people could make assumptions that led to skewed data and misunderstood terms and questions.

Another assumption in the teacher retention research is that the responses received from the participants were given in an honest manner. While many provided very revealing data and explanations on why they left a district that does not mean they all felt comfortable enough to share how they felt about the district. Could there be more information that could be gained by resurveying these participants in a different medium than an online survey? Perhaps they would be more open if it was on paper or in a face-to-face interview.

Recommendations

Principals. One recommendation to improve school administrator retention would be to reinstate the KPIP to assist local districts with a continuous plan of support for new administrators. By utilizing a statewide program based on a uniform set of standards and expectations, principals and assistant principals would receive consistent quality training and support that provides them access to a network of other school leaders to which they can turn for guidance. Additionally, an improvement in college preparation prior to assuming their roles can ameliorate retention. Graduate courses in education need to include opportunity for those interested in leadership positions to receive additional work associated with the practicality of what those positions entail. So often, teacher leaders become school principals without the

benefit of truly understanding what that means. According to the results of this study, only 11.1% felt that they had received that necessary support to feel very prepared.

Teachers. Based on the results of this study, districts need to be made aware of the findings from what teachers shared in relation to their reasons for leaving a district. A tremendous amount of information can be derived from this study that shows what truly impacts teacher retention in a district. Districts should look to use this data with the principals and assistant principals to find ways to meet the teachers where they can and help retain their best teachers. This survey should be seen as a tool that can only help a district progress in the area of teacher retention.

The districts that participated in the study and clearly stated that they would participate in this study will be sent a copy with highlighted portions that point out key information relating why teachers leave. Those districts can then look to help improve retention.

Principals need to realize that must communicate with teachers on a daily basis to ensure that they are providing their teachers what they need. A survey should be created and distributed in districts that have struggled with retention rates in order to see what is really transpiring between administration and certified educators in the building. If there is a verified disconnect between administration and teachers, then there should be an arena in which each side can freely share ideas without fear of repercussions. Both sides should look for ways to improve the work environment, not only for each other, but also for the benefit to the personal connections with their students.

Teachers need to have the type of leadership among their own that can help prevent problems before they develop. Teacher leaders need to create an atmosphere in which individuals can share ideas without fear of discipline or termination, but an atmosphere in which everyone can grow together. Teacher-leaders need to have the ability to share ideas with administrators to help the school progress forward, and administration needs to have the humility to take the suggestions and do their best to keep everyone productively working well together.

Future Actions

The next steps should be to look at how to take this study and create it into a book that can be used by professional educators throughout the country to help create environments that are conducive to educators and administrators alike. The book should cover what causes teachers to leave, and what can be done to help retain teachers in a district. Conversely, a professional development program could be derived from the book to help show educators and administrators how to work to create environments that fit the needs of all stakeholders.

This study will be presented at conferences to share what factors are impacting teachers to the point of wanting to leave a school for employment elsewhere. Through conferences, this information will hopefully be able to help more in the field of education to retain teachers and to create the kind of schools that are desired by educators. Working together with these conferences and various schools will provide the researchers a chance to help improve the educational system in the future.

Finally, a follow-up survey could be used to gain more detailed information from participants of this study. The survey may seek individuals who wish to share more personal information of what has gone wrong and what has gone well in their school districts in order to help give a clearer picture of what is working and what is broken in education. The additional survey could help direct the book as well as provide more personal stories and accounts to help improve the relationship between administration and faculty.

Reflection

Upon reflection on this project, the lesson learned here is that assumptions should not be made when determining why people leave educational jobs to seek new educational jobs. Everyone has specific personal reasons for leaving, but so many of those reasons are tied to how administrators either treated them or did not do their job on a daily basis. The number of people who left because of an administrator is surprising and at the same time troubling. What is causing so many in administration to precipitate teachers leaving their building? Are we not training our administrators correctly or preparing them for their job? Are people just always going to have a problem with their supervisors at work?

One compelling lesson from this study is ever underestimate the influence of one in leadership. So many in administration need to understand that they are what holds a building together or tears it apart, according to the people who participated in this survey. The number of comments on administrators is troubling and even unbelievable in a study like this. The relationship between school leaders and

teachers is a critical component of a school's success. From this study, it would seem that while they must work in conjunction with each other, often they do not fully understand each other. Even those school administrators who spent years in the classroom somehow seem to forget what it is like to be in the classroom. Likewise, district personnel often forget what it is like to be a building principal.

People will not always read emails nor will they be apt to help with a research study. The reality is that the email subject line must incite enough the interest that prospective participants actually open the email. At the same time, the email must be a concise enough to ensure they will actually read the email and hopefully distribute it to their staff.

Some things that could be done differently if this study were to be done again would be to obtain individual email addresses of state employees to help save distribution and response time and ensure that the survey actually reaches as many people as possible. Doing so would help increase the sample size and remove the power of one person outside the researchers who make a unilateral decision not help with the study and removing a large potential sample size from a study.

The next thing that would be done differently is the way questions are written in the survey. Individuals could have interpreted a few of the questions differently. The questions would be rewritten in a way that clearly defines what the question is asking and remove the element of interpretation from the questions. This would hopefully help the credibility of the study and the responders to the questions.

The goal of this study was to determine what factors actually cause people to leave a district and the results have clearly shown that the majority of the factors stem from the administration in a building. The purpose of improving school administrator and teacher retention is to improve and strengthen relationships with students, for whom both administrators and teachers act as can be tremendous role models. When a school administrator or teacher leaves a school, a student usually loses contact with that administrator or teacher and could feel let down by the district or the individual.

By increasing retention and seeing what actually causes people to leave a district, administrations can devise with ways to retain teachers and hopefully improve retention rates and improve the relationships and connections among school leaders, teachers, and students.

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Appendix

Teacher and Administrative Retention for Kentucky Public Schools

This form is being used as a case study dealing with teacher and administrator retention for Kentucky public schools from 2010 - 2016. This survey is being conducted by independent researchers who are collecting the data for their doctoral capstone project..

1. I consent to my inclusion in this survey on employee retention for Kentucky public schools from 2010 -2016.

Mark only one oval.

I agree

Skip to question 2.

I do not agree

Stop filling out this form.

Employment History

This form is being used as a case study dealing with teacher and administrator retention for Kentucky public schools from 2010 - 2016. This survey is being conducted by independent researchers who are collecting the data for their own study.

2. From 2010 - 2016, did you leave the school you work at to go to another school or district for employment?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

Skip to question 3

No

Stop filling out this form.

Job Title

This form is being used as a case study dealing with teacher and administrator retention for Kentucky public schools from 2010 - 2016. This survey is being conducted by independent researchers who are collecting the data for their own study.

3. What is your gender?

Mark only one oval.

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

4. What is your official title at the school you currently work at?

Mark only one oval.

Teacher

Skip to question 25.

Guidance Counselor

Stop filling out this form.

Administrative Assistant

Stop filling out this form.

Assistant Principal

Skip to question 27.

Principal

Skip to question 27.

Teacher Survey

This form is being used as a case study dealing with teacher and administrator retention for Kentucky public schools from 2010 -2016. This survey is being conducted by independent researchers who are collecting the data for their own study.

The purpose of this survey is to obtain information about current teachers' factors that led to their decision to leave their previous teaching position.

5. How long have you been teaching?

Mark only one oval.

Less than a year

1 year

2-4 years

5-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

21 years +

Indicate the level of importance EACH of the following played in your decision to leave YOUR PREVIOUS SCHOOL.

6. Because I wanted to take a job more conveniently located OR because I moved.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

7. Because of other personal life reasons (e.g., health, pregnancy/childcare, caring for family).

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

- 8. Because I wanted or needed a higher salary.**

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

- 9. Because I needed better benefits than I received at my previous school.**

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

10. Because I was concerned about my job security at my previous school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly

important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

11. Because I was dissatisfied with my job description or assignment (e.g., responsibilities, grade level, or subject area).

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly

Important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

12. Because I did not have enough autonomy over my classroom at my previous school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly

Important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

13. Because I was dissatisfied with the large number of students I taught at last year's school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly

Important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

14. Because I felt that there were too many intrusions on my teaching time at my previous school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

15. Because I wanted the opportunity to teach at my current school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

16. Because I was dissatisfied with workplace conditions (e.g., facilities, classroom resources, school safety) at my previous school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

17. Because student discipline problems were an issue at last year's school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

18. Because I was dissatisfied with the administration at last year's school.*Mark only one oval.*

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

19. Because I was dissatisfied with the lack of influence I had over school policies and practices at last year's school.*Mark only one oval.*

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

20. Because there were not enough opportunities for leadership roles or professional advancement at my previous school.*Mark only one oval.*

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

21. Because I was dissatisfied with how student assessments/school accountability measures impacted my teaching or curriculum at my previous school.*Mark only one oval.*

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

22. Because I was dissatisfied with how some of my compensation, benefits, or rewards were tied to the performance of my students at my previous school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

23. Because I was dissatisfied with the support I received for preparing my students for student assessments at my previous school.

Mark only one oval.

Not at all important

Slightly important

Somewhat important

Very important

Extremely important

24. Because of other factors not included in previous items

Skip to question 26.

Grade You Teach

25. Do you currently teach students in any of these grades at THIS school?

Check all that apply.

Prekindergarten	7th
Kindergarten	8th
1 st	9th
2 nd	10th
3 rd	11th
4 th	12th
5 th	Ungraded
6th	

Skip to question 5.

Future Plans

26. How long do you plan to remain in the position of a pre-K-12 teacher?

Mark only one oval.

As long as I am able

Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job

Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job

Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage)

Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along

Definitely plan to leave as soon as I can

Undecided at this time

Thank you for participating in the survey.

Stop filling out this form.

Principal Survey

This form is being used as a case study dealing with teacher and administrator retention for Kentucky public schools from 2010 - 2016. This survey is being conducted by independent researchers who are collecting the data for their own study.

27. How many total years have you been a school administrator?

Mark only one oval.

Less than 1 year

1 - 5 years

6 - 10 years

11 - 15 years

more than 16 years

28. How prepared do you feel you were for your role as an administrator when you first began?

Mark only one oval.

Very prepared

Prepared

Somewhat prepared

Not prepared

Please rate the following factors as to the degree in which they motivated you to change schools.

29. Salary, compensation and benefits

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

30. Greater demand for accountability

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

31. Number of hours spent on school related activities before, during, and after school

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

32. Job stress

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

33. Increased instructional responsibilities and workload

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

34. Changes in students (economical, linguistical, racial and developmental)

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

35. Lack of support from parents, students and administration

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

36. Increased politics in the profession

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

37. Opportunity for advancement

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

38. Current job is a promotion over previous position

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

39. Involuntarily left position

Mark only one oval.

Not at all

Very little

To some extent

To a great extent

40. Because of other factors not included in previous items

Mark only one oval.

Option 1

Thank you for participating in the survey.

VITA

BRANDON ELI RICHARDS

EDUCATION

December, 2004	Bachelor of Science Robert Morris University Moon Township, Pennsylvania
May, 2011	Master of Science Robert Morris University Moon Township, Pennsylvania
Pending	Doctor of Education Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

2012 - Present	Social Studies Teacher Montgomery County Schools Mount Sterling, Kentucky
2010 - 2012	Social Studies Teacher West Point Independent West Point, Kentucky

HONORS

February, 2011	Alpha Chi National College Honor Society Member Alpha Chi Natinoal College Honor Society Searcy, Arkansas
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VITA

CRYSTAL A. FULTZ

EDUCATION

May, 1994	Bachelor of Science Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
December, 2003	Master of Arts Morehead State University Morehead, Kentucky
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

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1996 - 2012	Social Studies Teacher Johnson County Schools Paintsville, Kentucky

HONORS

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