

RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR  
EFFICACY AND STRESS

by

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## ABSTRACT

Johnson, Cooper, Donald, Taylor, and Millet (2005) surveyed teachers to examine connections between their career and occupational stress and found that teaching was the second most stressful career. In fact, outside of driving an ambulance, teaching was more stressful than 24 other careers. In the age of accountability, stress can be potentially devastating to the educators. Many of the stressful factors that cause a teacher to reexamine his or her career choice come from outside the walls of the classroom. Additionally, a lack of administrative support in schools can lead to a negative climate and cause teachers to seek another career path (Billingsley, 2003). It is these stressful factors that I became interested in.

Therefore, the study I conducted provides an outlet for teachers to provide input about the stresses they experience or have experienced during their teaching careers. In offering this data, I wanted to add information to the body of knowledge on teacher efficacy in order to combat teacher stress and/or burnout. While I found a tremendous amount of research on how stress impacts high school teachers (Friedman, 1991) and elementary school teachers (Gold, 1996), I found a lack of data representing middle school teachers. In particular, there is a gap in the available data with respect to rural areas. Therefore, my focus became to investigate rural middle school teachers' perceptions of stress. In researching, I found there is little data available that examines the beliefs and perceptions current middle school teachers hold and how that impacts their teaching practices. My interest became specific to middle school teachers in rural areas. Thus, the purpose of this mixed methods study is two-fold: 1) to learn what factors impact

rural middle school teachers' efficacy; and 2) to better understand which of these factors increase their stress (and potential burnout).

This study employed two methods of data collection: 1) online survey of 36 teachers; and 2) interviews with 12 participants. This study found that teachers in the rural middle school setting feel they are impacted by more outside stress factors than from within their own classroom. It becomes obvious, though, that the concerns are generated by people and things the teachers have no control over. Micro-politics, trust and support, and the practice of hiring relatives are the main stress factors impacting these teachers. The support and close ties to family, friends and religious associations were places of comfort and solace. The overall implication is that teachers feel more stress based on the type of administrator the school has than on the teaching.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my loving husband who has supported me faithfully as I complete this lifetime goal. His love, patience, and advice have helped me to make this accomplishment a reality. You have enhanced my life in more ways than you can imagine. Anthony, I love you.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my two sons: Judd and Zeke. Without their encouragement, I would not have been able to work as diligently as I have. I am thankful that they did not give up on me. I am so grateful to have children such as you, who have truly been my cheerleaders. I love both of you dearly.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and sisters: Buddy, Naomia, Michelle, and Kim. They have truly been my role models. I thank you for all of your help and support. I love each of you.

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*What is impossible with men is possible with God. (Luke 18:27).*

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There have been numerous others, including Kari, Alan, JiJi, and Bridgett that have been supportive of my efforts and, for that, I am forever grateful.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Research Questions and Methods.....	4
Research Perspective .....	4
Assumptions.....	5
Limitations .....	5
Definition of Terms .....	6
Researcher and Community Background .....	6
Summary and Overview .....	8
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	9
Teacher Efficacy.....	10
Collective Efficacy.....	11
Measuring Teacher Efficacy.....	12
Stress and Burnout.....	14
Burnout and Efficacy .....	14

Emotional Exhaustion.....	15
Depersonalization.....	16
School Culture/Climate.....	16
Administration Impact .....	19
School Culture and Burnout .....	20
Rural Schools .....	21
Rural Communities and Teachers.....	21
Rural Schools and Burnout.....	23
The Middle School Setting .....	25
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....	27
Background .....	27
Research Questions and Methods.....	27
Settings .....	29
Participants .....	31
Data Collection.....	34
Phase I Surveys.....	34
Pros and Cons of Surveys .....	36
Phase II Teacher Interviews .....	36
Pros and Cons of Interviews and Focus Groups .....	38
Trustworthiness and Researcher Subjectivity .....	39
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS .....	41
Emotional Exhaustion.....	42
Depersonalization .....	49

School Climate .....	54
Efficacy and Stress .....	56
Davis Middle School (DMS) .....	58
Wallace Middle School (WMS) .....	60
Summary .....	66
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS .....	68
The Relationship Between Teacher Efficacy and Stress .....	68
Micro-Politics .....	71
Support and Trust.....	72
Nepotism/Familial Hiring Practices.....	73
Implications and Recommendations.....	74
Future Research.....	76
REFERENCES .....	78
APPENDICES .....	86

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Interviewee Demographics (all names are pseudonyms) .....	33
2. Survey Item Numbers and Correspondence with Dependent Variables .....	35
3. Overview of Data Collection and Analysis .....	39

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Teacher Burnout Cycle .....	18
2. Survey Results Regarding Emotional Exhaustion (in percentages).....	45
3. Survey Results for Depersonalization (in percentages).....	52
4. Survey Results for School Climate (in percentages).....	56

CHAPTER I:  
INTRODUCTION  
Background

Nearly every week newspaper headlines decry public schools and education in general for failing at their task of preparing students to become productive citizens and/or members of the workforce. Moreover, reform-driven policies like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) not only compound the already heavy load of our public schools and teachers, but give the public the idea that teachers will not do a good job unless prodded by mandates. With this negative attention to schools and education, how or why do teachers continue to do their jobs?

As an educator, I often wonder about the issues affecting schools and teachers. Over my 15-year career I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to work in three different schools in two different counties. In each of the settings the relationships between teachers, teachers and administrators, and teachers and students have been unique, yet the same. As I began to reflect upon my career and why I selected it, I began to think more deeply about these relationships.

As my career has continued, I find myself wondering about the amounts of stress that I have encountered during various times. In talking with other educators, I began to question what causes teachers stress and how they handle that stress. Each person seems to deal with his or her stress and stress factors in different ways. The different levels of stress and conversations with other educators have led me to be interested in the factors that cause teacher stress and how teachers deal with that stress, more specifically how teachers in rural communities handle stress.

## Statement of the Problem

Johnson, Cooper, Donald, Taylor, and Millet (2005) surveyed teachers to examine connections between their career and occupational stress and found that teaching was the second most stressful career. In fact, outside of driving an ambulance, teaching was more stressful than 24 other careers. In the age of accountability, stress can be potentially devastating to the educators. In operating a classroom, teachers can experience stress in class due to student misbehavior, the amount of work related to their content area (i.e., English teachers assessing 100 papers at a time), and/or organization or lesson preparations. In addition, the stress that comes with accountability reforms, generally sent down from higher administrative leadership to teachers, requires more paperwork, documentation, and numerous meetings/workshops that only compound the daily stress associated with teaching.

Many of the stressful factors that cause a teacher to reexamine his or her career choice come from outside the walls of the classroom. For example, a disorganized school structure, a heavy paperwork load, and social cliques have all been found to have negative impacts on teachers (Schlichte, 2005). Additionally, a lack of administrative support in schools can lead to a negative climate and cause teachers to seek another career path (Billingsley, 2003). It is these stressful factors that I became interested in. As I read over the literature, I found myself questioning whether these factors were what led to teacher burnout or were there other factors not yet documented. Therefore, the study I proposed provides an outlet for teachers to provide input about the stresses they experience or have experienced during their teaching careers. In offering this data, I wanted to add information to the body of knowledge on teacher efficacy in order to combat teacher stress and/or burnout.

## Purpose of the Study

While I found a tremendous amount of research on how stress impacts high school teachers (Friedman, 1991) and elementary school teachers (Gold, 1996), I found a lack of data representing middle school teachers. In particular, there is a gap in the available data with respect to rural areas. Therefore, my focus became to investigate rural middle school teachers' perceptions of stress. In researching, I found there is little data available that examines the beliefs and perceptions current middle school teachers hold and how that impacts their teaching practices. I found numerous articles associating the beliefs teachers hold about certain initiatives such as the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), or beliefs they hold about the profession like wanting to change the world or touching students' lives. However, the data I wanted were the stories or beliefs teachers had about schools, how they work, or their school's organization and how it impacted their classroom performance.

My interest became specific to middle school teachers in rural areas. In reading and analyzing the articles I found, the amounts and types of stress that teachers experience daily, monthly, and even yearly became more clarified. In reading through the articles, my thoughts shifted from teacher perceptions about schools to the stresses they experience and the impacts upon their teaching these stresses have: Why did teachers decide to teach as a career? How do teachers view schools as learning organizations? How do teachers perceive what they do? What do teachers think about the reforms being implemented in education? What do they think about their roles within schools? Do teachers enjoy teaching? Thus, the purpose of this mixed methods study is two-fold: 1) to learn what factors impact rural middle school teachers' efficacy; and 2) to better understand which of these factors increase their stress (and potential burnout).

## Research Questions and Methods

In order to gain the most information on rural middle school teachers' perceptions of efficacy and stress, I used two methods of data collection (mixed methods)—survey research and focus groups/interviews—to answer the following questions:

1. How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher efficacy; and
2. How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher stress?

Question one was addressed using a survey to assess the factors that teachers' believe most impact their efficacy. Question two was addressed through open ended survey questions and focus group/interview sessions. Survey questions are derived from several well-known validated surveys created by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), Abel (1999), Bandura (1993), and Goodard and Hoy (2000).

The study was limited to two of the three middle schools, Wallace Middle School (WMS) and Davis Middle School (DMS), in rural Sandstone County in North Alabama (all names pseudonyms). Data collection was an ongoing process spanning an 8- week period over the fall term of 2010. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the constant comparative method.

## Research Perspective

This study was primarily informed by research on teacher efficacy, stress, and burnout. Teacher efficacy is defined as an individual's beliefs in his or her capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Henson, 2001). DiPaola

and Hoy (2008) have defined a teacher's sense of efficacy as one's beliefs in their capabilities to meet or exceed the expectations in a specific situation.

Teacher stress refers to the ability of an individual to respond to environmental conditions. The stress itself is neither positive nor negative. It is the respondents' ability to deal with the stress and react that can be good or bad (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Swick, 1989).

Teacher burnout is classified as a phenomenon of prolonged levels of stress for an individual. The continued levels of stress slow an individual response and thinking. It also creates mental and physical exhaustion in people (Skillern, Richardson, Wallman, Prickett, & Marion, 1990).

### Assumptions

In conducting this study, the following assumptions were made

1. The teachers would be open and honest regarding their perceptions concerning the questions in the survey; and
2. The perceptions of a sample of teachers from grades 5- 8 (in a small rural Alabama county) are representative of the perceptions of many middle level teachers in small rural counties in the state.

### Limitations

Several limitations influenced the research and my findings. First, this study was limited by the number of and location of participating teachers who all teach in one county in Alabama. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. A second limitation is the nature of self-reports. Research (e.g., Delpit, 1995; Scherff & Piazza, 2005; Wittrock, 1986) has suggested that participants frequently report what they think researchers want to hear. Another issue is that participants are not always invested in the research; thus, they might not have answered openly or to the best of their ability. Third, the survey questions might have

overlapped or been misinterpreted. Finally, the results of this study relied upon self-reported data gathered at a certain time of the school year as an accurate measure of factors and their impact on teacher efficacy and stress throughout the whole school year.

#### Definition of Terms

**Burnout** is defined as a sense of frustration and fatigue that results in disengagement (Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993).

**Depersonalization** is the interpersonal or social dimension of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1984).

**Emotional exhaustion** is defined as the main component of burnout. This involves feelings of being emotionally overextended as well as a belief that one does not have adequate emotional coping resources to function in the work environment (Maslach & Jackson, 1984).

**Middle schools** are defined as schools involving traditional 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels. It is a transitional time generally covering ages 10-15 (Powell, 2005).

**Rural** is defined in its most conservative definition as an area of places with 2,500 or fewer people (Beeson, 2000).

**Stress** is defined by a person's affective reactions to a specific situation or series of related events (Swick, 1989).

**Teacher efficacy** is a "teacher's beliefs in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish specific teaching task in a particular context" (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 160).

#### Researcher and Community Background

As a former high school teacher in this school system, when I went to teach at the middle school I found the environment was completely different from what I had experienced with 9<sup>th</sup>

through 12<sup>th</sup> graders and my former colleagues. There was a rift between faculty and administrators and between/among the social organizations in the school. The original format of the school was a K-12 school. As the community grew, the school developed its own growing pains.

At first, the school was divided into an elementary and high school with two administrators sharing the same campus. As the community continued to develop, the school built a new elementary school on a different location but still shared buses and a couple of support staff. As the elementary faculty vacated the building, a “new” middle school began to develop. As the teachers were forced to move to new rooms and be divided or transferred without consent, the atmosphere began to also change. Co-workers were now positioned against each other. Administrators with differing visions began to take stands catching teachers in the middle. Sharing the one building for two schools made sense economically, but maybe not for those confined there.

As with other rural areas, funds in my district are limited. Therefore, the middle school developed as its own school but still resides under the same roof with the high school. Two separate administrations are in control of a limited space. Some faculty must be shared between schools, and the library and cafeteria are also used by both schools.

Due to the closeness of the schools in vicinity, it is no wonder the ties within the community are strong. Three large components of the community are family ties, religious affiliations, and sports. In the community, family ties are strong due to the large number of generational families. Some families have resided in the area up to four or five generations. Religious affiliation is a core divider of groups within the community; divisional lines emerge within the schools based upon which community church one attends. Several family members

may work under the same roof and that impacts the school environment. An example of such family connection is from one family: three out of four sisters work within the school. Outside of that, several other cousins, neice/nephews, and extended family members are students in the school. The schools employee several husband- wife combos, in-law relationships, cousins, and parent/child relationships.

Sports are also huge in this rural area. On any given night, the majority of the town can be found attending the sport of that season and discussing school issues while routing on the school. Job hiring and firings, school personnel, and procedures are often discussed and impacted by these outside affiliations.

#### Summary and Overview

In Chapter I, I have provided the rationale for and the need for more research on rural middle school teachers' efficacy and what motivates them to stay or leave the profession. Chapter II presents the perspectives that informed this study and background literature on teacher stress, teacher efficacy, rural education, and middle school settings. Chapter III provides the methodology for the proposed study including participant demographics. Chapter IV provides an analysis of collected data from participants. Finally, Chapter V provides findings, conclusions and areas of future research interest generated from the study.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the current body of research available concerning teacher perceptions concerning teaching—including efficacy, stress/burnout, and school culture/climate—and factors impacting teachers in rural middle schools. Remarkably, very little research has examined the perspective of rural middle school teachers. When rural schools are included, it is often studied to make comparisons to urban or inner city schools. These studies tend to focus on student performance, socio-economics, or limited opportunities afforded in the settings. Little to no data specifically focuses on teachers' efficacy and stress with the middle rural settings.

With increased public concerns about children achieving on standardized tests, negative comments about public schools, and ever changing policies for public education, teachers are trapped in the cross hairs of issues of school reform. How are teachers expected to do their jobs? How does all this negativity impact their emotions within the classroom? These types of questions are crucial to understanding the stress teachers experience and possible factors that can contribute to their burnout and even eventually leaving the teaching profession.

Each teacher enters the profession with a hope of making a difference or having a positive impact upon their students. These individuals also bring with them their own beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. Those individual influences cannot be completely separated from how the teacher views or performs his or her job. Yet, once confronted with the realities of the

school setting and classroom, many teachers develop a more negative attitude which can result in many leaving the profession.

### Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is an individual's beliefs in his or her capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Henson, 2001). DiPaola and Hoy (2008) further defined a teacher efficacy as one's beliefs in their capabilities to meet or exceed the expectations in a specific situation. It was Bandura's (1997) belief that efficacy was an indicator of an individual's actions and a powerful motivational influence. Based on one's efficacy, teaching methods can be open, creative, and motivational to students.

Research (e.g., Anhorn, 2008; Byrne, 1998; Grayson, 2008) has shown that teacher efficacy appears to have an impact upon how a teacher handles the stresses associated with their profession. Efficacy is an individual's beliefs of their abilities to be successful in a setting. Teachers' views of themselves can be extremely important to the performance demonstrated within the classroom (Baughman, 2008). New teachers have to rely heavily on their childhood experiences and values. Once the teacher develops an identity in the profession they are better able to decide what best fits their style of teaching. It is often a difficult and emotional process to come to understand oneself as an effective empowered teacher (i.e., a sense of efficacy).

When the understanding of the origins of efficacy deserves more examination, studies (Friedman 2000; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Weinstein, 1988) have shown that the "dreams" young teachers hold are quickly shattered by their co-workers, surroundings, and resources. Efficacy is established in the early years and is considered resilient during the internship and teacher pre-service programs. Yet, once faced with the real setting of schools, teachers have that belief system challenged early in their careers. Social persuasion, credibility, trustworthiness

and support/feedback from experienced teachers are viewed as possible threats to cause a decreased sense of efficacy with less experienced educators.

Hoy and Spero (2005) examined the issues of teacher efficacy in the early years of teaching and found that three of the four measures were of similar patterns. All were seen as reliable results even with a small sample. The issue of efficacy during teacher preparation and student teaching were high. Yet, when the teacher first started teaching in their own classrooms, efficacy lowered. However, the fourth measure demonstrated a good level of efficacy and then held steady with methods and strategies for instruction. The first year teachers had good levels of efficacy in the strategies but appear that the level of confidence for maintaining their jobs based on these was lowered.

### *Collective Efficacy*

According to Bandura (1997) teachers' perceptions of efficacy relate to an organizational concept termed collective efficacy. Because teachers work as a group—either in teams, by grade level, or simply by being in the same building—their beliefs are shaped according to the norms and structures in place; in other words, collective perceptions can emerge (Rosenholtz, 1989). Collective teacher efficacy is basically self-efficacy on a social level. Collective efficacy involves four main components: mastery experiences, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and affective states. Teachers examine and analyze what a school needs in order to be successful including the barriers that must be overcome and what resources are available. Collective teacher efficacy has shown strong correlations to student achievement (Goddard, 2004). Kurz (2000) found a strongly correlated relationship to collective teacher efficacy thus creating a compelling argument for more research in this area. Research also shows that collective efficacy is more unified in the elementary setting than in secondary schools (Goddard et al., 2000).

The issue of self efficacy and collective efficacy must be considered when examining teaching. As each student enters into a teacher education program, they bring with them their own experiences and beliefs concerning school and learning and their memories and previous experiences as a student. These memories can either be the thing that lead them to want to teach or the thing that they wanted to change for future children. The belief systems are developed from family, community, religious views and any other influence they have encountered. How well belief systems match teachers' perceptions of their expected and actual classroom performance impact efficacy.

### *Measuring Teacher Efficacy*

In their 2000 article Brouwers and Tomic described two “strands” of research on teacher efficacy.

The first is grounded in Rotter's social learning theory of internal versus external control (Rotter, 1966). Teachers who believe that they are competent to teach difficult or unmotivated students were considered to have internal control, whereas teachers who believe that the environment has more influence on student learning than their own teaching abilities were considered to have external control. (p. 241)

From this strand came several measures such as the *Teacher Locus of Control* (Rose & Medway, 1981), *Responsibility for Student Achievement* (Guskey, 1981), and the *Webb Efficacy Scale* (Ashton, Olejnik, Crocker & McAulife, 1982).

The second strand is “grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory and his construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977)” (as cited in Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, p. 241). Bandura (1997) offered that efficacy could be associated with the variety of task teachers are asked to complete. Efficacy levels could be driven by the belief regarding the task(s) or how the teacher views the relevance or importance of the task(s). Several measures emerged from this tradition, including the *Teacher Efficacy Scale* (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), the *Science Teaching Efficacy Belief*

*Instrument* (Riggs & Enochs, 1990), the *Ashton Vignettes* (Ashton, Buhr & Crocker, 1984), and the *Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale* (Bandura, 1990)” (as cited in Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, p. 241).

Bandura’s *Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale* is an instrument that is multi-faceted. The width of the instrument was designed to offer a broader sense of teacher held efficacy. Bandura’s examination of efficacy involved four sources for efficacy concerns: vicarious experiences, mastery of experiences, physiological and emotional states, and social persuasion. For Bandura, the efficacy of novice teachers was impacted early in their teaching careers. The issue of job satisfaction and stress were also related to the teachers’ sense of efficacy during their first years. Ashton (1984) established her belief in context place with efficacy by developing Ashton vignettes. These vignettes offered a situational view of teachers and their scenarios and allowed teachers to respond to the teacher in each case and their own professional view of each case.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy’s (2001) overall purpose of research was to examine existing instruments for efficacy and develop one that could offer a broader view of individual efficacy. In working to develop an instrument that would bring validity to teacher efficacy and how to measure the construct, they found there was a correlation between 3 of the 4 perceptions. As interest in teacher efficacy and stress has continued to grow, the direction of research has shifted. Tschannen and Hoy reviewed the previously accepted research and the tools associated with each study. Upon such examinations, a new instrument was developed. Through their research, the *Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale* (OSTES) was developed. It incorporated efficacy of instructional strategies, efficacy of classroom management, and efficacy of student engagement. Through analysis the strongest correlations between OSTES and other measures were in the area of personal teaching efficacy.

## Stress and Burnout

Stress is a person's affective reactions to a specific situation or series of related events (Swick, 1989) while burnout is defined as a sense of frustration and fatigue that results in disengagement (Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 1993). Stress can come from multiple sources including school climate/environment, administration, fellow teachers, and discipline issues (Farber, 1982; Friedman, 1991; Grayson, 2008). Burnout develops due to prolonged stress in three board areas: personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

According to Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996), feelings of personal accomplishment (i.e., efficacy; see also Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008) are reduced when teachers feel like they do not add to students' development. Depersonalization includes pessimistic attitudes regarding students, parents, and the school. "Indifferent, cold, or distant attitudes are displayed through generalizing, derogatory labels, or physically distancing actions" (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008, p. 1350). Emotional exhaustion, or stress (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008), comes about when teachers are incapable of physically and emotionally providing for students because of overpowering feelings of tiredness and stress (Maslach et al., 1996). Grayson and Alvarez (2008) noted that teachers who experience emotional exhaustion frequently depict it as a "tired feeling" that builds up over time as their "emotional resources" are exhausted (p. 1350).

### *Burnout and Efficacy*

Several studies (e.g., Brouwers & Tomic, 1998; Friedman, 2003; Leithwood, Menzies, Jantzi, & Leithwood, 1996; Rabinowitz, Kushnir, & Ribak, 1996; Van Yperen, 1998) have associated teacher efficacy and burnout. More than 20 years ago, Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey and

Bassler (1988) found that teacher efficacy predicts teachers' level of burnout. More recently, Brouwers and Tomic (2000)

concluded that in educational settings perceived self-efficacy in classroom management has a longitudinal effect on the depersonalization dimension of burnout and a synchronous effect on the personal accomplishment dimension. So, it is important to take perceived self-efficacy in classroom management into consideration. (p. 250)

Goddard (2006) examined environmental predictors of burnout among beginning teachers over a two year period. One hundred and forty-two teachers completed surveys initially; yet by the end of the study, only 79 teachers remained. Interestingly enough, there were no significant differences noted between those that stayed and those they left teaching. Respondents, however, expressed a lack of clarity of daily school routines/rules and the schools' inability to accommodate innovation as reasons for dissatisfaction.

Byrne (1998) found that teacher burnout was cyclic (see Figure 1) in nature. The cycle appears to surface at year two and again at five. By year seven, teachers have come to grips with either coping with the reality that teaching is not going to be what they expected or they have quit teaching. Byrne defined burnout as a very devastating deterrent to the successful performance of the pedagogue's duties. In another study (Grayson, 2008) teachers from 17 rural Ohio school districts were surveyed concerning the climate of their schools. The results showed that these teachers reported lower burnout stressors than other studies. However, there were other strong stress indicators that indicated the potential for burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, school organization, weak administration, and negative school climate component.

### Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is defined as the main component of burnout. This involves feelings of being emotionally overextended as well as a belief that one does not have adequate

emotional coping resources to function in the work environment (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). Emotional exhaustion, or stress (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008), comes about when teachers are incapable of physically and emotionally providing for students because of overpowering feelings of tiredness and stress (Maslach et al., 1996).

Grayson and Alvarez (2008) noted that teachers who experience emotional exhaustion frequently depict it as a “tired feeling” that builds up over time as their “emotional resources” are exhausted (p. 1350). Therefore, a better understanding of the exhaustion levels of rural middle school teachers could lead to a better understanding of the factors that impact their efficacy issues. Buunk and Schaufeli (1993) suggested that the interaction between job uncertainty and emotional reactivity caused emotional exhaustion, thus, highly reactive individuals were less able to cope with uncertainty, and maintained a less effective and passive coping style.

Emotional exhaustion is an issue that previous research is linked to issues that impact a teacher and their desire and/or ability to perform task at their job (Maslach, 1984). The emotional toil felt by some educators is driven by outside forces of school climate, community pressures, student behavior and personal lives. Emotions are both social and political in nature, which links them to multiple aspects of ones being (Kelchtermans, 2005).

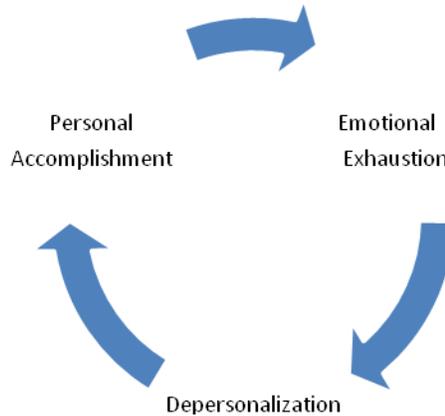
### Depersonalization

Depersonalization is the interpersonal or social dimension of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). According to Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996), feelings of personal accomplishment (i.e., efficacy; see also Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008) are reduced when teachers feel like they do not add to students’ development. Depersonalization also includes pessimistic attitudes regarding students, parents, and the school. “Indifferent, cold, or distant attitudes are displayed through generalizing, derogatory labels, or physically distancing actions” (Grayson &

Alvarez, 2008, p. 1350). Depersonalization, as it was identified by Maslach (1981), is a possible factor for burnout. While depersonalization sounds ambiguous, it is a difficult thing to admit for some.

Depersonalization is somewhat expected with some professions. A feeling of detachment could be warranted in certain professional relationships, such as that between clients and their psychologist(s). However, as the level of detachment increases the professional can become more disengaged and cynical about the client/students. They become more like objects to be handled than individuals (Lief & Fox, 1963). The level of value placed here is often dependent upon those around the individual, the intrinsic value a person possesses and their level of confidence. How one views his or her role in reform and change is based more on career and timing than on age. Teaching is a dual environment of balance. Being an effective teacher and open to initiative strategies but in the struggle of caring vs. methodological teaching or micro politics of reform (Kelchtermans, 2005).

Depersonalization may lead to isolation and lack of collaboration between educators. Some teachers have a more cynical outlook due to this lack of adult interaction, a lack of resources, and from a lack of motivation by their students/peers. Teachers may experience periods of no longer feeling effective in their positions, which strengthens the depersonalization factor.



*Figure 1. Teacher Burnout Cycle*

#### School Culture/Climate

School climate, which can be related to teacher stress and burnout, can be generally characterized as the ongoing condition of the whole school that is “experienced by members, describes their collective perceptions of routine behavior, and affects their attitudes and behavior in the school” (Hoy & Miskel 1996, p. 141). Common elements of a school’s climate include the faculty and staff’s sense of influence on work conditions, agreement on common goals, and feelings of collegiality (Tobin et al. 2006 as cited in Scherff & Singer, 2008). A corpus of research shows that a school’s politics and culture can negatively influence teachers, adding to their levels of stress (e.g., Goodlad 1990; Hirsch 2006; Ingersoll 1999, 2001, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

In his research, Ingersoll (2001, 2003) found that one key issue with teacher attrition is the working conditions in which they must work. The outlook of teacher attrition is not devastating due to the fact that the working conditions or the management of the schools can be addressed to improve the overall school condition. Altering the sink or swim idea for newcomers is being addressed using mentoring programs which is a step to improve support and

relationships for new teachers. Ingersoll (1999) called into question the issue of under qualified teachers in the profession. Being under qualified offers a variety of concerns for the teaching profession, lack of subject matter, stress of various teaching assignments, and less desire to prepare. Ingersoll (1999, 2001, 2003) brought to light some avenues that impact teacher efficacy due to two variations to teacher stress: teacher shortage/turnover and teacher qualifications.

In their study of Massachusetts teachers, Johnson and Kardos (2004) identified three types of professional (i.e., school) cultures, each with a different level of support: 1) veteran-oriented, where the climate was set by veteran teachers who valued their autonomy over collegial interaction; 2) novice-oriented, where a predominately novice faculty set school norms; and 3) integrated, where there was conversation among all levels of teachers. Each of these types of culture has the potential to affect teacher efficacy, stress, and burnout.

Organizational climate generally refers to a teacher's perception of the school's work environment. Trust and openness are two conditions that support effective school improvement. These are also necessary for teachers to feel supported and a component of effectiveness. Healthy schools protect teachers from unreasonable pressures such as parents and community. In healthy climates, teachers enjoy their jobs, are trusting of their fellow workers, and identify the school as positive. Hoy (1999) created the organizational climate index (OCI) survey which has shown high levels of reliability in relation to measuring four areas of school culture and climate: Collegial Principal Behavior (.94), Professional Teacher Behavior (.88), Achievement Press (.92), and Institutional Vulnerability (.87).

#### *Administration Impact*

In examining the climate of a school, the schools personality, one must examine the administrator(s) because of the significant role they have in the development of the climate.

Open climates are marked by cooperation and respect. Closed climates are characterized by restrictive, unsupportive administrators. Kanner (1974) found that teachers are more loyal and happier in their job with an open climate in place. Barnes (1994) found that open schools promote shared decision making which promotes school effectiveness as well (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). In open climates, administrators promote trust, collaboration, and professionalism in the faculty which categorizes the school as a healthy school climate. In the history of climates, organizational and school, researchers found patterns of behavior that lead to the development of the Organizational Health Index (OHI) (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). The healthier a school the positive the teachers and students appear which is shown with better achievement and higher teacher efficacy levels (Hoy & Tarter, 1990; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).

#### *School Culture and Burnout*

School culture is often directly related to teacher stress and burnout. For example, Friedman (1991) studied school culture using data collected from 78 elementary schools to show low- and high- burnout numbers and identified four areas of concern: the drive to achieve measureable goals for the administration, lack of trust in teachers professional adequacy, circumscribing school culture, and disagreeable physical environment. Schools that were more restricted hierarchally contributed to higher levels of stress, while schools that were flexible and cohesive had lower levels. High-stressed schools allowed little opportunity for the teachers to express their views of things. In the lower stressed schools, teachers were given more freedom and liberties when deciding the best route to reach students.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik's study (2009) explored the relationships between teacher efficacy and several factors like self-efficacy, teacher burnout, school context, and external factors of the environment. External factors are viewed as aspects of teachers' viewpoints that limit their

abilities to accomplish their goals. In the examination of teacher burnout, the concern is that the three dimensions of burnout cannot be accurately measured. Studies have suggested that burnout in other cultures have found subjective and objective health along with motivation and job satisfaction to be contributing factors to burnout. Throughout the study, the six factors examined had a strong correlation to teacher stress and potential burnout.

### Rural Schools

Rural areas refer to locations with 2,500 or fewer people (Beeson, 2000). Rural areas are often over looked in economic and policy issues due to the lack of strength in voting power. Although, the rural areas may not carry as much weight politically, they educate approximately 25% of the country's children. Yet, when examining educational studies, the rural areas are often skipped. Beeson and Strange (2000) offered a few reasons rural research should be seen as necessary, namely approximately 25% of all school children are classified as rural; diverse populations in rural areas; the effects of poverty among rural populations; and teacher shortages/teacher pay found in rural locations.

### *Rural Communities and Teachers*

The bond between a school and its rural community tends to be stronger than in an urban setting. The school is a central port of activity within a small community. Lessons, youth sports, and social gatherings are often connected to the school or school facilities. Local religious dignitaries are seen at the schools or school functions. School groups or organizations use church facilities to hold special meetings and banquets. These relationships in a rural setting carry over into the school systems for students and adults.

Teachers living within the community often find their school role crossing into their religious and social lives. Educators may also be their students' Sunday school teacher or youth

director. Educators may have parental interactions with students' parents due to ladies groups/organizations, town councils, youth league sports/teams/coaching duties. Retaining teachers or attracting teachers in such an environment can be rather difficult. Rural schools struggle with these as well as other issues in maintaining teachers (Beckner, 1996). The schools' organization and these personal connections between teachers can have a direct link to job satisfaction and school climate (Xiaofu, 2007).

Miller (1988) summarized three areas of awareness necessary to teach in rural settings: classroom factors, school factors, and sociocultural factors. As each child is unique, so too are communities. As teachers take a position in a rural school, they need to be aware of these three areas of concern. Classroom factors, like number of preparations, student teacher ratio, and dated equipment could and will impact their classroom performance. School factors, like lack of professional development, less defined policies/procedures, and extensive duties, can impact ones desire to continue to teach in this setting. Finally, sociocultural factors can create a lack of efficacy among teachers. Some of these factors are the greater concerns of informal or personal communications, difficulties fitting in, parental expectations to become a part of the community, and private lives are open to more scrutiny. Miller suggested that teacher preparatory programs should do a better job of preparing educators in these areas.

Teachers who live and teach within the same community or setting may experience other issues concerning their role or position within the structure of the community. Huysman (2008) found that rural teachers experience role confusion. This is brought about by the role they play as an educator and then as a member of the community. The teachers experienced a level of dissatisfaction in their levels of decision making and undue authority to a certain group of community members. Although a case is made that effective rural schools fit their communities,

rural schools are still viewed by many as community businesses (Beckner, 1996). Huysman suggested more studies be conducted in the rural settings to gain better knowledge of decision making strategies, teacher beliefs and administrative relationships.

With other studies pointing to role confusion and negative reform issues, Hardre (2008) recognized the need for further study in the rural areas for teacher motivation and research. Rural schools have often been lumped in to the broad areas of generalization that comes from urban and suburban areas. One such area of fusion could be content knowledge. The content knowledge necessary to be successful in a rural setting may differ from the strict definition associated with content knowledge. This content would have to include the social dynamics or context of community life as well as customary traditions and ways. Lacking of this content knowledge may lead educators to feelings of isolation, frustration, and a sense of loss in their lives. A broader understanding is needed than simple math, writing, or science standards. Teachers must bring a wealth of knowledge from various content sources to school daily to be effective in this setting (Beckner, 1996).

#### *Rural Schools and Burnout*

Abel (1999) suggested more research is necessary for rural school districts to understand better how stress and burnout impact teachers in these locations. Comparing nearly 100 rural secondary schools in North Carolina and Georgia to determine teacher stressors and stress symptoms, Abel found that poor working conditions, poor relationships with co-workers, and a lack of an administration as stresses that lead to burnout. In another study, Hardre (2008) studied teachers' perceptions of how the school can impact their motivational and instructional strategies. The study pointed to systemic factors as important influences teachers use to select and implement strategies within their classrooms. Systemic factors are defined as conditions or

issues outside the teachers' control that can influence their teaching. Through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, Hardre (2008) identified correlates between motivational and instructional strategies used. The more stressed or pressured the teacher felt, the less influential they felt with the students. For teachers at secondary levels, peer interactions were viewed to be more motivational than what teachers could offer. The availability of the administration in rural schools was also found to be a limiting issue for motivation. There were also differences in the teachers' responses concerning who's responsible for motivating students: teachers or students themselves. The study added to the available knowledge on teacher stresses and how they impact their motivational and instructional effectiveness in rural schools.

Rottier (2001) examined six specific areas of teachers in rural schools concerning burnout: teacher reactions with administration, teacher satisfaction with teaching, teacher satisfaction with students, teacher reaction to school district, teacher satisfaction with school expectations, and teacher health patterns. Concerning the teacher's satisfaction with students 93% believed that students were more disrespectful than previous years. Over 30% of the teachers believed that teaching was not more enjoyable than before. More than 50% of the teachers' believed that their emotional needs were not addressed or met. Physical illness associated with stress was found in over 30% of the participants. One concern is the level of emotions rural teachers feel concerning school reform. Rottier (1983) also proposed that the negative impacts of school reform will be felt more by rural teachers because reforms lessen the personal commitments to the students and relationship with administration. The relationship becomes more formal and legal which broadens the gap between the groups.

## The Middle School Setting

Although they have been through 40 years of change, middle schools are often criticized as the weakest portion of the educational system (Iver, 1993). Middle school performance has been below the national average for years. In 1994, 29% of eighth graders were proficient in reading according to National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data. No significant gains were made in the writing proficiencies between 1984 and 1996. While the number of students meeting the proficient level is showing gradual increases, it is coming in at a pace that is not acceptable for accountability standards. In 2009, only 34% of eighth graders were proficient in mathematics (NAEP, 2009). Initiatives in our state, like ARI and AMSTI, have shown improvements but the data on state assessments (ARMT) show that once students reach 6<sup>th</sup> grade they begin to decrease in areas of reading and mathematics ([www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu)).

Although grade levels may vary in middle school settings, teachers are trained through one of two routes: elementary or secondary. Those middle schools which house grades 5-8, for instance, are typically filled with elementary certified 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> teachers with little to no training in the psychological rains of adolescence. Those with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade certification have typically been trained through the secondary education programs. A lack of unity and common goals among those trained to teach in middle school has been thought to contribute to the breakdown of success in the school settings (Mizell, 1999). Killion and Hirsch (1998) found that 60% of teachers surveyed had had no personal experience in the middle school setting. The lack of experience and knowledge from such programs continue to be a road block to successful middle schools (McEwin, 1984; Wiles & Bondi, 1981). This lack of experience can negatively impact teachers' views of students. For example, viewing middle school students as nothing more than "hormonal" is damaging the encouragement and achievement of middle schools.

Teachers should be prepared and capable of offering encouragement and understanding of the maturation process of their students.

Arising from the questions about teacher education programs and training, the issue of grade selections for the middle school structure has been researched. Research found that the grade organization was less important than the school culture, spirit, and overall mission held within the school (Irvin, 1992; Lipsitz, 1980; Wilson, 1969). Vars (1966) found middle schools more successful when there was unity in purpose and a solid curriculum to implement.

Several papers have been presented over the last 20 years concerning what should be viewed as the necessary parts of a middle school. *This We Believe*, published by the National Middle School Association in 1982, provided a list of what they coined the ten essential elements of true middle schools. This document was later reworked to comprise six other characteristics of middle schools (NMSA, 1995). The Council of Adolescent Development of the Carnegie Corporation published a report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1989), with eight major recommendations for improving young adolescents learning. Others have since offered recommendations for the curriculum of middle schools. Making middle schools' focus on a more general education arena was presented by Beane (1992) who also argued that specialization should be saved for the secondary years. The overall concern of middle schools should be to meet educational standards, and social needs that are so prevalent during this time of adolescent development.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology. The first section briefly describes my research perspective and discusses why mixed methods were employed. The next section describes the setting and participants. Section three presents data collection procedures. Section four discusses data analysis techniques. Following that is a discussion of trustworthiness and researcher subjectivity.

### Background

As both a teacher and doctoral student I have been intrigued at the factors that drive the education profession. Over my 15-year career, I have worked with a variety of teachers under a range of initiatives from A Nation at Risk to No Child Left Behind. I have often wondered why some teachers remained in the profession, why some were closed minded, why some were more effective than others, why some never seemed to get burned out, and how some maintained hope for the future. These questions became the impetus for this study. In particular, I wanted to understand better what factors most impact rural middle school teachers' sense of efficacy. In addition, I wanted to figure out which of these factors are most stressful and which of these are more likely to lead to teacher burnout.

### Research Questions and Methods

Given the research questions, which examine teachers collectively and individually, this study employed a mixed methodology. Mixed method research involves using one method of data collection and analysis (e.g., quantitative) in one phase of research and another method

(qualitative) in a different phase (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). In this study the quantitative method (survey) took place in the first phase, and the qualitative method (interviews) followed in the second phase. There are several reasons for researchers to conduct mixed methods studies, namely triangulation which is establishing “converging lines of evidence” to make findings as strong as possible (Yin, 2006, p. 115).

Two questions guided this study. They included the following:

1. How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher efficacy; and
2. How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher stress?

The data collected in this mixed methods study were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the constant comparative method, a qualitative research method designed to aid in the systematic collection and analysis of data and the construction of the theoretical model (Glaser, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). The primary tool is comparison. Comparing and contrasting is used for nearly all aspects of analysis (forming categories, establishing boundaries, summarizing categories). The purpose is to decide on conceptual similarities and to discover patterns (Tesch, 1990)

One of the issues for a researcher is to establish the ways in which data can be collected and analyzed. A better understanding of the issues that teachers feel or experience is critical in the ways to prepare upcoming teachers and necessary to help those actively serving do so in an effective enjoyable way. Qualitative research provides more in depth focused responses by participants. Interviews can provide a wealth of information for the research: the personal accounts of the schools as they see it, their body language as discussions take place, and how

they emphasize language and/or terms. Surveys and written data have a more disconnected/distanced component.

As this research employs mixed methods, I relied on triangulation to assist in establishing validity and reliability. Triangulation means using more than one data source to “corroborate” or “elaborate” the research and “strengthen the study’s usefulness for other settings” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 252-253). Triangulation (Ely et al., 1991) is used to provide validity to the factors impacting this study. Eisner (1991), Angen (2000), and Wolcott (1990) attributed validity of data to using a broader sense of understanding and an informative way for new dialogue to an issue. Reliability is based on the complex overlap in recording, transcribing, and coding of data collected (Silverman, 2005).

### *Settings*

Middle school teachers are specifically of interest for this study due to the lack of data found regarding these grade levels. Middle schools are often filled with elementary or secondary teachers that have been placed in a school containing these grades—in other words, such teachers might not have been specifically trained to work with this age group. Middle schools are also unique in terms of the grade configurations. There are no set standards of what grades can be found in a middle school. The schools chosen for this study are where selected partially because of the grade configurations (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades). Qualitative research can provide information to better prepare teachers to enter this level of teaching. It also provides a greater understanding of the issues active teachers’ experience that impacts their stress levels and efficacy in teaching. Being in such a small, rural area provides a different environment of concern. Not only do teachers have to adjust from elementary or secondary levels to middle school but they also have to understand how to be effective in a setting of closeness and

community. The study was limited to two of the three middle schools in rural Sandstone County in North Alabama. The Sandstone school system consists of five high schools, three middle/junior high schools, and nine elementary or K-8 schools. The system is located in rural farming area. The parents of the students tend to travel between 5 and 40 miles to work in other towns/cities. The communities surrounding the schools are family oriented with deep religious ties. Family, church, and community are strongly connected to the local schools and they serve as the educational institution as well as a social magnet within the community.

Within the system, three or more schools are listed as title I schools. In recent years, the Hispanic population has doubled and tripled within two of the schools. Resources are limited to federal Title I funding, state funds, or local PTA/PTO associations' contributions. The federal government has several types of title funds based on specific needs with a school system. Being federal funds, the money must be spent in accordance with guidelines laid down by the government. Most of the title money is awarded to schools with low socioeconomics, levels of English as a second language students, and science/math resources available with the school or system. A few of the schools are assisted by businesses through the partnerships for education. The Sandstone school system employees several of its former students in a variety of positions. This situation can lead to issues within the system/school when decisions need to be made. Were decisions being made with any biases? Everyone seems to know everyone.

With an average of 100-150 students per grade level, students tend to start with the same group of kids in kindergarten and move through the grades as a group to graduation. Teachers are known in the communities by reputation, family or church ties, and some were even teachers of their student's parents. In a rural community, bonds are usually established early on for the students; however teachers do not always have that bond with co-workers.

Wallace Middle School (WMS) and Davis Middle School (DMS) were selected due to their grade division similarities (5-8). WMS had a total student enrollment of 452 while DMS enrolled 423 students. In a school of this size, there is a full time principal and counselor. DMS does not have an assistant principal and the assistant principal at WMS has to split his/her day with the middle and high school. WMS employees 21 teachers with four to five teachers having to split their teaching day between the middle and high schools. DMS employees 24 teachers with two teachers spending half or less of their day with the high school. DMS does have four core teachers per grade level that devotes their full day to the middle school schedule. WMS does not have that option for their schedule. With these divisions in labor, WMS teachers must deal with overcrowding and limited options for scheduling possibilities.

The schools were originally part of one K-12 site that expanded into a three separate schools: K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. While students adapted rather easily to the changes, the teachers and staff members have experienced growing pains. New administrative teams, office staff, and teachers were established through new hires or transfers within the system. With new staff in place, come new rules, procedures, and other structural changes. These changes created shifts in teachers' roles within the school system. Teachers' relationships with fellow co-workers were also changed. With these changes come new challenges for teachers. Their voices should and need to be heard.

### *Participants*

A letter was sent to the superintendent and principals associated with the two middle schools. The letters were used to seek permission to conduct the research within the county and schools. Once permission was granted, an email was sent to each educator within the two middle schools with a link to the survey. The Survey Monkey website was used to collect results and

aid in the data computation. By completing the surveys online, the identities of the individuals were kept anonymous. At the end of the survey, participants were asked about their willingness to participate further through a focus group session or interview.

Upon the closing of the survey, responses were analyzed to look for similarities and differences in the results from the teachers. An email was then sent to all educators at both school locations thanking them for their participation and with instructions to contact me for the second phase of the research, group sessions or interviews. The focus group participants and/or interviewees were then selected from surveyed teachers who responded saying they would be willing to participate in the focus group or interview session at one location. These responding 12 teachers were then contacted with a date and times for the interview/focus group meetings. The participants selected to meet in small groups or individually based on shared planning times for convenience sake.

In the first phase of the study, surveys were gathered from 36 of the 45 teachers from both school locations, Wallace Middle School (WMS) and Davis Middle School (DMS), for a return rate of 80 percent. According to Babbie (1990), “a response rate of at least 50% is considered adequate for analysis and reporting... and a response rate of 70% or more is very good” (p. 182). Then, the second phase of study focused on 12 of these teachers who agreed to be interviewed within the two schools Table 1 presents information on the 12 interviewees.

Table 1

Interviewee Demographics (all names are pseudonyms)

Participants	Total Years of Service (Years at Location)	Degrees Earned	Subjects/Grades Taught	Reside in the Community
Cassie	7 years	M.A./Elem. Ed.	Science/6	No, but attends church there
MaCayla	6 years (5 years)	M.A./Elem. Ed.	History/5	No
Michelle	6 years (5 years)	B. S./Sec. Ed. Language Arts	English/7 & 11	Yes
Valerie	11 years	M.A./Collaborative Ed.	Special Ed. (Inclusion teacher)/6	No
Dana	15 years	B.S./Secondary Math & Computer Science	Math & Computers/Access Classes/7-12	No
Kay	14 years (10 years—4 at the high school fed by this middle school)	M.A./Administration, B.S./Secondary Ed.	Reading—Language Arts/7 & 8	Yes
Amanda	2 years	B. S./Elem. Ed.	Math/5	No
Jay	16 years (7 years)	B.S./Sec. Ed. (middle school endorsement)	Math/7 & 8	No
Wanda	22 years	B.S.(2)/K-3 & 1-6	History/6 (has taught K, 1, 2, & 6)	Yes
Candy	3 years (2 years)	B.S.	Language/6	Building now--moving here
Katie	16 years (8 years)	Ed.S.	Science & Math/8 (has taught 7-12)	Yes

## Data Collection

Data collection was an ongoing process spanning an eight week period over the fall semester of 2010. Once permission of the school board and superintendent were obtained, the participants were surveyed, screened, and selected based on the limiting factors of the study, which included 2-25 years experience, middle school teacher, and willingness to participate. Demographic information was collected to gain knowledge of participants training, years of experience, and other demographic data.

### *Phase I Surveys*

Based on prior research, I used a 40-question survey that was sent (emailed) to the middle school teachers to measure school climate, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion. The survey, hosted through the website Survey Monkey, consisted of questions that covered teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1993, 1986; Hoy, 1999, 2008), stress (Abel, 1999), and community and school climate (Goodard & Hoy, 2000). The survey consisted of Likert scale and open-ended questions.

Survey questions were developed from other published surveys pertaining to the areas of interest. Efficacy questions were derived from research conducted by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) and Bandura (1993). The *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* has two forms: long and short. Questions for this study were used from the short form. The short form has an overall alpha of .90, with subscales engagement (.81), instruction (.86), and management (.86). Climate questions were derived from research conducted by Wayne Hoy (1999). Hoy established an *Organizational Climate Index Survey* (OCI) with high reliability in each index category: collegial principal behavior (.94), professional teacher behavior (.88), achievement press (.92), and institutional vulnerability (.87). Climate questions were also based on the *Organizational*

*Climate Description* (OCDQ-RM) and the *Organizational Health Inventory* (OHI-M). The OCDQ-RM has the following reliability levels: supportive (.96), directive (.88), restrictive (.89), collegial (.90), committed (.93) and disengaged (.87). The OHI-M has reliability subscores of institutional integrity (.93), collegial leadership (.94), principal influence (.94), resource support (.93), teacher affiliation (.94) and academic emphasis (.94). Both the OCDQ-RM and OHI-M have factorial analysis that supports their construct validity (Hoy & Sabo, 1998). The correspondence between survey items and the three variables of interest are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Survey Item Numbers and Correspondence with Dependent Variables

School Climate	Depersonalization/efficacy	Emotional Exhaustion
13-24	1-13	15-16
26-27	19	20
29-31	37-40	25
33-34		28
		32
		35-36

Because of the small sample size (n=36), survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in order to establish overall patterns and themes. This analysis formed the basis for phase two of the study. Emerging themes were identified from survey responses and open ended responses. These themes were then used as the basis for the focus groups and interviews (Phase II).

*Pros and Cons of Surveys.* Surveys are beneficial to use due to the relative lack of cost involved, the ease of distribution, and there is a restriction on time. The survey can be easily distributed by mail, face to face, by phone, or email/electronically. The standardized format of the questions allow for uniform definitions and more precise measuring of a larger group/population. However, the standardization that exists also works as a con to survey flexibility. The lack of flexibility and generalized wording of questions can allow for context to unanswered. For the survey to be reliable the research also needs to be able to ensure a large return out the population (Allan, 1991).

### *Phase II Teacher Interviews*

After the initial survey, I conducted follow up interviews to better understand the issues that educators implied were stressors or factors that could impact their efficacy. I examined the survey results for the largest responses per factor: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization/efficacy, and stress. After reviewing the survey responses, and discovering themes in from the descriptive statistics, the interview questions were revised for the interviewees.

Upon establishing the themes, 12 voluntary participants took part in either a focus group, by school, or one-on-one interview (for those who were not comfortable speaking in front of others). Pseudonyms were established to protect the identity of participants that agreed to participate in the focus groups or interviews. The focus group and interview sessions provided greater clarification of the emerging themes and triangulation of the survey data. For example, analysis of question 12 on the survey showed that teachers did not feel heard or listened to by their administrator. Thus, in the interviews, I asked participants about the value given to their

ideas or suggestions and/or if they felt that equal voices were heard or listened to by administrators.

Of the 12 participants that agreed to be interviewed, four teachers were interviewed individually and the other eight chose to be in small group settings due to time constraint issues. All sessions individual or small groups lasted between 45 to 55 minutes per session. Two teachers shared the same planning time, four others shared another block of planning, and finally there was a third group of two with the same planning time. All sessions were audio recorded for transcription purposes and accuracy of reporting. The schedule was intended to be interviewee friendly.

The focus group meeting and individual interviews were transcribed for analysis. Analysis consisted of coded themes from the surveys that were cross referenced from focus group responses and interviews. Transcriptions of the focus groups/interviews were coded for the overarching themes using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Open coding was developed from the transcripts of interviews conducted with participants. Open codes offered me a place to begin to find groupings or themes that continually showed throughout the interview. The second shift in coding came in axial coding. Axial codes are the bridge to the themes from open codes that connect themes. The last coding format was selective coding. Selective coding is used when the researcher narrows the themes to three or fewer codes that are essential to the development of a theory. I had to be subjective at each stage of coding to provide an accurate representation of the data.

Each participant was given the opportunity to read over and check the transcript for accuracy. For example, survey question 4 asked if teachers can freely express themselves concerning important school issues. The survey data revealed that teachers did not believe they

could express themselves freely. Therefore, in the interviews, I questioned the teachers' ability to express themselves with administration. As I went through responses, I found statements like "he/she don't really care about...." or "he/she did not even listen when...." or "he/she ask about our interest in...." These issues lead me to probe deeper with the issue of professionalism and trust within the school site.

After this first round of interviews, follow-up interviews were conducted with willing participants to clarify experiences, understandings, beliefs, and/or to ask additional questions based on the themes (i.e., categories) that emerged from the initial interviews. Follow up interviews were conducted with five of the 12 interview participants. Only one participant wanted to edit or add to their interview notes/session; Jay commented about a few issues he believed that he had overlooked or did not discuss in the first interview.

*Pros and Cons of Interviews and Focus Groups.* Interviews allow the researcher to go deeper into the participants' thoughts or beliefs. Participants are questioned with more open ended type questions allowing them the ability to provide examples, stories, or insights on a particular issue (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Focus groups work to benefit communication in a more non-threatening environment. Collaboration and open discussion can provide a deeper understanding of a complex perception or behavior. It can also allow participants to discuss consensus (or non-consensus) of issues impacting the site or issue being studied. The participants often pull information from previous experiences during the interview or focus group sessions.

One caution for the researcher is the amount of data to be transcribed and analyzed. The interviews and focus groups can become off focus or distracting if not maintained within limits. Researchers must ensure the participants anonymity and provide a safe confidential area for the sessions. In order to maintain reliability, researchers must provide pseudonyms and guidance of

discussions. It is the researchers responsibility to use multiple methods of data collection to ensure credibility data (Creswell, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Table 3 below summarizes the research questions and the data collection and analysis methods.

Table 3

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis

Research Question	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods
<i>How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher efficacy?</i>	Survey Interviews and Focus groups Follow-up interviews	Descriptive statistics Constant comparative method
<i>How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher stress?</i>	Survey Interviews and Focus groups Follow-up interviews	Constant comparative method

### Trustworthiness and Researcher Subjectivity

Trustworthiness must be established and maintained throughout the study. Participants were ensured of their privacy and the use of pseudonyms throughout the reporting of findings. IRB approval was gained to ensure ethical treatment of participants. As a researcher, I acknowledge my own personal biases up front. I believe that I cannot completely separate myself or my views of teacher beliefs and how they impact their abilities to be effective in the classroom.

I hail from a rural setting which has experienced tremendous growth over the past decade. Within this setting, teachers are retiring or exiting the system leaving numerous positions to be filled (McClure, 2003). Having been a part of a rural community for a long period of time, I

understand there is a correlation between community and schools. I have experienced circumstances of parental influence, small town politics, and family correlations that have direct effects on teaching in a rural area. As a reasearcher, I do not believe that it is correct to say that the importance of a school in a rural community can be separated from the culture in which it is located.

However, I have endeavored to limit my voice throughout the study. Qualitative research is driven by the participant's voice and personal accounts of their perceptions (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, as a researcher, my interest is to offer perspectives from those that have the greatest impact on students today, teachers.

## CHAPTER IV:

### RESULTS

The purpose of this mixed methods study was two-fold: 1) to learn what factors impact rural middle school teachers' efficacy; and 2) to better understand which of these factors increase their stress (and potential burnout). Two research questions guided my study. They included the following:

1. How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher efficacy; and
2. How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher stress?

I begin by presenting the overall findings related to emotional exhaustion, then move to depersonalization and social climate. Following this, I present a summary of findings related to each research site. I close the chapter by showing how these three paradigms relate to teachers' efficacy and stress. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and climate were the constructs associated with this research. I acknowledge up front that there is a multi-dimensional relationship among these three paradigms. Each individual teacher brings a unique background into their role. How they view themselves in this role is a complex aspect to not only their teaching but also in how they adapt and handle the stress of their lives.

## Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is defined as the main component of burnout. This involves feelings of being emotionally overextended as well as a belief that one does not have adequate emotional coping resources to function in the work environment (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). Emotional exhaustion, or stress (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008), comes about when teachers are incapable of physically and emotionally providing for students because of overpowering feelings of tiredness and stress (Maslach et al., 1996).

Grayson and Alvarez (2008) note that teachers who experience emotional exhaustion frequently depict it as a “tired feeling” that builds up over time as their “emotional resources” are exhausted (p. 1350). Therefore, a better understanding of the exhaustion levels of rural middle school teachers could lead to a better understanding of the factors that impact their efficacy issues. Buunk and Schaufeli (1993) suggested that the interaction between job uncertainty and emotional reactivity caused emotional exhaustion, thus, highly reactive individuals were less able to cope with uncertainty, and maintained a less effective and passive coping style. Emotional exhaustion is an issue that previous research is linked to issues that impact a teacher and their desire and/or ability to perform task at their job (Maslach, 1984). The emotional toil felt by some educators is driven by outside forces of school climate, community pressures, student behavior and personal lives. Emotions are both social and political in nature, which links them to multiple aspects of ones being (Kelchtermans, 2005).

In this study, teachers at both schools, Davis Middle School (DMS) and Wallace Middle School (WMS), experienced an emotional struggle due to the lack of funding and the socioeconomics of the surrounding community. Both schools have received Title I funding status from the government, which is based on the number of free/reduced lunches in the school.

The rural area is driven by agriculture and blue collar careers, and the revenue and tax base are not available to help fund school needs especially during poor economic times.

From the survey data, although the teachers encountered elements that could lead to burnout, emotional exhaustion did not appear to be an overbearing aspect of their lives (see Figure 1). In regards to survey question 15 regarding community pressure 34% of teachers said they sometimes felt pressured by the community while 29% rarely felt community pressure. Less than 15% felt community pressure very frequently. Question 20 addressed the emotions related to students' lack of effort with homework. Responses indicated that this does cause some emotional concern for teachers; "sometimes occurs" had the highest response at 42%, while just under 20% indicated that this was a frequent issue.

Item 25 asked teachers about being burdened "busy work." Forty-nine percent of respondents selected "sometimes occurs" while 40% indicated that it often happens. Question 25, incidentally, was higher than all of the other questions in this area for "often" responses. Item 28 addressed teachers engaging in gossip about their co-workers. "Sometimes occurs" was reported the most, at 43%. Just under 50% percent said that gossip happens often or very frequently; gossip rarely occurs according to 9% of teachers.

Survey question 32 asked about how a few vocal parents could cause changes in school policy. Thirty-one percent of teachers indicated that this rarely occurred; 20% said it happened very frequently. This degree of difference would lead one to question these findings. Being in a school every day and the conversations that arise, one would assume this happens either all the time or none of the time. It was also a red flag when coding to examine this matter as to whether it is different from school to school or a difference in respondents perceptions. One participant chose to skip this question all together. Questions 35 examined the issue of respect and

professionalism. Twenty percent of teachers said teachers sometimes interrupted other teachers who were speaking at staff meetings by others and another 17% saw this happening very frequently. Just over 20% of survey participants say others rarely interrupted.

Survey questions 16 and 36 were closely related in they asked teachers to examine aspects of enthusiasm in teaching. In question 16, teachers were asked how teachers complete their jobs with enthusiasm. Forty percent indicated this sometimes occurred while close to 40% said it happened often or very frequently. In question 36, teachers were questioned about how often they were frustrated with their jobs. Thirty-two percent responded that they were rarely frustrated but almost 40% were often or very frequently frustrated. So, while 40% taught with enthusiasm, 40% were frustrated. This leads to the question of whether they answered question 16 in terms of themselves or their colleagues. From some of the other survey questions, there was obviously frustration somewhere. This lead to some probing within the interviews for the area of emotions within the respective teachers' positions.

## Emotional Exhaustion

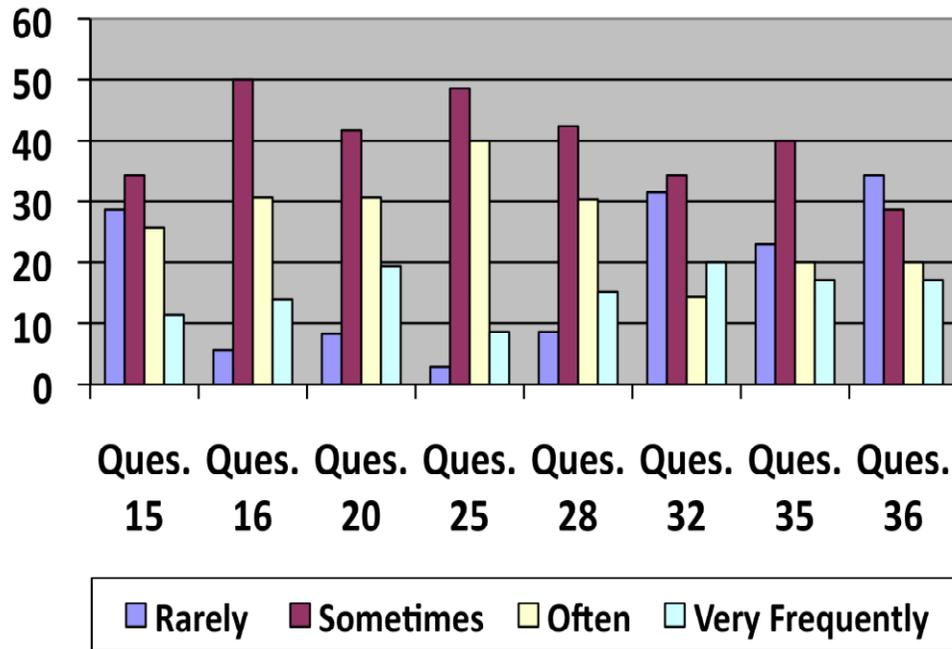


Figure 2. Survey Responses Regarding Emotional Exhaustion (in percentages)

A great deal of the emotional toil of teaching in both of these settings seemed to be caused by frustration with a lack of resources for their classrooms and students. In leaving college, educators had hopeful views and plans of their first classroom and how they would teach. Often teachers enter their first teaching job with initiative and promising plans and activities yet become aggravated with the lack of computers, programs, and internet service available to them and their students. In relation to this Michelle, an English teacher at WMS said,

I guess sometimes it is hard to stay motivated to be innovative . . . you don't have enough desk for every student and you don't have computers . . . in your classroom and you cannot allow small groups to work with because there is not funding to purchase these items.

Jay, a math teacher at WMS, also had quite a bit to say about this issue.

I have a problem with the mind set...if it is not for math especially if it is not out of the textbook and problems assigned...then it is not math work...alternative projects where they have to do or produce something are frowned upon because the parents were taught in a situation where 40 problems were assigned and they went home that night so they expect their kids to have the same thing and it is that mind set well it's always been done this way and they do not see the value in learning about other things or learning in a different way...so it is frowned upon and it makes us less effective when what we thought we were going to be doing was innovating and experimenting and finding out what worked in encouraging and motivating kids when the mindset is just give them some worksheets and let them go on...it is frustrating and it is demoralizing for the teacher when they have put a ton of work into this really brilliant new strategy and then are chastised for it because it is too hard or it doesn't make sense or why are we doing this what is the value of it and you have to justify every single thing.

For Valerie, a special education teacher, some of the frustration was due to the lack of funding and space within her school. As she said in her interview:

Do you mean days like I want to beat my head against the wall? Ok...I have this kid...I know we cannot save these kids...I have them at best 8 hours a day and then they go home to the crap they live in...I cannot save them but my job is to give them somewhere that they feel they are safe and some cares about them.

Emotional ties were also worn over the amount of apathy from the students about their own learning. Teachers expressed concern and frustration with how education is taken so flippantly. This was especially noted at WMS. "As long as they make good grades, it is not important if they learn," said Jay, who added, "It is more of a blue collar working environment and parents tend to encourage students to aim for sports or vocational type positions." For some it is as simple as, "It was good enough for me and your grandparents, it will/should be good enough for you" according to Jay with Michelle vocalizing agreement during their focus group.

Although emotional exhaustion data from the survey was not overwhelming, frustration was an emotion that ran throughout the interview process: frustration associated with politics from county offices, state agencies, and other teachers; frustration with the daily struggles that come from having 30+ teenagers in a room while the resources are not there; and frustration with

oneself for not rising above a situation. These emotional buttons were also pushed by the administration within the school settings. The emotions associated with the difference in school climates and the types of administration were obviously intertwined which was expounded upon during the interview process. Teachers in both locations agreed that much of the things that they had anger, frustration, and disgust with originated within the confines of the school itself. DMS was more uni-visional school in discussing the issues of their school. WMS teachers were less unified in their vision and found considerable issues that did not surface at DMS.

Teachers at DMS were/are excited and enthusiastic about their profession. They were eager to discuss the things that made their school a good learning environment. They openly liked and enjoyed their positions at the schools. In the interview process, this was reinforced as their body language would change when discussing their school. Open to new and innovative ideas of instruction appeared to be a part of the normalcy of this school. "I love my job. I do. I love being around the kids...I love being here...I just love my job," Kay said.

"Oh yes, I gripe about my job but never to the kids. I love my job. I only have four that I spend time with. I love the advisory group. But there are some things that piss me off about this job," added Valerie.

Teachers at WMS were/are enthusiastic about teaching yet cannot be described as excited. As the interviews started at this site, it quickly became a game of selecting the correct words. Hesitations were much more obvious during the questions and the participants wanted to talk but had to be reassured that the information was for research purposes and would remain anonymous. It was fairly clear that they had been burned when discussing issues at their school before. New and innovative ideas are heard and considered. Yet, acceptance and willingness to try them are less likely at this location. It is a jaded environment with doubts and reservations

about change. Notice the differences in their responses to how they feel about their jobs: MaCayla agreed with the whole “I try to accomplish my job with enthusiasm” statement and Amanda said “yeah”; MaCayla says that she tries to put as much enthusiasm into her job as possible. However, it was not the ‘oh I love my job’ response that had been so quickly said at DMS.

The emotional toll of teaching expresses its self in numerous ways. Stress due to emotional exhaustion is not a new concept. Emotional trials for teachers change with each school year and each school day. Personal situations, family life, changes in faculty members, students, etc. impact teachers, and the list can go on and on. Emotions can drive an individual to greatness or distress. Jay said “it makes you just want to close your door and do your job in your room and not participate in anything,” and Michelle agreed with that.

Teachers often feel strongly toward their students, profession, and role in school structure. These feelings are not always positive or negative. The emotions teachers possess can change from class period to class period. Often these emotions can depend upon the student’s behavior and/or outside disruptions (Kelchtermans, 2005; Nias, 1996). To truly appreciate the emotional toll of teaching, teaching is to be understood as it is bound by a specific space and specific location. It does matter the where and when something happens to understand how it impacts the teachers’ emotions. (Kelchtermans, 2005) The age of a teacher and the amount of experience a teacher possesses can impact how the emotions change or are impacted.

Valerie noted,

If you did not like your job why would you come do it??? I mean really it is stressful. It is annoying. Why would you want to do that if you did not like it? I know we “have some here who are simply here for the paycheck. I don’t know how they stand it. In the nine years of a self-contained classroom, I have been bitten, spit on, cursed out, and had chairs thrown at me. I have been to court and had probation officers tell me it is my fault that

the child is the way it is. I sure did not birth it nor did I spend the first 12 yrs. With it to make it what it is now. I like this job enough to come back every day.”

Yet, in the end, the teachers rise to the occasion and do the best with what they have to work with.

Exhaustion has been identified as the leading reaction to the stress of job demands and the sense of lack of accomplishment at work. When people feel cynical, they assume a cold, distant, depersonalized attitude toward their work and the people they encounter through work. They tend to minimize their involvement at work, and even relinquish their ideals.

“I am an outsider and I don’t live in this community and I am not related to anybody in this community so I am ummm fairly isolated,” Dana offered. “Every day is a frustrating day...when you know that you are trying to get something accomplished and you are not going to have very much support...and you are going to have almost no support from your principal” (see Davidson, 2009, for similar findings).

In the interviews, it became obvious that these teachers had the idealistic views when they left college to begin teaching. With time and daily struggles all of them have moved progressively away from the ideal thoughts of teaching. In the surveys, efficacy appeared to still be average to above average, however. Teachers were struggling with some of the daily problems but not in their abilities or beliefs to be an effective teacher.

### Depersonalization

Depersonalization is the interpersonal or social dimension of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1984). According to Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996), feelings of personal accomplishment (i.e., efficacy; see also Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008) are reduced when teachers feel like they do not add to students’ development. Depersonalization also includes pessimistic attitudes regarding students, parents, and the school. “Indifferent, cold, or distant attitudes are

displayed through generalizing, derogatory labels, or physically distancing actions” (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008, p. 1350). Depersonalization, as it was identified by Maslach (1981), is a possible factor for burnout. While depersonalization sounds ambiguous, it is a difficult thing to admit for some.

Depersonalization is somewhat expected with some professions. A feeling of detachment could be warranted in certain professional relationships, such as that between clients and their psychologist(s). However, as the level of detachment increases the professional can become more disengaged and cynical about the client/students. They become more like objects to be handled than individuals (Lief & Fox, 1963). The level of value placed here is often dependent upon those around the individual, the intrinsic value a person possesses and their level of confidence. How one views his or her role in reform and change is based more on career and timing than on age. Teaching is a dual environment of balance. Being an effective teacher and open to initiative strategies but in the struggle of caring vs. methodological teaching or micro politics of reform (Kelchtermans, 2005).

Depersonalization may lead to isolation and lack of collaboration between educators. Some teachers have a more cynical outlook due to this lack of adult interaction, a lack of resources, and from a lack of motivation by their students/peers. Teachers may experience periods of no longer feeling effective in their positions, which strengthens the depersonalization factor. As demonstrated from the survey, those interviewed or surveyed were found to have some indicators of depersonalization.

In survey questions 2 and 3, teachers were questioned about their ability to motivate students. On question 2, 56% of respondents said they only had “some influence” in motivating their students. Regarding question 3 (how much they could do to get students to believe they

could do well in school), all teachers felt, to some extent, they could impact students' beliefs; not one respondent said "nothing." In questions 10 and 12, teachers were asked about their abilities to implement a variety of methods or to offer alternative explanations. In these questions teachers were at 44% and 56%, respectively, for they could quite a bit. Survey responses revealed that depersonalization within those surveyed or interviewed seemed to be mild. Figure 3 presents survey results regarding depersonalization.

## Depersonalization/Efficacy

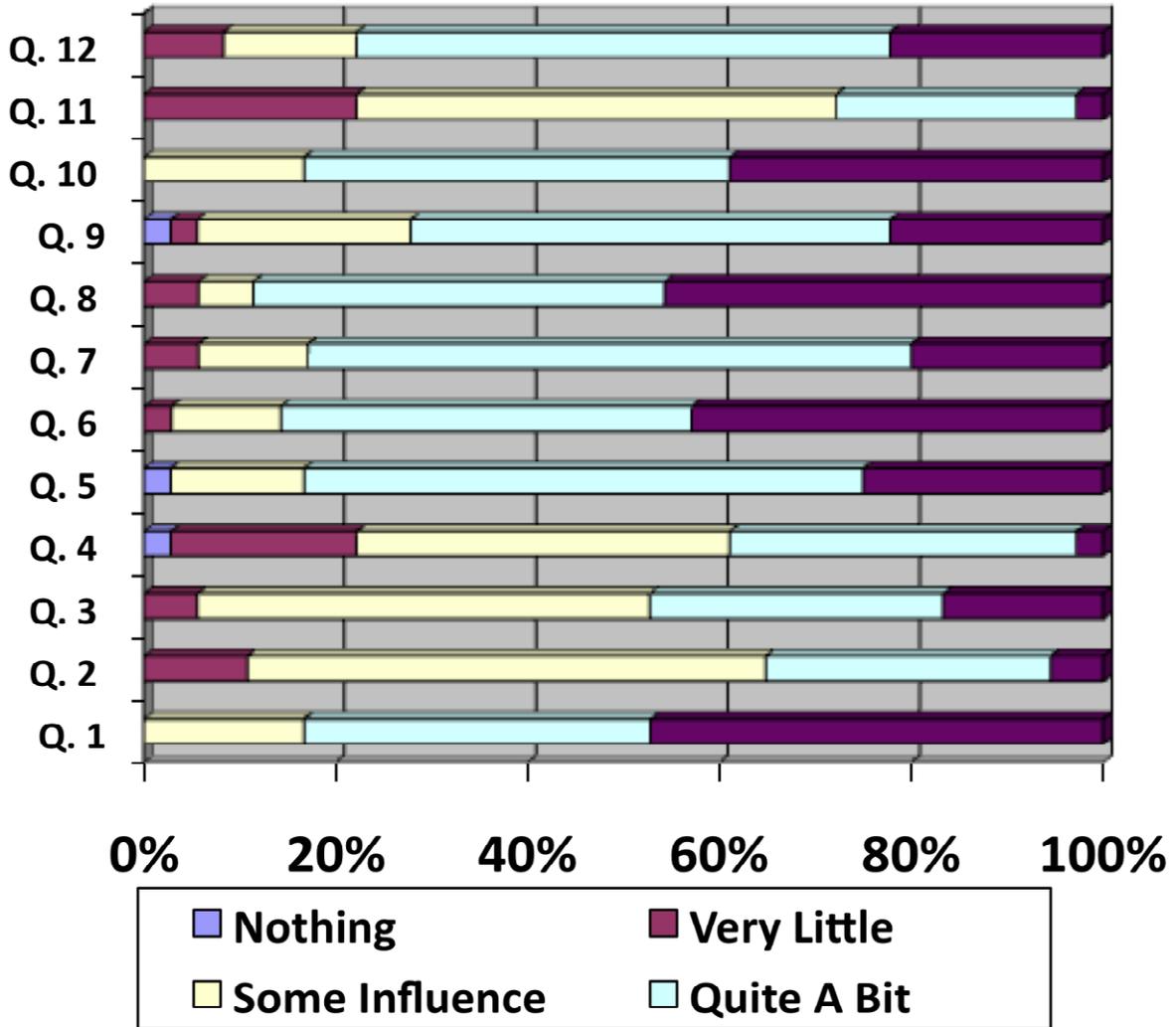


Figure 3. Survey Results for Depersonalization (in percentages)

Teachers’ comments during the interviews and focus groups both supported and contradicted the survey results. Participants like Jay and Katie made comments like “The students have no sense of motivation” and “they never bring their supplies.” This type of detachment is not expected to overwhelm the emotions of an educator. Dana explained how she

has had to adapt her personality and desire to be involved at school with her experience. She has come to terms with things here over the 15 years she has taught here.

I am a type A personality and I worry over things like a dog with a bone until I get a solution or until I finally decide that I cannot do that anymore...and that is what I basically have had to learn to do...is come to the terms that because of the structure of the school and the structure of the community...I have to back off and follow...do what I can do within the constraints that I am put in...and if I can do that to the best of my ability and help a child then I am...am ok with it.

However, when cynicism develops the teacher has moved into a more destructive state, personally and professionally. The number of years of service did not seem to be an indicator of depersonalization for participants. Amanda, a second-year teacher, had already developed a cynical attitude regarding her profession. She stated, "I can remember even last year being my first year...I remember being like this is nothing like college said it would be like. Some of us feel like we are in high school again. You got to watch out for yourself and what you say."

Amanda openly admitted she had and would continue to look for another job, a teaching job but a different location.

Not being valued as a professional, as a person of worth, etc. causes undue stress or strain on educators. "My mom said I will never use this," or "My dad said I will not use this," and "I hear that a lot," Jay said. Michelle indicated similar patterns of thought:

It is frustrating and it is demoralizing for the teacher when they have put a ton of work into this really brilliant new strategy and then are chastised for it because it is too hard or it doesn't make sense or why are we doing this what is the value of it and you have to justify every single thing.

Not experiencing a sense of importance teachers can quickly lose the desire or want to aid their students as individuals with needs. They can change into "those people in 5<sup>th</sup> period," or those in my math class even overhead them referred to as "little turds in the hallway." "I go to work, do

my job, and go home. I almost throw up just pulling into the parking lot” was a response typed in on the comment section of a survey question.

Losing a sense of identity should be a sign to those within the teachers’ support system that they are experiencing an emotional struggle or detachment. Dana, for example, made these comments about why she tends to be disengaged from the students and faculty at WMS

OH...my middle school experience is extremely frustrating...not only did have to (for a lack of a better word) have to fight my students to get them to do what they needed to do but I also had to fight parents, my principal, and even other teachers...ummm a lot of teachers do not hold with keeping the kids responsible an...an that is my main mantra ...The kids NEED TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE so when I am having to fight everybody around me then my days are very, very frustrating...and when you know that your principal is not going to back you up whether you are right or wrong ummm...That makes you ...wish you were doing something else and it causes you to not be able to give the children what they actually need.

#### School Climate

The major contributing factor for this study was the school climate. The more positive and supportive the school climate the less emotional exhaustion experienced and the less depersonalization that was felt. In a closed more chaotic school setting the teachers felt that academics were less valued and more emphasis was placed on outside pressures. The climate was dictated to them. Within this structure the efficacy was lowered by the feelings that no one was working as hard as them and that work was not valued by others on the staff. Personal efficacy was an intrinsic motivating factor that people felt was more difficult to maintain in a closed climate.

While the survey was not as definitive as one might want, it did show an indication of contradictions in results. Survey questions found that “sometimes” and “often occurs” were the prevalent answers for 11 of 16 questions on school climate. Four questions pertained specifically to administrative views and were equally tied with sometimes occurs to often occurs

by respondents. Questions 18, 19, 26, 27, and 30 were indicators that there were issues to be examined in greater detail with interviews (see Figure 4 for some survey results). These questions were dedicated to how the teachers viewed others, especially views regarding administration.

For the participants, survey question 19 the response was tied with 37% believing they sometimes or often were listened to by the administration. However, in the interview sessions this data appeared to be skewed. Of the 12 interviewed, only two teachers felt they were often listened to or viewed as an equal when it came to questions to the administration. Those two individuals were both located at the same school (DMS). As Kay noted, “I feel like he does a really good job and he does really well with the parents and most of the kids here respect him and like him and he is a very...he helps us...he supports us...very supportive.”

Question 32 asked about the parental influence allowed within the school. Sixty-six percent felt the community demands were listened too much over their own voices. Speaking of her administrator MaCayla stated, “He has no support for his teachers he is constantly backing up the parent he doesn’t even come and talk to us he is just backing up the parent.”

These questions were reinforced when interviewing participants especially at one school (WMS). These questions coincided with the issue of administration exploring all sides of an issue and examining multiple options, which was at a 65% rate for “sometimes” to “rarely occurs.” “With our principal, we are like a rudderless ship,” Dana stated.

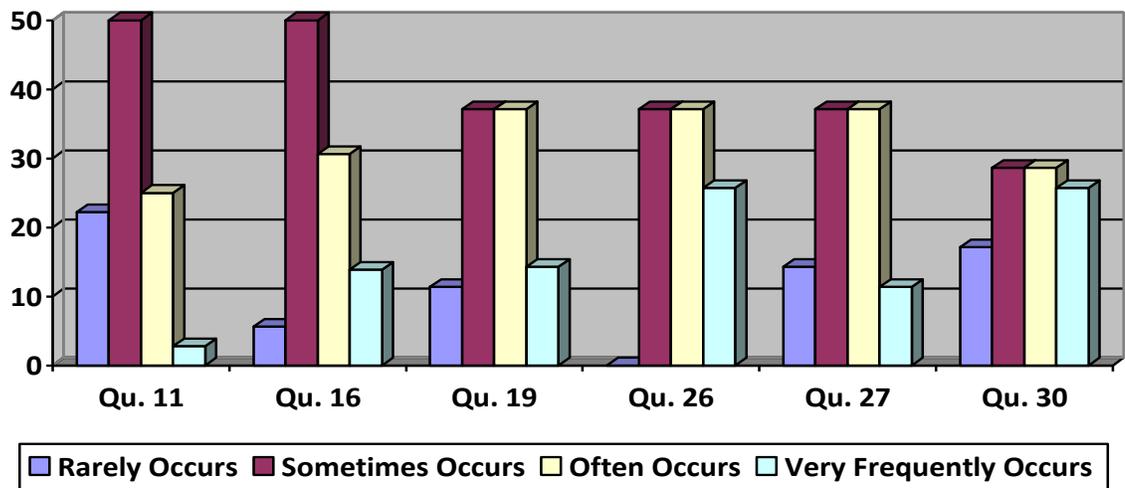


Figure 4. Survey Results for School Climate (in Percentages)

The issue of respect for and trust of administration along with the overall type of school climate that teachers work in appears to be the most influential factor to these educators. It is also the largest difference in these two schools. Schools that are so similar yet so different!

Having presented the overall findings related to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and climate, I next discuss the findings related to the interrelationship between efficacy and stress. I additionally offer a synopsis of each research site to show, in more detail, the multidimensional relationship among the three constructs and how that relates to overall efficacy and stress.

#### Efficacy and Stress

Teacher efficacy is an individual's beliefs in his or her capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Henson, 2001). Teacher efficacy is an influential factor in how an educator views and sets out to complete their tasks. Teachers with high (or good efficacy) are open to change in teaching, confident in their abilities to provide the subject matter, and their resiliency in overcoming obstacles (Hoy, 2005). A

teacher with low efficacy is an educator that is rigid, distant and questions how and why he or she is teaching.

Overall, according to both, survey and interview data, individual efficacy of the teachers in this study was good to very good. These individuals may not have intended to be in the middle school setting, yet they did not waiver in their beliefs that they were doing the best job possible in their given situations. Teachers brought a strong belief that the skills they demonstrated and the support of their co-workers brought them to a new and exciting level of teaching. As a school, the views were not as positive. As they acknowledge repeatedly that there are days and things that they experience that cause them to question something they believe or felt was best.

Stress is generally viewed as a negative connotation. Yet, some teachers admitted, they work well under stress. We (surveyed teachers) rise to the occasion when the pressure is on. It is the lack of support that teachers experience that cause the stress to convert to a negative in their lives. Healthy schools protect teachers from unreasonable pressures such as parents and community. In healthy climates, teachers enjoy their jobs, are trusting of their fellow workers, and identify the school as positive. As young teachers enter the profession with a strong desire to be the 'teacher of the year' and touch everyone's lives. It is the daily grind that can wear them out. If there is not a strong support system or strong sense of one's self, the daily wear is overwhelming. It is a benefit of the rural setting to have a strong sense of networked support. Families have a strong connection to the roots of their labor. Families are generally associated with a church group or organization. Families often are communicating with other family members. This finding supported the network that research had established was needed in rural teachers' lives (Beckner, 1996; Xiaofu, 2007; Miller, 1988).

The community is more of a blue collar work environment, as described by Jay and Michelle, for what you want in life and that spills into the schools. Parents expect their children to work hard, learn something to point them to a better life, finish what they start, and do what is right. That relationship is strengthened often by the fact that teachers are not only at school but are seen and are part of the community. Church, ball fields, the grocery store all places teachers can be parents. Yes, according to participants, it would be great if every time someone had a complaint or concern they would remember that it is school business and not social conversation for the local convenience store. The teachers involved with the study generally knew that they can call this parent or grandma and they can express the issue with the child's best interest at heart.

*Davis Middle School (DMS)*

The way in which administration carries out their role or their supervisory role is a constant factor of stress as found from survey data. Although the settings were very similar, the administrative experience was very different in each school. DMS faculty members experienced a more supportive open climate with the administration.

I feel like he does a really good job and he does really well with the parents and most of the kids here respect him and like him and he is a very...he helps us...he supports us...very supportive...and in dealings I have every had I could not have asked for anybody to have supported me than he has and I have known him now for 14 years so...(Kay)

He will back us and stand up for us with parents. Equal listening in views...If he is hell bent on doing something then we are doing it. Sometimes you can talk to the secretary and have her talk with the administrator and convince them to not do something.  
(Valerie)

The administration was available for questions or concerns that might arise throughout the course of the day or school year. Selection processes for committee or extracurricular

supervision was more of a voluntary basis. If approached to serve on a committee or to supervise a dance, faculty felt secure in their position to say no or opt out of service without negative impacts in the professional realm of their jobs.

The faculty is made up of individuals who grew up in the community and wanted to come and give back. Others are city transplants looking for something else in their careers. Regardless of the upbringing and school experiences as a student, the faculty is glad to be teaching in a rural setting. The close knit community and smallness of the school allows for a bonding that generally would be difficult in a larger setting.

The administration sets a reputation for dealing with situations that arise in an immediate time frame. Having faith and previous knowledge of how discipline has been dealt with in the past, teachers know that discipline issues will be handled in a timely and fair method. Being on campus and accessible, creates an environment of support and trust by the faculty.

Teachers know that if there is a parent or complaint that the administration will handle it with respect and dignity. While listening to the parents with respect, the administration supports their faculty and handles issues with the faculty in a professional demeanor. I feel like he does a really good job and he does really well with the parents and most of the kids here respect him and like him and he is a very...he helps us...he supports us...very supportive...and in dealings I have every had I could not have asked for anybody to have supported me than he has and I have known him now for 14 years so... (Kay)

We loved him the first few years. This year not so much. He has forgotten what it is like to be in the classroom. He is kind of losing touch with reality. Just because you go to a workshop does not mean that you must implement everything. We are getting a lot of that. Not just from the local administration but also from the "head shed." There are not enough hours in a day to implement everything they want us too. (Valerie)

Participating teachers generally felt there was a maintained level of professionalism during faculty and in-service meetings. Due to a lack of called meetings, teachers tend to realize the importance of the information being handed down. A lack of cell phone reception also helps with

limiting outside distractions. Parents respect the school as a place that takes the child's best interest to heart and realize that education should be left to the professionals. During the focus group, several teachers commented on this aspect:

Professionalism is probably not his strong suit...he does a good job in front of the parents but that is not his strong suit---- most teachers are professional----as far as not talking about other teachers in front of the kids and giving the perceptions that we all get along and are hunky dunky -----we are pretty good at it. (Valerie)

Yes, I would say that there is professionalism. (Kay)

Churches and other social organizations in the community are there for added support of the school, not to influence or change the goal of school decisions. Valerie went on to say, "This is really like a dysfunctionally functional family which you know has to happen."

*Wallace Middle School (WMS)*

The setting at WMS was found to be a unique setting for a study. The faculty demonstrated a different view regarding support than the DMS faculty. The administrative environment and support were driving themes of stress for this school. Although the faculty acknowledged the issue of liking their administration as individuals, they felt the administrative role was lacking for support, trust, and respect.

The faculty was very animated when discussing the issues affecting them at this school. It was obvious they were very passionate with this issue of climate and how it impacted them. In discussing my initial topics, other topics arose that were important to how they felt about their climate and their administration/co-workers. The interview process was more detailed and longer in time at this site than the DMS interviews.

The interviewees at this location were fairly happy with their co-workers and felt they have average to good working relationships with each other. They were high on efficacy issues as well. The majority of interview time became devoted to climate issues that led to their stress

concerns and possible efficacy issues. The WMS participating survey members were in agreement that the relationships they share with their co-workers was one of a positive aspect of their teaching. Amanda stated that “as far as us and 5<sup>th</sup> grade goes, we are constantly there for each other and we share information and help each other.” MaCayla agreed with the sentiment.

Amanda added “we work together and share with each other and if we would not work together it would be chaos.” MaCayla interjected with

I think we work really well together we are not in competition with each other. I feel that there are some teachers at this school that are somewhat in competition with others and will just turn around and stab you in the back sort of thing...as a grade level we are good we back each other up and are not in competition with each other and that OUR main goal is our kids.

Amanda then said, “that is right.” Candy’s comments in her interview, however, did show some levels of isolation for teachers:

I think down here our grade level we help each other out...5<sup>th</sup> grade they are close because we are down here...sometimes I feel although grades 5-8 are a middle school I still feel like we are two separate schools because it is not the teachers one thing it is the set up of the school we are down here and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> are up there and we never have a chance to interact except at a faculty meeting which we might have once a month.

Dana’s comments, though, revealed how isolation outside the school can impact how a teacher feels in the school. Even though teachers got along, feelings of being an outsider did occur.

Umm...I am an outsider and even though I have been here 15 yrs I will still be an outsider because the community is very, very close which is probably one of the reasons the community has a big hand in saying what we actually are going to do with our students...I am an outsider fairly isolated...I think...ummm...I don’t do a whole lot of socializing and I don’t do any socializing after work...now the teachers that leave early have no need to stick around and socialize and talk to each other or share ideas because they do it outside of the school setting in a personal setting.

The relationship with the administration was strained at best at WMS. The administration was not easily accessible nor easily found when situations arose. Once administration was aware of a discipline situation participants said it could be up to a week

before it was dealt with. The level of respect teachers and parents had toward the administration and their professionalism were low. “I don’t feel like we have a whole lot of professionalism in the school,” Dana said, “Our administrator is a very nice man but I don’t think hardly anybody has any respect for him as an educator.”

MaCayla said, “Our principal is not involved,” and Amanda agreed. MaCayla wanted to know “Can we go there?” “Sure,” I responded. The teachers obviously had something that they wanted to share. MaCayla was struggling to select the correct words to explain how she perceived her principal.

A principal that ummm...this is the seventh week of school and a principal that has not been in our hall way since the first week of school who is constantly putting his job off on an assistant principal and umm...I don’t think that a lot of parents take us seriously here because of our administration and that is probably the biggest frustration that I have right now. . .It is not with coworkers, it’s not with kids, it’s not wanting to do the work but it is with a principal that doesn’t support you that has no clue what is going on and I just feel like I am at a school that nobody wants to be at like...parents aren’t happy here and I think a lot of it stems from our administration.

Amanda said “well...yeah, I agree.” Amanda was a bit more reserved for two reasons; one she has been there less time and two she is a bit more timid in general. However, neither of these women seemed to be extremely vocal.

The administration appears receptive and open to changes as demanded by parents. They have connections in other roles within the community that are political and therefore cause extra sensitivity to being “liked” in the community. They could be a possible vote. The attachments to the community are not the major problem. It is the way in which things are handled within the confines of the school that leads to problems. The administration allows parents, churches, and community groups to have a say in the running of the school. Decisions and policies are changed or adjusted to meet the pressures of the community; nobody really cares what we (teachers) think. While the majority of the school policy is higher than the local administration

the day-to-day issues like dress code, discipline, and types of punishments are relegated by the student and who they are related to. Dana uses this to describe the role of principal and community pressures.

Umm to use an analogy for our middle school principal we are a ‘rudderless ship.’ Everybody does what he or she wants to do and if it is not helpful to the kids. It does not really matter. He will not step in and make sure that the educational goals are being met. If you are meeting the educational goals and a parent has a problem with what you are expecting of his or her child...then instead of backing up his teachers...he goes with the parents...um these parents are not with these kids in an educational setting...the parents for the most part are not educators the parents for the most part do not spend a lot of time with their children and still they think they know how to teach their child better.

She continued, adding

I think that we have an exceptional amount of ‘professional incest’....That maybe because of the close knit community that maybe because of the small school...But at this school the majority of the people at this school are related to each other in some way or fashion...umm...our principal’s daughter-in-law works here...um she has missed um of the three years she has been here she has missed over half that time at work umm due to pregnancies...um...being a math teacher I have a problem with her teaching our students teaching them improperly for math...she is our 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher for math ummm and when those children come up to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade they have a very difficult time with their math which is hard for a lot of people anyway because she is not teaching properly...and because she is his daughter-in-law everybody knows this but nothing is said and nothing is done!!! With that being an example there other relationships that impact the school climate—there are cousins, husband/wives, aunts/nieces, etc...you have to be very careful what you say because everybody is related. I don’t gossip. Well, I try not to gossip or talk about anybody...but you really have to think if I say this to this person...is this person related to this person...so, so you kinda of have to walk on tippy toes around these people because if you offend one whether it is legitimate or not you offend a whole bunch of them...

Jay had similar things to say and added in the follow up interview—

Distrust is further fostered by what is referred to as ‘educational incest’ and the ‘good ol’boy system’ of leadership that is in place. It is hard to find a colleague to confide in when there is a problem when over 2/3’s of the faculty is related to each other, a CO employee, or was hired because they are friends with the administrator. Often times what was said in confidence or just when there was a need to vent it is repeated to the people involved, so it is impossible to know who to trust and It makes the day that much harder when you know that there is no one you can truly talk with to solve a problem. This is

compounded by the different cliques that are formed because of teacher relationships from the community created by sports, church, or civic organizations.

The mindset of the administration at both the local and county levels is that of “if they are walking and breathing they are passing.” Katie added. Jay added further:

At one point in the last two years the principals met and decided that middle school really didn't count and that in an effort to save money they would remove summer school. (This fact was reiterated by the superintendent at a county meeting when he responded to one of the committee members questions about passing and failing with the remark let's face it middle school and junior high don't matter because they don't affect dropout rates or graduation numbers.) This is not only demoralizing to teachers but an absolute slap in the face. What we do doesn't matter because it will not affect how the system looks on paper. So, why bother being innovative or creative when you don't matter. Furthermore students by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade have come to the realization that they are going to be promoted regardless of grade or test scores. So the ones that we lose are the few that were afraid of being retained and being the oldest or the biggest in a class with younger children, it has taken away any incentive to try or achieve. Teachers are further disenfranchised by the fact that all a child who has a fail their subject need to do for promotion is finish a worksheet packet over the summer and they can get credit for failing a full year. At one point teachers were told they would have to grade the packets when they came back to school. After they refuse the packets mysteriously disappeared and grades were given.

MaCayla said, “He has no support for his teachers he constantly backs up the parent he doesn't even come and talk to us he is just backing up the parent.” Decisions are decided top down.

Committees are organized and assigned with little to know regard to who would like to or who would be the best fit for the purpose of the committees,” Katie added. “I believe he selects based on who is seen first in the hallway and not who is most interested or qualified for something”

Cassie said. “A list just appears with our names on it for committees,” stated Wanda.

Outside of the lack of professionalism and distrust with administration, the overwhelming issue was the concept of family members working so closely together and the ripple effects felt by the teachers. Both schools in this study have close family relationships on their staff.

However, they are dealt with totally different and the treatment of others due to this kinship is felt throughout the school and communities. MaCayla shared that “we do not have a lot of

professionalism at...no I don't...I think we have professionalism but it is hard to be professional when your boss is not professional!"

I asked for clarification on the issue: "So you don't feel that you have a role model?"

"That is exactly right. I think our assistant principal is...Do I think our principal is---- NO. I think he is like I have to get all this stuff turned in and he is wanting us to be out in the hallways and all this but where is he...that does not set a good example for me."

"Well," Amanda started to speak, and MaCayla jumped back into the conversation. MaCayla said, "We are supposed to be a role model for our kids but I need a role model but I need a role model too." Amanda said, "like we had that situation with the homeroom stuff and when we changed that and they got all upset about it and its like you don't know what we have to deal with down here (referring to the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> wing of the building)." They both agreed the assistant principal was much more supportive and aware of this situation.

"Do you want me to talk about this???" MaCayla asked. "You can talk about whatever you want to," I replied. MaCayla. started in with

Okay let me tell you about this...ok in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade we had to keep our same focus groups from last year so 5<sup>th</sup> grade has a 6<sup>th</sup> grade focus group and 6<sup>th</sup> grade has a 5<sup>th</sup> grade focus group well it was pure and utter chaos for the 6<sup>th</sup> grades to come down 5<sup>th</sup> grade hallway and 5<sup>th</sup> grade to get down 6<sup>th</sup> grade hallway...well...umm...we tried to tell him this (meaning the principal)...You think he ever comes down in our hallway to figure it out...nope...anyway...we talked to coach...the assist. Principal we came up with a resolution and we did it and we failed to mention to the main principal and the "fourth" principal/secretary and so one day a student had to check out so...this would come with...hah...let me talk about that [body structure changed...perked up and hyped up] they come over the intercom asking for a student in my classroom well...I was in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom well they were looking for a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher but the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher was in my 5<sup>th</sup> classroom...they were looking for that student and they said Ms...I said no she is in my classroom...this is Ms....well when your secretary gets smart with you over the intercom and my 6<sup>th</sup> graders are in shock because she gets smart with you and they can even realize the tone in her voice (first of all that is not professional) and ummm all she would have had to of done was buzz my room for the student but anyways that is not professional and then for him to send us an email in all caps yelling at us because we weren't where we supposed to be when technically we were because we had worked it

out with the vice principal and he knew about it ummm...if he would come down into our hallway and see what was going on then he might realize it but you know we don't have that... I mean...ummm [relief laughter to have it off her chest...and to be able to say it was not professional]

All during this story about professionalism or lack thereof Amanda agreed with what MaCayla said. Teachers do not have an option to turn down the assignment but with a good excuse will not have to attend said meetings or can have them changed to a more convenient time. Teachers tend to deal with their discipline issues as much as possible due to the fear it will not be dealt with at all higher up.

As educators the focus of teaching is to reach as many children as possible. In the middle grades, reaching children is compounded by the physical and emotional changes experienced in adolescence. Yet, when teachers feel restricted by administration and lack of support and trust within their surroundings it is easier to lessen their own criteria of behavior and expectations. The educators at WMS offered an interesting insight into the factors they most viewed as stressful. Teacher education had not prepared them for the type administrative climate they found upon entering this school. For those who had encountered different types of administrators in their careers, they simply felt they had to hang on until the powers at be shifted again.

### Summary

In the data collected for this study, stress and efficacy were both impacted by the three sub-factors: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and school climate. The impact of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were negligible at both school settings. Although, similarities were expected due to the relative closeness in setting and type of school, the issues impacting each setting was different. Teachers at DMS were confident in their abilities and felt valued in their position and by their administration. Teachers at WMS were

confident in their abilities and felt valued by each other, the parents, and their community. Yet, when it came to school climate and administration, there large issues that given time could cause a decline in efficacy and stress.

All 36 survey respondents acknowledged a desire and love for their profession. They chose to enter this field knowing that it would not make them rich and is not always easy. However, of the 36 respondents, there were discrepancies in how they responded to the climate at their school and how they felt (which leads to depersonalization concerns) about their position as an educator daily, weekly, and monthly in this setting.

The largest contributing factor to stress for WMS was the school climate. In the type of climate in which they work, support and administrative leadership is obviously lacking. Although politics and personal connections are not unheard of in rural communities or educational settings, when they meet in this type of setting lives are affected either for the positive or the negative. It is the underlying factors of politics, family connections, and poor leadership that daily grind on teachers and their efficacy or stress. It appears to be more of a domino effect.

School size can and does have an impact on the staffing, climate, and morale of a school (Foster, 1985) There did appear to be a difference between the teacher's view and procedures in their job as to middle versus junior high school. Middle school teachers were more hands-on, differentiated instructors where as the junior high teachers were departmentalized and used lecture format predominantly.

## CHAPTER V:

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In order to gain the most information on rural middle school teachers' perceptions of efficacy and stress, I used two methods of data collection (mixed methods)—survey research and focus groups/interviews—to answer the following questions:

1. How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher efficacy; and
2. How do emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and social climate relate to teacher stress?

Overall, I found that teacher stress and efficacy were impacted by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and school climate. Yet, the impact of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were negligible at both school settings. Although, similarities were expected due to the relative closeness in setting and type of school, the issues impacting each setting were different. In the sections that follow I discuss my key findings and follow up with implications for stakeholders.

#### The Relationship Between Teacher Efficacy and Stress

In general, the level of teacher efficacy among participants within this study appeared to be at a good to high level. While teachers openly admitted to having days that were not perfect, they did believe they were doing the best job possible to prepare the students for academic success. Self-efficacy is supported by the connected family-like atmosphere located within the

faculties of each school (Bandura, 1997). Teachers felt that the support of other faculty members goes a long way in their abilities to remain successful and energetic about their job.

Teachers in rural schools generally have more than one role (Beckner, 1996). Coaches are often full time teachers. Teachers are sponsors of clubs and civic groups. Teaching in a small town often involves being in multiple activities at any given moment. Having multiple roles allows teachers to impact numerous groups of children over their years in school and provides time for deeper bonds to form between teacher and student.

The majority of those surveyed and interviewed felt they did an effective job with planning and implementing a variety lessons. The types of questions and presentation of their subject matter was strong. The teachers' believed that they were doing the best job possible within the school setting. Although pressures from outside the classroom caused stress almost daily, within their rooms they were confident in their abilities and methodological approaches to instruction.

Support from the community and the majority of parents were also seen as contributing factors for the teachers' high levels of efficacy (Hoy, 1993). In rural communities, advantages and disadvantages can exist in the fact that everybody knows everybody. Teachers did feel that, although it could be stressful at times, they felt more support from parents because they did have a personal relationship with many in the community through religious affiliation, their children playing sports together, etc. Being in a rural setting had its disadvantages in the form of constant interactions with students and/or parents, knowing everyone, little to no private life; however, for efficacy purposes it was a strong plus. Teachers made do with the resources available to them and made the most of the professional opportunities given them.

The teachers in this study also emphasized the importance that having a religious faith as contributing to their efficacy. Being from a place where church and religion are important, teachers felt their faith and beliefs allowed them a support and continued belief in their abilities to be successful.

Teacher stress in this rural environment comes from limited sources but is a far reaching factor. Complex in nature but real nonetheless is their stress. As Huysman (2008) found, rural educators can often experience role confusion. Stress is a daily component of these teachers' lives. Teachers in this rural area often attend church with the same students and or coworkers. Coaching youth league ball, teaching Sunday school, or the neighbors they have in their subdivisions are the same individuals they have to teach or deal with at school. Being a parent and not a teacher is not always easily distinguishable in a small town. Students are friends of your own children or are the children of adult friends. Either way, the roles and views can easily blur if not very careful.

Whether teaching in rural, urban or suburban areas, money and resources can always offer a level of stress for educators. However, it is not this stress that appears to drive participants' efficacy or effective teaching to low levels. Based on this research I found that the level of stress can impact the teachers' efficacy and teaching styles; yet the most stressful aspect of their teaching careers is impacted by the type of administrator with they work (Hoy, 2008). This is the first theme to emerge; other major themes include the importance of support and trust and the impact of nepotism (i.e., familial hiring). I explore these in greater detail in the sections that follow.

### *Micro-Politics*

It cannot be stated strong enough that the type of administrator that teachers work for is one if not the most critical component of stress for educators (Bachkirova, 2005; Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005; Pervez & Hanif, 2003). The issues brought to light concerning stress all revert back to the type of administrative support teachers perceive—healthy or unhealthy (Hoy W. K., 2008). One theme that emerged is the impact of micro-politics in and at schools. At both school sites, the administrators had once been a teacher and coach there. As the years and their careers have evolved they have progressed to the levels that they hold now. However the paths of each administrator have developed and are implemented in completely different ways. Both administrators have had other political ambitions; they have both sought the office of superintendent but were defeated in that venture. One remains in a coaching capacity at his school. Both administrators have sent their own children through the schools they supervise and both live within the aforementioned communities. Both administrators are active in their communities and local churches.

One administrator has other political associations within the community. This principal is a city councilman within the local town, which is an elected position. Some of the teachers that work with him see this as a conflict. They feel he is more concerned with maintaining votes and allies; when it comes to making difficult decisions or punishing students whose parents could be political allies he is swayed by the stature of the community. Votes and political avenues seem to blur at the point. The principal not only wants to maintain the votes and serve on the council, he does not see these roles as conflicting with his job as an administrator.

### *Support and Trust*

Although personal efficacy is just that, personal, the support that teacher's feel they receive on their jobs is important. Throughout the study it was apparent that teachers had mixed emotions on the issue of support (Hoy W. K., 2008). The mixed results from the survey became more understood as the interviews were conducted. The survey results were in a general pool of samples not separated by schools. Yet, once interviews started, it became clear that one school location felt much more supported than the other.

DMS teachers offered that they felt that they were professionally and personally supported by their principal. When or if situations arose, teachers were confident that their voices would be listened to and heard with respect and confidentiality. Whether the decisions that were made were the ones they wanted or felt was best, they did feel valued and supported to offer their sides or opinions. Another large component with support was mentioned in the interviews. The respect the community has for the administrator was perceived as a factor in how a decision was received and accepted.

At WMS, the reaction to the issue of support was not as well received. Support was not a component that teachers felt they could count on or even expect when it came to issues that involved their administrator. When issues arose, teachers did not feel that they would even have a chance to be heard or given the support of their administrator. The community does not have respect for the administrator has being a school leader. This carries over into the educational setting. When decisions are handed down, parents and teachers often feel neither has much validity or authority. While the consensus was that he is a good man with a good heart, he simply does not make sound and consistent decisions. Teachers expressed an air of tolerance and desire to get by but not one of respect or support when administration was concerned. He obviously did

not listen to the facts or evidence and then draw a conclusion upon such. Students' scoff at decisions and statements made which weakens the teacher's ability to discipline and correct students.

With respect and support comes trust. Trust is an aspect of the relationship between administrator and teacher that drives many of the components of stress. If trust and support are felt, teachers are more confident and that is shown in their desire to teach and be a part of the school. Without the trust component, teachers lose respect for the decisions handed down. Without trust and respect, it is difficult to feel supported and valued in ones profession.

#### *Nepotism/Familial Hiring Practices*

As with the issue of respect, support, and trust, it was found to be about who you are related to as much as it was who you are. In the study's rural setting, if you do not know who is related to whom, then it changes how the facts get portrayed. While coming into an area of such closeness, it should be an obvious thing. Everyone not only knows everyone but they are related to one another. Can I talk or speak about an issue that I feel strongly about? Can I openly correct a child without the feeling of retaliation on my own child or my job? This are issues that "outsiders" may not understand when entering the community. Educators that have little to no experience with this type of community may feel totally overwhelmed by the kinships that exist. It is not only the blood relatives that make up this kinship but also church relations, ball parents, etc. Cliques of several kinds determine how discipline and methods of handling issues are based on.

An openly sore subject for the teachers at WMS was the issue of relatives and teaching. While most relatives enjoy working with other family members, some cannot separate the two avenues of their lives. It appears to be a larger problem at this location. With husband and

wives, aunts and nieces/nephews, sisters, in-laws, and cousins this particular location was overly loaded with family connections. This is not even accounting for the church relationships and those that share ball teams and other neighborhood connections.

At times this school seems more like an area of us against them type mentality. With these type of relationships, others feel isolated or nervous over everything they say. It is like walking on egg shells when it comes to conversations at the school. This would be a difficult place to work for many teachers, much less a new teacher that was not aware of the atmosphere. Considerable amounts of stress come with being a new teacher much less having to learn the “family ropes” of the job. Relatives are given considerable leeway in dealing with situations. This group is allowed to not patrol the hallways or report to the lunchroom for duties or numerous other teacher duties assigned.

DMS has relatives employed at the same school yet it does not cause the same degree of strife at this location. A husband wife team would be a bit much for any couple. Yet, in this location, teachers do not have the same strife due to the family relations. One of the noted reasons mentioned was that the wife did not use her connection or gloat.

#### Implications and Recommendations

Even though the findings from this study are not necessarily generalizable to other settings, I do believe the data provides information that should be examined and considered when looking at teachers and how effectively they do their job. Being in a rural setting appears to be a double edged sword, the smallness and closeness enjoyed by knowing your neighbors and having the sense of family that helps draw individuals to this type of area can also be harmful in the education setting.

In this study, I found that teachers in the rural middle school setting feel that they are impacted by more outside stress factors than from within their own classroom. It becomes obvious, though, that the concerns are generated by people and things the teachers have no control over. Micro-politics, trust and support, and the practice of hiring relatives are the main stress factors impacting these teachers. The support and close ties to family, friends and religious associations were places of comfort and solace.

The overall implication is that teachers feel more stress based on the type of administrator the school has than on the teaching. The type of administrative climate a school has contributes more to the teaching stress than the factors teachers experience within the classroom. In this study, school makes up and the types of surrounding communities appear to be very similar on paper. Yet, something that seems so simple the administration can change and impact so much.

As a recommendation for rural educators, schools and school systems should examine their hiring principles. Having someone who understands the rural setting is critical, but being so close to the community has a drawback. Employing family members is understandable, yet the placement of these family members should be placed at other school locations. Principals with political aspirations should consciously separate themselves from the roles and their conflicts. It is difficult in a small town to be seen in only one role. Yet, it can be done.

For teacher education programs, thought should be given to teaching courses that examine the differences between and among school environments. In master's programs teachers should take more courses that examine school climate and the factors that can impact school climate. In undergraduate programs, the focuses of educational programs tend to lend themselves to the "ideal" classroom/school setting. However, when teachers enter their first job, the ideal classroom quickly becomes a myth.

In the interest of preparing teachers, time should be spent in both rural and urban settings. Many teachers have spent their entire programs in the same type of school setting in which they attended high school. This experience is limited and yields them to have a narrowed view of how schools operate. Based on this research, most teachers have an idea of the type of classroom they want to teach in. However, with the economy and social changes, people often move or have changes to these plans and should be prepared for the less than perfect first job.

Teacher education programs should also include a larger portion of information about the psychological, social, and maturation processes of the middle school years. Students in these grades are in a difficult part of their development and need teachers who are aware of these changes and how they can impact learning.

#### Future Research

As this study was conducted in only two schools, future studies should be conducted on a larger scale. Spending longer amounts of time with rural educators in their school settings would provide a better picture of how the daily stresses and their levels of efficacy are impacted by outside factors. Involving more middle schools in this type of study would allow for more generalizable results for examining teachers' stress and efficacy.

Future studies should also be conducted where different rural areas are compared. Examining teachers in different states, counties, and even countries could offer a deeper understanding of rural education. Rural education appears to be as different as those communities in which they originate. Rural Alabama schools may face different or unique situations than rural schools in Tennessee, Texas, or Nebraska. Yet in examining rural schools there surely are generalizable details that can be studied to enhance the teaching experience.

Educators who choose to move their careers into the administrative realm need to also spend time in both types of schools. Teachers too often become administrators in the same school or system as to where they have spent their careers. Urban and rural areas have issues that are unique to their settings yet could benefit by examining solutions that are more applicable in numerous settings. Learning is power and we employ children to be lifelong learners. However, as adults, we often become comfortable in a setting and forget that change is sometimes necessary to facilitate growth.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A  
Superintendent Participation Request Letter

Superintendent of Schools  
Mr. Bob Balch  
1325 Point Mallard Pkwy.  
Decatur, AL 35601  
March 5, 2010

I am writing to request your permission and assistance in a study regarding rural middle school teachers. This study specifically focuses on the issues that influence teacher efficacy and teacher stress in a Northern Alabama county. The intent of the study is to better understand the factors that influence rural middle school teacher's struggles within this particular setting. The research is an essential component of my doctoral dissertation at the University of Alabama and will become public information. Results from the study will contribute to the body of knowledge regarding rural teachers, middle school teacher, and teacher efficacy and stress.

Research has shown that over 50% of public school teachers leave the profession before their sixth year. Therefore, it is critical to listen to teachers concerning the pressures they experience. Teachers and their abilities to cope with the current factors in their profession have an impact on their desire and ability to be an effective teacher. My study will include a survey of rural middle school teachers at two schools located within the same system. I plan to meet with those who agree to a follow up focus group session. In order to gain a complete picture of the factors currently a work for these educators, the focus sessions will provide for clarity of emerging themes and a deeper more rich understanding of the factors these educators must deal with daily. I am requesting your permission and assistance with this project. I would be deeply appreciative of your support so I may contact the local administrators of each school for permission and data pertaining to each setting.

Be assured the study will be completely confidential. All taped and transcribed material will be stored in a secured area. Your system will not be identified in the findings of the study. If you have any questions or comments about this study, please feel free to contact me. My number is 256-318-1744 (cell) and 256-340-1291 (home). My email is [ktblack@bellsouth.com](mailto:ktblack@bellsouth.com).

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,  
Kristy T. Black

Appendix B

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM**

**Consent to Take Part in a Research Study**

**You are being asked to be in a research study.**

**The name of this study is** “Rural Middle School Teachers: Efficacy and Stress”

**This study is being done by** Kristy Black, UA graduate student, in the College of Education at the University of Alabama.

**What is the purpose of this study—what is it trying to learn?**

The purpose of this study is to explore and evaluate rural middle school teacher’s perception of factors associated with their teaching and effectiveness. The perceptions of factors could be positive or negative depending upon the individuals’ belief.

**Why this is study important—what good will the results do?**

Two good things might come out of this study: (1) how to better prepare teachers to teach in the rural middle schools effectively and (2) how teachers to better understand stress and other factors associated with rural middle schools to extend and better teaching careers.

**Why have I been asked be in this study?**

You have been asked to be in this study because you are one of the teachers with 2-20 years experience teaching at the involved schools.

**How many other people will be in this study?**

About 20-35 teachers will be in the study but narrowed to 5-10 for focus studies.

**What will I be asked to do in this study?**

In this study you will be asked to complete a survey concerning factors that impact your teaching career. Outside of the survey, you will be ask if you are willing to participate in a focus session. This session will be video and audio taped to maintain accurate data interruption.

**How much time will I spend being in this study?**

You will only spend 5-10 minutes to complete the survey via email. If participating in the focus session, you will spend 30-120 minutes in one focus session at your school setting for this study.

**Will being in this study cost me anything?**

This study will not cost you anything.

**What are the benefits of my being in this study?**

The benefits include learning how to better understand issues that are impacting middle school classrooms in rural areas. Another benefit could lead to a better understanding of the factors that can lead to stress and potential burnout among educators.

**What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?**

There are no risks for your being in this study.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Pseudonyms will be used unless you request otherwise. You will not be identified in this study or any publications from this study.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**

I will protect your information by giving you a pseudonym. Your real name will not appear on any study document besides this consent form. There is no way to link consent forms and names with data. The data from the study will be kept in locked file drawers in a locked room. No one will have access to it except the investigator.

**Do I have to be in this study?**

No. You can refuse to be in the study now or at any time in the future. If you refuse to consent or if you agree and then stop it, you will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have.

**If I don't want to be in the study, are there other choices?**

If you do not want to be in this study, the other choice is to refuse.

**What if new information is learned during the study that might affect my well-being or decision to continue in the study?**

If any new information is learned during this study, then I will inform you and give you the option to withdraw consent.

**What if I have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints?**

If you have questions about the study now, please ask them. If you have questions or concerns later, you can reach, advisor, Dr. Lisa Scherff at 205-348-5872. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at 205-348-8461.

**What else do I need to know?**

You do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this consent form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. Save it in case you want to review it later or you decide to contact the investigator or the university about the study. The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (IRB) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and the study is being carried out as planned.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions. Our questions have been answered. I understand what I will be asked to do. I freely agree that I will take part in it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Audio and Video Taping Consent**

As mentioned above, the focus sessions will be audio taped for research purposes to make accurate transcriptions for coding purposes. These tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked room and only available to the researcher who will keep these tapes for no more than one year; the tapes will destroyed after they have been transcribed.

**I understand that the focus group sessions in this research study will be audio taped and I give my permission to the research team to record the session.**

**Yes**, participation in focus group session can be audio taped.

**No**, I do not want my participation in the focus group session to be audio taped.

As mentioned above, the focus groups session will be video taped for research purposes to accurately transcribe the session. These tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked room and only available to the researcher who will keep these tapes for no more than one year; the tapes will destroyed after they have been transcribed.

**I understand that the focus group session in this research study will be video taped and I give my permission to the research team to record the session.**

**Yes**, participation in focus group can be video taped.

**No**, I do not want my participation in focus group to be video taped.

Appendix C  
Teacher Survey

The purpose of the survey is to gather information concerning teacher attitudes relating to efficacy, stress, and burnout. There are no correct or incorrect answers. Your responses will remain confidential.

**Instructions:** Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response below each statement.

1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?.

Nothing Great Deal	Very Little Other	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------	---

2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?

Nothing Great Deal	Very Little Other	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------	---

3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?

Nothing Great Deal	Very Little Other	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------	---

4. How much can you do to help your students value learning?.

Nothing Great Deal	Very Little Other	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------	---

5. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?

Nothing Great Deal	Very Little Other	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------	---

6. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?

Nothing Great Deal	Very Little Other	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------	---

7. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?

Nothing Great Deal	Very Little Other	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------	---

8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?

Nothing Other	Very Little	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A Great Deal
------------------	-------------	----------------	-------------	--------------

9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?

Nothing Great Deal	Very Little Other	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------	-------------	---

10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanations or example when students are confused?  
 Nothing                  Very Little                  Some Influence                  Quite A Bit                  A  
 Great Deal                  Other
11. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?  
 Nothing                  Very Little                  Some Influence                  Quite A Bit                  A Great Deal  
 Other
12. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?  
 Nothing                  Very Little                  Some Influence                  Quite A Bit  
 A Great Deal                  Other
13. The principal treats all faculty members as his or her equal.  
 Rarely Occurs                  Sometimes Occurs                  Often Occurs                  Very  
 Frequently Occurs
14. The principal responds to pressure from parents.  
 Rarely Occurs                  Sometimes Occurs                  Often Occurs                  Very Frequently  
 Occurs
15. Teachers feel pressure from the community.  
 Rarely Occurs                  Sometimes Occurs                  Often Occurs                  Very Frequently  
 Occurs
16. Teachers accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm.  
 Rarely Occurs                  Sometimes Occurs                  Often Occurs                  Very Frequently Occurs
17. The school is vulnerable to outside pressures.  
 Rarely Occurs                  Sometimes Occurs                  Often Occurs                  Very Frequently  
 Occurs
18. The principal explores all sides of topics and admits that other options exist.  
 Rarely Occurs                  Sometimes Occurs                  Often Occurs                  Very Frequently  
 Occurs
19. The principal accepts questions without appearing to snub or quash the teacher.  
 Rarely Occurs                  Sometimes Occurs                  Often Occurs                  Very Frequently  
 Occurs
20. Students neglect to complete homework.

	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
21. Community demands are accepted even when they are not consistent with the educational program..	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
22. Select citizen groups are influential with the board.	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
23. Academically oriented students in this school are ridiculed by their peers.	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
24. Teachers do favors for each other.	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
25. Teachers are burdened with busywork..	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
26. Teachers leave school immediately after school is over.	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
27. The principal listens to and accepts teachers' suggestions.	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
28. Teacher like to hear gossip about other staff members..	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
29. Administrative paperwork is burdensome at this school..	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
30. The principal sets an example by working hard himself/herself.	Rarely Occurs Occurs	Sometimes Occurs	Often Occurs	Very Frequently Occurs
31. The principal encourages teacher autonomy.				

- |  |                         |                  |              |                 |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
|  | Rarely Occurs<br>Occurs | Sometimes Occurs | Often Occurs | Very Frequently |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
32. A few vocal parents can change school policy.
- |  |                         |                  |              |                 |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
|  | Rarely Occurs<br>Occurs | Sometimes Occurs | Often Occurs | Very Frequently |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
33. The principal explores all sides of topics and admits that other opinions exist.
- |  |                         |                  |              |                 |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
|  | Rarely Occurs<br>Occurs | Sometimes Occurs | Often Occurs | Very Frequently |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
34. Teachers have access to needed instructional materials.
- |  |                         |                  |              |                 |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
|  | Rarely Occurs<br>Occurs | Sometimes Occurs | Often Occurs | Very Frequently |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
35. Teachers interrupt other teachers who are talking in staff meetings.
- |  |                         |                  |              |                 |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
|  | Rarely Occurs<br>Occurs | Sometimes Occurs | Often Occurs | Very Frequently |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
36. As a teacher, I often feel frustrated by my job.
- |  |                         |                  |              |                 |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
|  | Rarely Occurs<br>Occurs | Sometimes Occurs | Often Occurs | Very Frequently |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
37. If students aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline.
- |                                   |                     |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Strongly Agree                    | Moderately Agree    | Agree slightly more than disagree |
| Disagree slightly more than agree | Moderately disagree | Strongly disagree                 |
38. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many students.
- |                                   |                     |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Strongly Agree                    | Moderately Agree    | Agree slightly more than disagree |
| Disagree slightly more than agree | Moderately disagree | Strongly disagree                 |
39. Some students need to be placed in slower groups so they are not subjected to unrealistic expectations.
- |                                   |                     |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Strongly Agree                    | Moderately Agree    | Agree slightly more than disagree |
| Disagree slightly more than agree | Moderately disagree | Strongly disagree                 |
40. My teacher training program and/or experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.
- |                                   |                     |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Strongly Agree                    | Moderately Agree    | Agree slightly more than disagree |
| Disagree slightly more than agree | Moderately disagree | Strongly disagree                 |
41. Following this survey, are you willing to participate in a focus group session or interview session?
- |             |                                |                              |
|-------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Survey only | Survey with focus group option | Survey with interview option |
|-------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|

Appendix D  
Interview Session questions

1. Demographic information: years teaching, subjects, live in community, degrees
2. Did you originally intend to teach in a middle school setting? In a rural setting?
3. What aspects of teaching in a middle school setting do you feel is most stressful for you personally? What aspects of teaching in a rural school setting do you feel is most stressful for you personally?

Emotional Exhaustion

Depersonalization

School climate

4. What aspects of teaching in a rural setting do you feel most impacts your efficacy? What aspects of teaching in a middle school setting do you feel most impacts your efficacy?
5. Based on survey results, how do you view the principal role and their reactions to parents/parent pressure ( #13/#14)?
6. Over 50% of those I surveyed stated that they sometimes accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm. Yet responded that they rarely are frustrated by their jobs. How do you view this (feel about) difference? Describe how you feel/handle/deal with a normal day at your school.
7. There appears to be three major factors impacting teachers based on this survey. I would like to discuss things related to these topics.

Topics: school climate----accepted norms of your school

Community----outside controls and relationships

Efficacy-----personal controls/beliefs

8. Based on the survey, teachers appear to have a good co-worker relationship. However, teachers tend to leave immediately from school. How do your peers impact your efficacy and the climate of your school? ( #24/#26)
9. How often do you feel frustrated by your job? What factors contribute or create these feelings for you? How do you handle this frustration?
10. Based on survey information over 50% believe their principal rarely admit or explore alternative views. Does this cause a loss or sense of value change in you as an educator? (why bother.....no one really cares...???) (#31, 33)
11. How do the interruptions by others at staff meetings manifest itself in your personal thoughts and/or thoughts about your job? (#35)
12. Random topics/things depending upon time and direction of discussion

- a. Family relationships on the job
- b. Community/church connections that impact your school
- c. Equal responsibility of duties and professionalism in your school
- d. ??????

JM/MB Interview 9-24-10

MB—live in community and is active in area, teaches English and assist. Band (7-12) teaches 7 & 11 grade English

JM—does not live in community, teaches 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade Math, has taught 6-8 at this setting also taught in Birmingham city schools

1. Survey results to middle school setting---no, no I had planned to teach in high school (B); me too (m)
2. Rural setting---umm yes (b); I did not have an intent I was going to go where ever I could find a job (m)
3. Areas of stress---stress factors---(m) the importance placed on standardized; testing the wasting of class time for standardized test prep; umm... the amount of time wasted for things that are not academic..umm failure to get back up or support from the administration\_\_\_\_\_ (b) I would say a lack of administrative support and lack of parental support for the children\_\_\_ Yes(m) parental support or involvement that is constructive not destructive involvement...
4. Do you feel those would be different in a high school setting instead of middle? No and no (both)
5. Impacts on stress being in a rural setting---(b) I think a lot of emphasis is placed on labor intensive working rather than ummmm... a future that requires a college education---(m) more of a blue collar pressure situation than trying to go to a white collar career with.. more emphasis on extracurricular activities rather than academic activities....appears to me that more emphasis is placed on little league sports and being able to be in a high school sport that academics are kind of ignored or pushed to the side they are not as (academics) are not as important as football, baseball, or softball
6. In this setting factors impact your beliefs about teaching----- (b) I guess I was naïve in college your getting all of these ideas ....ideal thought processes for running your classroom and then you walk into the setting that lacks the funding to do the strategies and basic classroom setup and things of that nature and uhhh everything you had planned...it's like reality slaps you in the face and you know ...you don't have enough

desk for every student and you don't have computers....in your classroom and you cannot allow small groups to work with because there is not funding to purchase these items...ummm....I guess sometimes it is hard to stay motivated to be innovative....yahhh... (m) I have a problem with the mind set..if it is not for math especially if it is not out of the textbook and problems assigned..then it is not math work..alternative projects where they have to do or produce something are frowned upon because the parents were taught in a situation where 40 problems were assigned and they went home that night so they expect their kids to have the same thing and it is that mind set well it's always been done this way and they do not see the value in learning about other things or learning in a different way....so it is frowned upon and it makes us less effective when what we thought we were going to be doing was innovating and experimenting and finding out what worked in encouraging and motivating kids when the mindset is just give them some worksheets and let them go on....it is frustrating and it is demoralizing for the teacher when they have put a ton of work into this really brilliant new strategy and then are chastised for it because it is too hard or it doesn't make sense or why are we doing this what is the value of it and you have to justify every single thing (b) "my mom said I will never use this" or "my dad said I will not use this" I hear that a lot (m) yeah...

7. Co-workers/relationships-----leaving immediately---(b)mmmm....its obvious at the end of the day that people are tired and I always think back to a passage in the "First Days of School" by Harry Wong and he had a whole little passage about the kids should be the ones tired at the end of the day not not the teachers and I think about that every time I am tired..little laugh....being one teacher that is involved in several extracurricular activities and clubs...99% of the time I leave abruptly after school Is because of one of those activities I feel like a lot of the teachers at our school are involved or participate in activities like that and that's the reason most of them uhhh do leave so quickly after school but I think many of them would be leaving abruptly even if they did not have those extracurricular activities....because putting up with the same excuses day in and day out seeing the same poor level of performance day in and day out does.....(m) why stay and work more when nothing's going change that is how I kind of feel about it and then you have administrators who want the doors locked at 3:15 and everybody out of the building .....it's one of their policies to have the doors locked and have every one out of the building by 3:15....and that kind of sets a tone of well let's get out of here and why would you want to deal with the same child after school when....little laugh....you have dealt with them all day... (b) that same tone is reflected in faculty meetings when everything is uhhhh when everything has to be done quickly quickly quickly and let's get out of here, let's get out of here; those are the words said by several administrators in our school and you don't feel like you can't ask a question without the you know body language, the weight shift, things like that ummmm (m) the huff (b) the things people do subconsciously they don't realize they are doing it....but when an administrator has that

attitude that projects toward the teachers then (miller something??) (b) it...it ...there is just so many other places they would rather be (m) yeah

8. So professionalism for a lack of a better word???----- (b) is not held to a high standard; it's not modeled (exhibited by me???)
9. Equal listening/parent/community input----- (b) our particular administrator is very involved in the community in a variety of ways (m) political functions (b) therefore he is known by many people in the community and has personal ties to people in the community and I do feel at times that influence outweighs his obligation loyalty to his teachers (m) I think a lot times the administration caves to pressures from the community... its..they know that they need for their other facets of their lives they need that support from the community so its easier to ignore people who can't do things for you to advance your political aspirations than it is to listen to do something that goes against what the community wants
10. Alternative views---explores alternative views----- (m) NO, when some of the administrators have it in their heads that this is the way it's got to be then it's like talking to a wall because it's going to be that way (b) it seems evident to me that the times that our administrators are being required by those above them to have teacher input because it is so rarely done that is just a tone when they approach us or sometimes they even say well well we have got to see what some of you think (m) they are going through the motions not really they are going through it so they can put it on paper they got our input and then it is going to be completely ignored it's going to be shelved and they are going to go on
11. But it is not truly valued???--- (b) right (m) sometimes no
12. How do you feel this leads to your stress or beliefs or feelings about your job????--- (m) it makes you just want to close your door and do your job in your room and not participate in anything (b) I agree with that
13. Input from outside sources are impacting ....other factors church/relationships that have an impact on your school's climate???----- (B) well for someone who lives in the community and has my entire life so I know and am known by a lot of people and I am also involved in my church which has many/most every child there attends our school I have had the situation where you go to church and you are approached by a parent to discuss a school related topic uhhh.....I have I can say with honesty ....I have never been berated by a parent outside of school but I cannot say that .....I am trying to think how I want to ....sometimes you want to do something maybe but that pushes the envelope and really push the kids but I have to say that I have had the thought cross my mind what if so and so thinks that's too hard do I really want to listen to them complain because I know I have to see those people in my MY time away from school and if some parents would

observe the professional side with respect to my life and properly call the school and make an appointment to speak with me that would be one thing but on my time ummm...in a time of worship or any other setting I do have parents that like to come up and converse and it has at times from uhhhh being more challenging ...I guess (m) I don't have the problem of being out in the community with them since I don't live here but it does seem to me that in other social settings parents get together and gang up cause one talks to another and then they all get a little "bee in their bonnet" and want to run up here and challenge what's being done

(JM included notes/answers later in the day that he did not want to answer while with the other teachers===found below)

#### Additional responses for interview with JM

The mindset of the administration at both the local and county levels is that of "if they are walking and breathing they are passing." At one point in the last 2 years the principals met and decided that middle school really didn't count and that in an effort to save money they would remove summer school. (this fact was reiterated by the superintendent at a county meeting when he responded to one of the committee members questions about passing and failing with the remark "let's face it middle school and jr. high don't matter because they don't affect dropout rates or graduation numbers.") This is not only demoralizing to teachers but an absolute slap in the face. "What we do doesn't matter because it will not affect how the system looks on paper. " So, why bother being innovative or creative when you don't matter. Furthermore students by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade have come to the realization that they are going to be promoted regardless of grade or test scores. So the ones that we lose are the few that were afraid of being retained and being the oldest or the biggest in a class with younger children, it has taken away any incentive to try or achieve. Teachers are further disenfranchised by the fact that all a child who has a fail their subject need to do for promotion is finish a worksheet packet over the summer and they can get credit for failing a full year. At one point teachers would told they would have to grade the packets when they came back to school. After they refuse the packets mysteriously disappeared and grades were given.

There even comes a point where the pay scale and privileges given to some faculty members help foster a spirit of distrust and envy adding to the stress levels of other teachers. There are only a small handful of classes taught after 6<sup>th</sup> period in our school because many teachers have what is called an athletic period, where more than 10 teachers are over the supervision of a few students. The consequences of which are many students are crammed into a few classes and anyone who complains or questions it is ignored, also the supplement that are paid for athletics are a great deal higher than those of academic supplements, and many are paid overlapping practices and sports. That doesn't even include rumored bonuses paid to people by booster clubs.

Distrust is further fostered by what is referred to as "educational incest" and the good ol'boy system of leadership that is in place. It is hard to find a colleague to confide in when there is a problem when over 2/3 s of the faculty is related to each other, a CO employee, or was hired because they are friends with the administrator. Often times what was said in confidence or just when there was a need to vent it is repeated to the people involved, so it is impossible to know who to trust and It makes the day that much harder when you know that there is no one

you can truly talk with to solve a problem. This is compounded by the different cliques that are formed because of teacher relationships from the community created by sports, church, or civic organizations.

VP Interview

9-27-10

11 yrs. All been at here (first 9 yrs in a self contained classroom)

Do not live in the community

Master's in collaborative ed

1. Did you intend to teach in a middle school setting? (p) yes yes---I did not like the little kids they got on my nerves and the high school kids thought they knew everything.....so I did want to teach middle school....I had always wanted to teach middle school
2. Rural setting???(p) no when I first decided to teach...went back to school to teach history---so when I was talking with a family member they said I would not be able to get a history job because I did not coach and that is right so I went to special education
3. What aspects of teaching in a middle school do you feel are most stressful for you personally? (p) doing the paperwork and then doing inclusion having to get along with EVERYBODY because when you are inclusion you have to go into everyone's classroom whether you like them or not and most...a lot of the time they don't want you there so that is a very stressful balancing act
4. Rural setting impacts???(p)---unique because they are almost a city....but they think that...but I do think that it does make them a little more cliques. Not very accepting to others.
5. What aspects do you think impact you the most? (p) besides the fact that the school is too small that we have one hallway for 365 kids and this used to be an elementary school that really affects how we do things here because we are all so cramped here.....this causes a lot of problems with kids thinking they are being bullied in the hall when really it is just because we are so cramped -----the immaturity of a lot of these kids 6<sup>th</sup> grade this year is really immature they are really big tattlers-----
6. Do you feel if your school had 5<sup>th</sup> grade in the same building do you think it would be different? (p) it would be worse.....so much worse.....I don't think a fifth grade kid should be anywhere near an 8<sup>th</sup> grade kid
7. Stress---over crowded.....departmentalized teaching set up.....special ed teacher only ---- not a title one school----they get money---short a teacher unit----based on the number of kids they have
8. One librarian for 6-12 and DMs has one as well
9. How do you feel your relationships with your co-workers impact your job? (p) It test your professionalism to go into a class and not comment on how they teach....I just take care of my kids....

10. Don't feel like you have to worry about tattling about you leaving?---before she was there it was a big problem with them not coming to class
11. We know who the squeaky wheel is and who is going to complain. We just work through it and we are just here for the kids. Pretty much a positive atmosphere. We have been together a while.
12. How do you perceive your principals role? (p) We loved her the first two years. This year not so much. She has forgotten what it is like to be in the classroom. She is kind of losing touch with reality. Just because you go to a workshop does not mean that you must implement everything. We are getting a lot of that. Not just from the local administration but also from the "head shed". There are not enough hours in a day to implement everything they want us too. Seven habits of effective people....Icu last year..... it is working for us...so now we are going to get a new superintendent so now we are going to implement something else.....if you are not self-motivated...it does not resonant with these kids.
13. Administration—how do you feel your input or support is considered?---she will back us and stand up for us with parents. Equal listening in views.....If she is hell bent on doing something then we are doing it. Sometimes you can talk to the secretary and have her talk with the administrator and convince them to not do something.
14. So is the secretary an ally for you? Some days. They do not teach you that in college.
15. Prepared to teach in this setting? Mentor teachers are something lacking within the system. Turned into a piece of crap real quick.....about everyday things
16. Doing your job with enthusiasm.....----Oh yes, I gripe about my job but never to the kids. I love my job. I only have four that I spend time with. I love the advisory group. But there are some thing s that piss me off about this job.
17. What pisses me off???---If you did not like you job why would you come do it??? I mean really it is stressful. It is annoying. Why would you want to do that if you did not like it? I know we "have some here who are simply here for the paycheck. I don't know how they stand it. In the nine years of a self-contained classroom, I have been bitten, spit on, cursed out, and had chairs thrown at me. I have been to court and had probation officers tell me it is my fault that the child is the way it is. I sure did not birth it nor did I spend the first 12 yrs. With it to make it what it is now. I like this job enough to come back every day.
18. Inconsistency....cannot get a straight answer about anything especially spec. ed things --- --lack of money pisses me off.....people gripe about teachers pay and they have the summer off. ----Not a title one school just because we don't have enough reduced lunch kids here we don't have enough poor kids.---- People are allowed to stay even after the type of example they set (Bowling PHS) That's bad....it bothers me that we get drug through the mud ----we cannot keep excusing poor behavior by those of authority...the kids see and know this....he is a big joke but the alternative is to put him at the CO ---- that is annoying---do something wrong you get permoted.....tenure is kind of a bad thing-

----do I want to be rated by my kids performance.....but then you have those you are ghost that just sit there

19. We test the kids too much.....how many test can we give them? -----We are giving test on levels that are too high for our students...for example I have some reading on a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade level but will be tested on the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade level. How crazy is that?
20. Rarely frustrated-----no...I was frustrated Friday....do you mean days like I want to beat my head against the wall---- Ok..I have this kid.....I know we cannot save these kids...I have them at best 8 hours a day and then they go home to the crap they live in...I cannot save them but my job is to give them somewhere that they feel they are safe and someone cares about them. I have a child that I am “his school mommy” pay his fees, get his hair cut, etc. and some days he is just the most ungrateful rude child. That is frustrating....that is where my frustration come from.
21. Coping mechanism for frustration-----drugs, how many teachers do you know that needs drugs----Really good friends that I teach with and we can sit here and gripe/talk about it.....they know....we have the same type of experiences....
22. Administration-----promote a sense of value and professionalism as a role model---- Professionalism is probably not her strong suit....she does a good job in front of the parents but that is not her strong suit----
23. Professionalism---most teachers are professional----as far as not talking about other teachers in front of the kids and giving the perceptions that we all get along and are hunky dunky -----we are pretty good at it....
24. Groups are teachers who are social outside-----especially the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers we go and do and get together at each other’s houses except one -----6<sup>th</sup> grade is more close knit group and pull in others plus we only have three men which is a big deal----
25. Community perspective---pressures-----not so much here but at the high school level yes---parents are very supportive----no they do not come in demanding they pretty much leave us alone but at the high school I do feel it is probably an issue because the administrative climate allows it----
26. Generally accepted norms in schools----as long as you don’t take our blue jeans away we are fine---no for the most part we all get along and tolerate each other but you know there are times when it just all hits the fan and people stay erked for two or three weeks and then it goes away and we just get along—this is really like a dysfunctionally functional family which you know has to happen
27. Leaving early or getting there late----sometimes it does cause a little stick in the crawl but we do have assigned duties we are supposed to do....car duty....hall duty....
28. Committees-----shared decisions-----do not have a lot of committees here.....stink wod this year...here was club....we have several tenured teachers doing numerous clubs and then some non-tenured teachers who did not have any----The comment was made “he did not play football for upcoming superintendent and was not going to start now”-----has

been fixed-----the way our clubs are conducted has helped with some comrodority of teachers-----

29. Do you believe there are factors that contribute to your continued efficacy about your job? I like seeing the kids and the other teachers. I like my job. If special ed would stop changing everything I think I would like it more..
30. Faculty meetings....held with professionalism....we are all listening but texting....not like we have on often....teachers being called down...it was not respected but was embarrassing...to some.....sharing ideas do you have interruptions....not unless it is continually that stupid person who.....no....no one is outwardly ugly or unprofessional it is just behind their backs....they will wait until they are back in their other little groups and say can you believe she said that
31. Equally assigned duties, duty free lunch...advisory before lunch...mary is very good about duties...
32. Family relations spilling over into the school setting-----people could not be open...felt pressure....no we do not have that....except you cannot go and say anything about the principal to the secretary because she will tell and jump on you about it-----I do have friends who are husband wife at the same school and if the child causes on problems sometimes the issue will carry over into the others classes as well –but it is not a relationship of hierarchy with possible job implications-----on a positive note I do think that my children’s teachers are favorable viewed because they do know us and know that we teach where in a city system would just be punished for what ever

#### DK Interview

9-24-10

15yrs all same school started later in life

No don’t live here

Education BS in math and computer science Sec. ed. Yep...Changed to 4-8 because of my highly qualified status is 4-8

1. Originally intend to teach middle school---umm....I really did not think about it going 7-12.... I really did not think about it.....I assumed it was all high school
2. Rural yeah...I pretty much knew it would be rural setting.....I went to all rural schools ....feel more comfortable
3. I think maybe it is the same stress levels for both... with ms students you have to deal with parents that think you are being awful to their babies.....that umm....you cannot expect a high level of work out of them because parents think it is mean to expect that and working in a rural school it is usually very family orientated and everybody is protecting everybody else from the big bad teachers who are trying to teach their kids and get them ready to live in the outside world.....
4. Efficacy-----No...um..... if anything it just reinforced them ....I am an old fashion teacher...not old fashion in how I present material I use computers and all that....but old

fashion in how I think it should be approached....I think we have gotten away from the child being responsible for him or herself.....and all responsibility is laid on the teachers and that is too me very very unfair because there are more participants in the education system than just the teachers, the students the parents....umm...I think if we are held accountable then they should be held accountable

5. Do you think that is more difficult because it is a rural setting? I think it is more difficult overall whether it is a rural setting or not because we have evolved from ...expecting are children to do what they know to do....teaching our children what to do to cleaning up behind them....and not having any consequences for bad decisions
6. Role of principal and community pressures-----Umm to use an analogy for our middle school principal we are a “rudderless ship”....everybody does what he or she wants to do...and if it is not helpful to the kids....it does not really matter....he will not step in and make sure that the educational goals are being met....if are you are meeting the educational goals and a parent has a problem with what you are expecting of his or her child ...then instead of backing up his teachers.....he goes with the parents...um these parents are not with these kids in an educational setting...the parents for the most part are not educators the parents for the most part do not spend a lot of time with their children and still they think they know how to teach their child better....
7. OH.....my middle school experience was extremely frustrating...not only did have to (for a lack of a better word) have to fight my students to get them to do what they needed to do but I also had to fight parents, my principal, and even other teachers...ummm a lot of teachers do not hold with keeping the kids responsible an an that is my main mantra ..... The kids NEED TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE so when I am having to fight everybody around me then my days are very very frustrating....and when you know that your principal is not going to back you up whether you are right or wrong ummm.... That makes you .....wish you were doing something else and it causes you to not be able to give the children what they actually need
8. Three themes-----how do you feel your school handles-----Yes...because as I said before if a parent has a problem in our middle school then the principal puts more weight on what the parent wants than what the actual educational goals be met
9. Climate/norms-----are do just what you can get by with and then that is good enough-----for students or for teachers----both for both
10. Co-workers closer net community-----leaving school immediately----umm...I am an outsider and even though I have been here 15 yrs I will still be an outsider because the community is very very close which is probably one of the reasons the community has a big hand in saying what we actually are going to do with our students....I am an outsider and I don't live in this community and I am not related to anybody in this community so I am ummm fairly isolated ....I think.....ummm...I don't do a whole lot of socializing and I don't do any socializing after work...now the teachers that leave early have no need to

stick around and socialize and talk to each other or share Ideas because they do it outside of the school setting in a personal setting

11. Identify factors that cause or add to this frustration-----coping skills---sports get more recognition than education... sports gets more materials than education and umm...if there is something happening in a sport or having to do with a sport getting out of class is not a big deal...stayed tied in knots with that for years and finally had to come to the conclusion that I cannot change that so what you can't change you have to live with...umm...another frustration that I have is our principal lays down the law at what teachers will be doing at certain times and there are just a few teachers doing that and there are no repercussions for teachers that do not do that and they know that there will not be.....an example we are supposed to stand out in the hallways by our doors between class changes and at break and I am not always at my door because there are things that have to be done but there are other teachers that are NEVER out in the hall during those times and the main discipline and main watching falls to just a few teachers...and even if some of those teachers are out in the hall they are standing in a little group talking about what is happening in their families or something and they are not watching the kids and again the duties actually fall to just a few .....
12. How often in a normal week or month....how often would you think that you are frustrated instead of enthusiastic .....that one is hard because every day is a frustrating day...when you know that you are trying to get something accomplished and you are not going to have very much support...and you are going to have almost no support from your principal
13. Is there any particular way that you have learned to deal with .....have learned ...have learned not to carry it home with me and that was one of my big things..I am a type A personality and I worry over things like a dog with a bone until I get a solution or until I finally decide that I cannot do that anymore...and that is what I basically have had to learn to do...is come to the terms that because of the structure of the school and the structure of the community.....I have to back off and follow....do what I can do within the constraints that I am put in...and if I can do that to the best of my ability and help a child then I am am ok with it
14. Equal views/by principal...value of individual.....-----I I I feel when I go to talk to him he listens to me but he does not necessarily acknowledge what I am saying and once he decides on a course whether he has any input from anybody else that is the course he goes in... ummmm...he usually listens to what his coaches need first .....the coaches needs will impact the classroom needs...and..and umm to put out a directive that this is what is going to happen and this is what you need to do but there is no follow up in it so when we are told we have to do something in particular and we feel strongly against it ...we and I feel strongly against I don't do it....I don't have any repercussions from him and again
15. Equal listening ----- Oh no, Oh no, DEFINITELY NOT

16. Impacts the professionalism in the school???-----I don't feel like we have a whole lot of professionalism in the school
17. Staff meetings-----impact you overall----- Umm..it is like in the classroom when you have children playing and another child trying to learn it is very difficult for that child to learn if there are all kinds of distractions and it is the same with teachers ...we are human ummm. We do not have successful ....successful is not the right word...ummm.... We do not have productive faculty meetings...usually he comes in the principal comes in and gives a couple of things he wants done and or a couple of things he wants us to consider and while he is talking everybody else is talking.....nobody has respect for him as a leader...here.....and that goes back to our rudderless ship
18. That impacts thing-----it impacts thing-----like school climate/community itself-----Yes. Ummm he is a very nice man but I don't think hardly anybody has any respect for him as an educator
19. One last question---community---how do other organizations impacts within the school--- --goes back to what we talked about earlier...regardless of what he has decided to do he can be swayed to what any outside opinion...most of what..probably faster than what he could be by one of his teachers
20. Any other issue or comments-----I think that we have an exceptional amount of professional incest.... That maybe because of the close knit community that maybe because of the small school .... But at this school the majority of the people at this school are related to each other in some way or fashion....ummm...our principal's daughter-in-law works here...um she has missed um of the three years she has been here she has missed over half that time at work umm due to pregnancies...um...being a math teacher I have a problem with her teaching our students teaching them improperly for math...she is our 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher for math ummm and when those children come up to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade they have a very difficult time with their math which is hard for a lot of people anyway because she is not teaching properly....and because she is his daughter-in-law everybody know s this but nothing is said and nothing is done... -----with that being an example are there other relationships that impact the school climate----there are cousins...you have to be very careful what you say because everybody is related .....I don't gossip...I try not to gossip... or talk about anybody....but you really have to think if I say this to this person...is this person related to the person ....so so you kinda of have to walk on tippy toes around these people because if you offend one whether it is ligitament or not you offend a whole bunch of them...
21. Do you feel this would be different in a larger school setting? I think the larger the school the less of that you are going to have...just because with a larger population you have more people hiring or being hired than family members.....ummm..we had a situation where we held a position for another teacher for two years or three years in a new subject...um...and I did not think that was fair when they had hired people thinking that they could get tenure when actually it was pre ordained that they would not get tenure...

“Being effective is not important as long as we look good”

KB Interview

9-27-10

15.5 yrs total---3 yrs in another county, 12.5 In this county but 4 were at another school setting within the county the rest have been here

Lives in the community

Ed.S., MA in three areas, and BS in Comp. Science and Math

Teaches 8<sup>th</sup> Science & Math

1. I did plan to teach in a county system...would have worked in a city system but felt I would always end up in a county/rural setting.
2. No definitely not-----a high school (9-12) or (7-12) was the plan
3. The main thing I have found about teaching in middle school is that you are less appreciated or valued than other teachers. When we were a K-12 set up...everyone was under the same umbrella....teacher. Once the division became necessary it was then that you were either an elementary teacher or high school teacher. The division became more difficult when K-4 moved and 5-12 were left under the same roof but two different schools. Now, under the same roof, we are officially two different schools----middle and high. Those in the high put off a persona of being a bit better than us lonely lowly middle school teachers. I think know how it was and now how it is is one of the more stressful aspects of being here in a middle school.

Stressful aspects of rural schools are probably based on the outside relationships of being in a small community and how everybody knows everybody. While it is an attractive thing to teaching in a small school, it can also be a negative especially if you don't know the relationships from the community. I also think a stressful aspect of being in a rural setting is the very likely possibility of having the same child twice. If there is a conflict the first go around, it becomes more tedious to do it again and again. Many rural teachers have to teach multiple subjects or grades which can offer a bit of stress.

4. I don't know that the efficacy issue is that much different based on the middle vs. high or middle vs. elementary schools. I do think the efficacy issue can soo be impacted by the rural/city situation though. Mainly because of the politics involved and the amount of family relationships that exist in the schools. There are little cliques or groups that seem to control things within the school. If you are not a part of that you find yourself as an outsider.

Most of that can be worked around but feeling valued is not high on the list nor is trust a thing that we can expect here. Being very careful about what you say or do is critical here. There is little to no support. Strength and belief comes from within and from your support system outside of this building. If you are a person with a strong sense of self, you can manage. If you have self doubt or less support, working in this system can break you and cripple what you thought you could do.

I am drained most days by the time I leave here. Either frustrated by children and the things kids do, or irritated by the adults and their lack of authority, or a combination there of ....leaves me with nothing at the end of the day.

5. I do not think that our principal is effective in his role. He does not appear to have the decisiveness with follow through that teachers need. His relationship with the students is way to laid back...the children know that if a situation is pushed...it will generally be swept under the rug or be the teachers fault. The parents within the community generally do not respect his authority nor do they appear to have faith in his decisions. He caves to parental pressures because he wants to maintain the “votes” for his council seat and he does not want to upset anybody. He seems to have a desire to be everybody’s friend.
6. In my opinion, teachers are often frustrated but they do try to be enthusiastic about their jobs. Teachers try to separate the feelings they have about outside pressures from the lesson or what is going on within the classroom. Sometimes that is easier done than others. Without the few people (co-workers) that I do feel I can vent with my family gets the brunt of the storm on a bad day. Without the adults that I vent too I believe this job could become unbearable. I pray a lot and have learned to channel my frustration into a new hobby, running. Medication is always a possibility, many of my teacher friends are on something for blood pressure, anxiety, or depression. That is sad but true.
7. I think the main thing is to look busy, keep the students under control, and don’t rock the boat. We have been told repeatedly “if they are walking and breathing....they are going on to the next grade”. That is a hard pill to swallow if we are truly interested in what is best for the students. Not what is best for their athletic careers but for their preparedness for a productive life.

It is fine if my neighbor teacher shows videos and does worksheets and then test. However, I am supposed to be up moving around the room with interactive lessons that is geared to all levels of learning. Somehow there is a disconnect in what is truly going on and important. I do believe the community for the most part supports the school academically and athletically. Yet, there is a portion of the community that is only interested in playing ball and not what is going on in the classroom. Many parents would be more supportive if they felt their voice was heard and something was actually going to be done with the trouble making students.

Sometimes it is hard to wear the hat of teacher, neighbor, and friend's parent all within the same community. In larger towns I don't think the afterhour's interactions would have as large an impact on the teacher/student/parent interactions.

For the most part, teachers believe they are doing a good job with what they have available. Under the circumstances, teachers work hard to do the best they can to be interesting and involve the students in the learning process within their classrooms.

8. I do think some take advantage of the abilities afforded them. Yet, when the principal is one of the first out the door it is hard to expect teachers to stay. I think it is viewed by most that there are some who are entitled to do what they want and the rest have to follow the rules. Some days it is harder to remain positive about your job. I think it leaves a bad taste in the mouths of those who are working hard but not acknowledged for anything they do.
9. Frustration is a constant daily item. I think most of the frustrations come to me because of the accumulation of climate issues and principal issues. The pressures I feel come from outside of my classroom. I get aggravated at the students but kids are kids. The adults are old enough to know better. Inconsistency is a huge issue on the part of authority and causes of frustration on the job.

I try to handle it and leave it at school. However, my family hears a lot of frustration in my stories and there is a huge amount of praying daily. I do try to let it go and continue on the best I can. Each day could be a great day.

10. I do not feel valued at all in my job by the other adults around. I should not say all but most. Anyway, some kids seem to value what I do and want to do well. For the most part though...do not feel valued or respected.

As for our administration, he is always right and he does not want anyone's input...even if he asks for it. The few "in charge" people are allowed to control things and otherwise you are just supposed to do as you are told. I have often wondered why I even bother. Then I hope I can touch one life as my teachers did when I was in school and dig down deep and prepare for a new day.

11. The interruptions of others further demoralize and devalue the other adults in the conversation or meetings. You quickly learn who will truly listen and value your input professionally and those that will just roll their eyes and text while you talk. We have even had teacher's text or call the administration just to break up a meeting or so they can make fun of him. It is a joke and nothing really changes..you just have to do the best you can for the kids and move on.
12. The family connections are unreal. At one time we had two husband/wife combos here. Three sisters with a niece and nephew here. Many cousins and in-law relationships dominated the building. This just fuels the levels of unequalness felt by those not related. Family members are not questioned about what or how they are teaching it must be someone else's fault.

Church relationships are huge in a small community. It is obvious which church you belong too based on what clique you are involved with. It also goes to the acceptance or tolerance of what is going on within the school. For instance, at one local church you have administration, several teachers, and a few aides all with students that attend that church. Now the adults have to assume a different role with variations of authority.

You don't even have enough time to spend discussing the unequal distribution of duties/responsibilities. Let's just say it is not all equal or close to even fair....if you are a coach you pretty much can do what you want including not supervise the students in your room for a core subject lesson. There is very little to no professionalism at the school. If you truly did not have a desire to teach this would definitely be eat you alive.

If they are walking and breathing they will pass...unbelievable really.

#### KT Interview

9-27-10

14 yrs. Total --- 10 at MS and 4 HS

Lives in the community

Master's in Administration, BS in Sec. Ed. Language Arts

1. Did you intend to teach in a middle school setting?----- (t) Really no....I thought that I would strictly teach in a 9-12 setting...but when I got to my student teaching I was where my brother went to school so I could not be with the older kids so they put me in the younger grades and I fell in love with them
2. Did you intend to be in a rural setting?----(t) Yeah
3. What aspects of teaching in a middle school setting do you find are most stressful for you personally? ----(t) uhhh.....Just like dealing with it??.... (me) yes....(t) like just dealing with it like vs. a high school or elementary.....(me) yes.....(t) really and truly their behavior you know like how one day they think they are 18 and then the next day they are like little babies....and just all the peer pressures they deal with makes our lives....annoying little things.....just their behaviors
4. Do you think that those types of stress factors would be the same in an urban or city setting? (t) oh yeah...because kids are kids

5. So you do not think that is different because it is a rural school? (t) no, no...not that particular thing
  
6. What factors do you think teaching in a rural/middle school setting impacts or affects your efficacy?-----long pause....laughing.....thinking about my answer.....(t) other than I have always been in a rural setting I can relate to the kids more ....I have more in common with them and my own child do more than anything....is that kind of what you are looking for?.....(me) that is fine..yeah...

[student entered looking for books and she helped with that with peaceful pleasant demeanor and picked back up with interview]

(me) Soo...ok you can relate to them.....(t) yeah...

7. So your beliefs as far as teaching in the middle school???-----(t) really struggling with what that means in the middle school setting.....(me).....some just stated that they went to college with the intent to teach high school and that when they began teaching in the middle grades it was really a struggle for them.... (t) there are things I like about the middle school and there are things I like about the high school....if it were a perfect world I would teach half day in the middle and half day in the high school.... But I can't do that..... the main thing is I just see a difference in the behavior of the two.... The tattling and this and that...ummm...sometimes I feel like I can help them a little more at this level because they are so impressionable at this age and that just goes with...to how much I love kids....I guess I just relate with this age the best....
  
8. What do you like teaching best about high school and vice versa (personal note)????-----(t) at the high level they know to come in and sit down to get started you know they just want to get in there get it done and get out of there....they were harder to motivate in a lot of areas....but you know over here they will do anything for a piece of candy or a sticker or to get to stand up and clap three times at their desk if they are learning verbs over there (high school) they are like uhhhh come on ....worked last night, I was taking care of my little brother or sister, I just need to do what I got to do and get out of here....they don't usually give you any problems .....I can't compete with what they are doing over there.....drugs and sex and everything.....I have no desire to compete with that but....they are in a totally different world

9. Administrator role-----How do you view your administrator's role---good example, supportive of teachers...???(t) I feel like he does a really good job and he does really well with the parents and most of the kids here respect him and like him and he is a very .....he helps us...he supports us....very supportive....and in dealings I have every had I could not have asked for anybody to have supported me than he has and I have known him now for 14 years so...
10. Do you feel that you get your voice heard and considered???(t) I do....I feel like I do....I have not had....luckily....I have not had that to happen.....have not had many complaints over the years...so the few times I have had some of that....of course he listens to the parents...because we need too...and then...he knew me and he knew what kind of person I am and he was very supportive....listens to both sides....(me) not just a gut reaction....(t) no
11. Do you feel you accomplish your job with enthusiasm? Oh yeah...I love my job. I do. I love being around the kids...I love being here.... I just love my job.
12. How you describe the frustrations with your job? A normal day...----- (t) well...umm...I get very stressed out but I worry about everything so...I worry constantly....I am worried about the kids I teach....I try not to take it home with me...but I do worry about them and then I do get a little frustrated of sometimes....I do lots and lots of things you can look at my desk....I have a new job...I am the Title I coordinator at my school and along with CIP working with RTI...you know just everything....I have too many hats that I wear I guess...but it is my own fault I guess because I don't know how to say no but that is the part that gets frustrating....if I could just teach all the time and not have to worry about all the other stuff then..I would be less frustrated...laugh...but it is all the administrative type duties that come into the aspect of the job that kind of makes me more stressed and frustrated at time...and having to keep everybody on board and other people who are not as interested in it as me you know
13. You mentioned the different hats you wear...do you have decision making powers at your school? Like in what committees you serve on or are that just kind of dictated to you??----(t) He generally just ask who he wants to be like Title I chair or ELL chair...he just ask you if you mind doing it...he has never been one to just tell you...like we have a dance this afternoon...he has not been one to say you, you, and you have to work the dance today....it is more like I would appreciate if you could stay and help...but as far as

everybody getting together as a faculty and saying I feel like I would be good at this and this and then putting your name on a list that does not happen....

14. Since he just asks, does everybody generally participate in something or do you have those that don't really participate in anything?--- (t) we have some that don't participate and they have been asked to....he just really tries to be fair about a lot of things....like recently I had to give up ell and he wanted to ask somebody else that he thought would do a really good job and she does not do anything else and she is a really good teacher and well organized and we don't have many ell kids here and he went to her and asked her and she said no....I don't want to do it.
15. There is a level of confidence that if you say no that there are not going to be repercussions?--- (t) oh yes....no...he is not ....he is nice and understanding and if you don't want to participate in anything extra...if you can make it to the faculty meetings, and do your job while you are here with the kids well...then he does not have a problem at all with extracurricular or extra responsibilities .... (me) some just said it would be nice to be asked to be on a committee instead of just being told...(t) oh yeah....but it is just not that way here... no we just don't do that here
16. Do you feel like your school climate has accepted norms? What are they??? ----(t) those same types of things happen here...we know who does their job well and we know who doesn't, we know who just pops in a movie, and who is behind his/her desk all day...and a lot of that has become acceptable over here but that comes....ummm...too...we are intrinsically motivated too....but we have to make that choice for ourselves but yeah...we know here on this faculty who are here going to do anything they are asked to do and we know that there are people here that we don't even want to ask to do anything extra....we know who we can go to for help or support with a problem
17. Do you feel that those who are simply here to do their job and that is it have an impact on the climate or the other teachers??? ----(t) ummmm....well we have had incidences in the past that were public here...and that created a lot of tension among the faculty it was almost like people were siding with one or another and I could feel the tension even though I was not involved with the tension...it made me....I don't like tension like that. That is just my personality...I am the one who always is like let's be nice to one another, let's be friends, so...like that kind of stuff can make you not want to come to school/job when there is that type of bickering and that stuff going on...but that issue has been resolved and everything is better this year

18. So you don't feel that type of tension anymore??---(t) I don't feel that tension within the faculty anymore.
19. What about relationships with the outside community—churches, organizations, etc.????  
 (t) You would think that we have that more since the \_\_\_\_\_ baptist church is just across the street but I don't really see it so much....they are there to support us...like when we have functions they will send money for kids who could not afford to participate and supplies stuff like that but they don't get involved in the schools' business per say...I don't see it over here.
20. Some teachers leave immediately and some work earlier. How do you feel that your fellow co-workers have an impact on the school climate and you personally? (t) not me personally...now if I were the administrator I might would feel a little differently....we have some teachers who get here I mean just right as the students are supposed to be in class...we have even had some even had some slip in after the beginning of class....as far as leaving we don't have a bell that rings but it is rare that we have teachers here at 3:15 or after....there are usually just 3 or 4 of us who are still here.....so people get out of here...we have some who even leave before....I feel badly or embarrassed sometimes because we have parents who need teachers and when they get here that teacher is not here to speak with or they should be able to run in and talk with the teacher if he or she feels like they need to do so.....I know that sometimes I need to talk to my little girl's teacher down at the elementary school and they are there we open arms ready to talk to you and I am going there before I am even here and so that is even earlier and I feel like that is very important and as a teacher that is our responsibility .....(t) Do you know S.E.? (me) yes (t) somebody was fussing about something one day and giving him a hard time about how he is a 12 month employee and all that....and he said "Nobody told me what line to get in in college" and I try to remember that sometimes when I am fussing about things...oh I wish I did not have to take this home and grade it and this and that and I think you know I knew what line I was getting into in college.....I just try you know remember that that is them and they have to live with that and they could be going home to grade papers or whatever.....like sometimes I have been on the road for an hour before I ever even get to work...I used to get here at 7:10 or 7:15...but kids change things....I don't worry about coming in right at 7:40 because I know that I am here when I am supposed to be and that I am taking Title I stuff home and doing this and that and coming up here chaperoning dances and putting in time....
21. Do you feel as if there are teachers off with a little tally sheet keeping score? (t) oh yes there are. I just feel like if they were doing what they were supposed to be doing how would they have time to be keeping score. ....I figure some of my attitude comes with

- age and I want them to do a good job especially because my kids will be here one day and I am already worried about certain things but ummm....
22. So do you feel like those who are keeping the checklist and tally marks are from a different generation of teacher? (t) some of them are ....here it is....it may not be that way everywhere but here I think it is
  23. How do you deal with the frustrations of a normal day? (t) try not to take it home and if I am having problems at home I try not to bring them here...but I think that also goes to the fact that I have always been a positive person and so the stuff like that just doesn't seem to affect me like it does other people and I have another friend here on staff that she and I are close and we talk and we spend time out school together and I guess sometimes when I am a little upset talking to her...she can give me advice and that kind of makes me feel a little better.....but I don't know I just usually don't really get upset about things....that is just who I am
  24. Do you feel as a faculty that you are equally listened too or are all avenues explored equally? Yeah, like with this new Title one thing.....we have been given so much money for technology so he asked us to make a wish list of things we would like to have and how it would be used by us in our classrooms because what I might need for teaching language arts may not be what you need for teaching science and teaching styles may be different.... So he took all that into account and that is how it was decided about how we would spend that money and I have a friend who teaches at another title school and they were just told what they were going to get.....I was glad to be in a situation where everybody got to get things they needed or could use
  25. So it was not departmentalized...like all math teachers get this and all science teachers need this????---(t) no he tries to be as fair as he can with stuff like that...really...sometimes he is too nice...
  26. Too nice-----sometimes wish he were more stern with certain people...ok....like you know if you are late some teachers are written up or lesson plans are not in on time...names are called out....stuff like that ....not big stuff or bad things
  27. Is your principal visible and capable of discerning the line of being liked and being respected? (t) yes, I think so...as far as the being visible he is always out in the halls when like changing classes and stuff....unless he is in with at parent or something you know you can find him if you need something.....it's not like...I have been in a situation before where like you never knew where he was or like I have friends at other schools and they have discipline problems and it might be a week later before it is handled or addressed by the principal.....If we have a problem I can go right down to the office and he is going to get it taken care of immediately...I don't have to wait
  28. Do you have an assistant principal? (t) no it is just him and when he is out the next in line steps in
  29. Faculty meetings---are there professionalism within the meetings or settings are?--- (t) Yes, I would say that there is professionalism---interruptions---no....I am sure that there

are some texting....(me) is it a hurry up and get out of here mentality?---(t) oh yeah, we don't have many faculty meetings around here... when we do they are short....they don't have time to text anybody .....it is like I said they are short and sweet and they better be listening.... For the most part our cell phones don't pick up so...but I have seen a few people text but for the most part they are handled professionally

30. Some have stated that it is difficult to be the teacher at school and then just another lady at church or mom at the ball field. How do you feel about that or see that? (t) I have not experienced that really. I don't attend church here and my children are not old enough to be at the youth league sports level yet. I want to keep that as much separated as possible. I do think about that and what will it be like when they are old enough to play. I would like to be in an administrative role one day and I do wonder about that.
31. Family relationships spill over into the job setting. Some felt like that changes the environment. (t) We have a husband wife team and I feel it is mainly because she is a Lady. It is her personality that makes it be a negative environment. Here it is not like that.

#### MH/AE interview

9-24-10

AE: 2<sup>nd</sup> year to teach both at here; don't live in community; BS in elem. Education (math 5<sup>th</sup>); certification k-6

MH: 6yrs total one year at another system elem. school and this is her 5<sup>th</sup> year at here; don't live in the community; Master's eleme. Education (history 5<sup>th</sup>); certification k-6

1. Intention to teach at middle school level: (H) absolutely not; NO (e) No
2. Did you intend to teach in a rural school: (both) yes
3. Aspects of middle school setting do you feel is most stressful???---(h)most stressful for teaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade is that they are coming from the elem. School where they have been in self-contained classrooms and in my opinion 5<sup>th</sup> grade is still technically eleme so they are thrown into this departmentalized situation too quickly sort of (e) it is like kindergarten all over again (h) exactly it is almost like kindergarten all over the first nine weeks they are still trying to get into the routine it takes forever to get them into that routine and then when you finally do you're half way through school but that is the most stressful as far as 5<sup>th</sup> just being thrown into the situation when I feel they are too young (e) and having to gain responsibility so quick (h) at the elem I don't think they are given so much responsibility and then we are expecting them to change classes, keep up with books, go to their lockers, homework, keeping up with four different teachers, and then a pe teacher too; I think the responsibility is a much for them (e) keeping lockers clean

4. Rural school stress----- they neither thought it was that stressful....[paused for about 30 sec.] then...(H) I don't think it is that stressful because it is rural....I did some observation in city schools and the expectations were a little higher and at a rural school it is kinda more laid back -----good or bad----- (h) in my opinion that is good I think it is not as much pressure on the teachers sometimes (e) yes, agree
5. Efficacy have changed/how----(silence)----(e) when you start out you have this picture perfect thing (H\_\_JUMPS IN) you are going to change everybody's lives (e) yeah (h) everybody's going to make a's, everybody's going to get it; then when you are put into the situation you realize that it's not the case (e)some of them you want them to care but they just don't care
6. How make you feel?----(e) it does not make me feel good (h) feels like you are kind of failing sometimes (e) yeah (h) but then you have got to have the attitude that not everybody's going to get it (e)I am trying to do what I can here but if they are not getting it at home then ...home is the part too....I don't know what to do .....I even feel that way this year that some of them JUST do not care ----you don't doubt your ability----- (e) right...as good as I can do right now...(h) that's the way I feel..... I am doing everything I can but some kids are not going to care and ummm....and getting them to care is impossible... seems like
7. Accomplishing your job with enthusiasm----- (h) agree with the whole I try to accomplish my job with enthusiasm (e) yeah (h) umm....but uhh....----rarely frustrated was the other part of it---(h) rarely frustrated??? Uh....(e) rarely really wow that is a shocking thing (h) I try to put as much enthusiasm into my job as possible...My job I think is a little bit different than math...because I am in social studies so it is not as frustrating as math...because there is more to get I guess....(h) but ummm.....my frustration comes from kids just not wanting to do anything...
8. Do you think math is more frustrating?----(h) I do think it is without a doubt ....there is more pressure....(e) yeah...(h) there is more pressure in 5<sup>th</sup> grade....when they go to high school they are accountable for the social studies part of the graduation exam that is taught in 5<sup>th</sup> grade...but as far as there is not a SAT or Armt ....there is nothing in 5<sup>th</sup> grade social studies so I teach in four classes of social studies where I am not responsible for any test scores (e) right (h) but then she is teaching four classes of math where good grief she has the armt, she has got the sat's and umm...there is just a whole lot of weight on her shoulders....and I would not think that I would be as frustrated as she is....so...I taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade math ...I love math and would not mind going back to teach it but ummm the frustration is just frustrating especially when you have a handful of kids that don't get it and you have a course of study and you have to get it ready by sat and armt time ....(e) I guess they just don't care but umm...

9. Co-workers and you...efficacy----(e) as far as us and 5<sup>th</sup> grade goes (h) we are constantly there for each other and we share information and help each other (e) we work together and share with each other and if we would not work together it would be chaos (h) I think we work really well together we are not in competition with each other I feel that there are some teachers at this school that are somewhat in competition with others and will just turn around and stab you in the back sort of thing.....as a grade level we are good we back each other up and are not in competition with each other and that OUR main goal is our kids...(e) that is right (h) we are not trying to have my test scores be better than her test scores thing....we are constantly backing each other...if I have an idea I will go and share it with everybody and if someone else has an idea we share it with everybody -----thoughts of she stole that from me----- (e) no I don't feel that (h) no no ---- so as a grade level we are all good----but outside that grade level----(h) it is crap...(e)ummm.....some of us feel like it is high school again... got to watch out for yourself (h) that is right drama drama (e) and watch out for what you say (h) I want use names but she knows so I will just say it you got to be careful what you say at this school especially when you have a co-worker whose relative is your boss....ummm.... because things that have been said about me that are completely not true....ummmm....have affected the way my boss views me.... And when you work with a daughter in law you are going to believe what the daughter in law says and that the other person is just made out to be just crap I guess pretty much...and that affects me ummm....[voice changes and speed of talking and more directed disposition] I will be honest I have looked for other jobs just so I can get away from her ummmm...(e) true...good (h) where was I going with this.....(e) get another job...(h) oh yeah....all summer long I looked for another job so I could get away from that because I don't think it is fair when somebody can't do their job, they don't know what they are doing is in that position ummm (e) yes, right [in back ground agreeing the entire conversation] (h) can say pretty much whatever they want to and make somebody else look bad and that is constantly going on here and the school environment here is not so good here [that part trailed off to a soft whisper] I will be honest I have looked for other jobs just for that reason just so I can get away from her
10. Do you believe it would be different even in another rural middle school than it is here???---(h) no I think you are going to have your whole back stabbing I'm only out for myself kind of thing but I think it is worse when you put relatives, daughter-in-law working with father-in-law....I think it is worse...but no I think it goes on everywhere...the whole back stabbing I am only out for myself.....----but maybe the family relations connections---(h) yes (e) little laughter ....(h) that is my opinion (e) that is ok
11. Undoubtedly these things cause you frustration???---(h) without a doubt -----(h) a principal that is not involved (e) yeah...(h) can we go there????----me yes----(h) a principal that ummm....this is the seventh week of school and a principal that has not

been our hall way since the first week of school who is constantly putting his job off on an assistant principal and umm.... I don't think that a lot of parents take us seriously here because of our administration and that is probably the biggest frustration that I have right now...it is not with coworkers its not with kids its not wanting to do the work but it is with a principal that doesn't support you that has no clue what is going on and I just feel like I am at a school that nobody wants to be at like ...parents aren't happy here and I think a lot of it stems from our administration (e) well....yeah I agree

12. What factors from the community or surrounding area do you feel impact upon you as a teacher?---(h) I think that the elementary school (e) they always talk bad about us (h) right .....umm we all work in the same system .....work in the same community you would think that there would be more support from the elementary school but even the workers over there and the way they talk about "5<sup>th</sup> grade". (e) ummm huh...[yes] (h) the way they talk about 5<sup>th</sup> grade that we are horrible umm the frustration of not having support from the elementary school the way they talk about us and then the way the parents perceive us....they don't even give us a chance before they come over here....and ummmm they just ank their kids right out of here and send them to Decatur heritadge is Good. Fine > and Dandy.....but usually not always but usually once the kid comes over here even in the first week they will be like "it's not that bad" and I have had parents tell me it's not that bad .....it's not as bad...ummm I just get really frustrated that we have just don't have the support...everybody supports the elementary and nobody supports us...(e) no support anywhere .....just being talked about (h) I don't feel like I do a horrible job I don't feel like I am just this mean horrible person.. I don't feel like that but the way I am perceived just because I am part of the "5<sup>th</sup> grade" (e) and it is kind of like get to know us before you label us and wait it out....that is another frustration....(h) everybody just hates the 5<sup>th</sup> grade...[whisper] I just wish people would get to know us first (e) yes
13. You mentioned the pulling your kids out.....do you feel there are other factors for not wanting their children to come here??? (h) ummm I have heard...administration is one big factor.... Ummm...I also teach it is 5<sup>th</sup> grade being in a middle school technically I still see 5<sup>th</sup> grade being a part of an elementary school and I don't always feel like this is a good time to throw them into this situation umm...most schools start in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and they are a little bit more mature...umm...
14. What about the diversity of the community/and changes in the community???---(e) ummmm....if they were with them in elementary then what is really (h) right (e) why then just all of a sudden pull them out (e) it would be different if (h) right (e) if they were coming from a bunch of different schools (h) right right (e) like how they do in the city schools (h) we did have a parent meeting the other day in pe between African American and Hispanic and was upset at the way it was handled and there was some talk about swapping school so he could be with other/more African Americans because he was the

only African American in his grade...----they were more upset with the way it was handled than the race aspect-----it was really both it turned into because they were upset with the way it was handled and then it was turned into a racial issue

15. Meetings-professionalism???---- (h) not a lot of professionalism at .....no I don't....I think we have professionalism but it is hard to be professional when your boss is not professional-----so you don't feel that you have a role model?-----(h) that is exactly right-----(h) I think our assistant principal is (h) do I think our principal is ----NO. I think he is like I have to get all this stuff turned in and he is wanting us to be out in the hallways and all this but where is he.....that does not set a good example for me....(e) well....(h) we are supposed to be a role model for our kids but I need a role model but I need a role model too (e) like we had that situation with the homeroom stuff and when we changed that and they got all upset about it and its like you don't know what we have to deal with down here (h) right ....(e) and the other [meaning assit. Principal] did
16. Do you want me to talk about this??? You can talk about whatever you want to.... (h) ok let me tell you about this.....ok in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade we had to keep our same focus groups from last year so 5<sup>th</sup> grade has a 6<sup>th</sup> grade focus group and 6<sup>th</sup> grade has a 5<sup>th</sup> grade focus group well it was pure and utter chaos for the 6<sup>th</sup> grades to come down 5<sup>th</sup> grade hallway and 5<sup>th</sup> grade to get down 6<sup>th</sup> grade hallway...well....umm...we tried to tell him this (meaning the principal).... You think he ever comes down in our hallway to figure it out....nope...anyway...we talked to coach....the assist. Principal we came up with a resolution and we did it and we failed to mention to the main principal and the "fourth" principal/secretary and so one day a student had to check out so (e) this would go with professionalism (h) this would come with...hah...let me talk about that [body structure changed....perked up and hyped up] they come over the intercom asking for a student in my classroom well....I was in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom well they were looking for a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher but the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher was in my 5<sup>th</sup> classroom ...they were looking for that student and they said Ms..... I said no she is in my classroom....this is Ms. .... well when your secretary gets smart with you over the intercom and my 6<sup>th</sup> graders are in shock because she gets smart with you and they can even realize the tone in her voice (first of all that is not professional) and ummm all she would have had to of done was buzz my room for the student but anyways that is not professional and then for him to send us an email in all caps yelling at us because we weren't where we supposed to be when technically we were because we had worked it out with the vice principal and he knew about it ummm...if he would come down into our hallway and see what was going on then he might realize it but you know we don' have that (e) no not all I mean...ummm [relief laughter to have it off her chest...and to be able to say it was not professional]
17. How your principal handles support from parents/community???----(h) He has no support for his teachers he is constantly backs up the parent he doesn't even come and talk to us he is just backing up the parent

18. Even as a professional your opinion is not valued??? (h) exactly....(e) yes [again relief smile and laughter]
19. Would he listen to you and evaluate????equally---(h) NO no way (e) no (h) no he does not even listen to us it is his way or no way (e) well...ummm...like we tried to talk to him at the beginning about the homeroom issue and nope (h) we are going to do it this way and no ....no you are not talking to me about anymore
20. Knowing that you wanted to teach in a rural setting how do you feel the factors in this setting impact your job differently than maybe if you were in a city system? (h) I don't know that It has that big of an impact on me because I don't live the same place that I teach but when I did teach that year there it was ummmm.....everybody knows everybody so at the ball field you are all the talk and there is not a whole lot of professionalism like.....parents want to come up and gossip to you about another teacher or student and since it is so close knit and everybody knows everybody else's business and I think that is kind of carried over in the school setting and at the ball fields and at church (e) I like not living right where I work I like being able to go home and I am totally away from parents and whoever and I don't have to see any of the kids and its nice but yes I see it...yeah....I don't think that in a city system you would run in to that in as many problems...(h) I am sure there are other problems but less of that (e) but it is that small town talk like you said everybody knows everybody and they talk about everybody and always in someone else's business (h) right, right. If a child gets in trouble at school it is going to be conversation everywhere....(e) ummm uhh... (h) that is one thing about a rural setting I don't like about it but (e) yes, (h) but you have got your problems everywhere (e) yeah true
21. Do you feel you were prepared by your teacher training program for middle school???---(e) no (h) uhh no (e) I don't think to teach any...they all give you this little cookie cutter hey it's so whatever....un uh (h) this is going to work (e) you just have to ....fend for yourself you do what you have got to do and they prepare you but it is not for the real world (h) right (e)right (h) I like the grade level I am teaching but I never thought about it being at a middle school (e) right yeah (H & E ) I like the older kids, I like the grade but I just did not think about it as a middle school (e) I can remember even last year being my first year...I remember being like this is nothing like what college said it was going to be like
22. Lack of supplies were a rude awaking.....??? right do you feel you have equal standing in getting or accessing materials at your school -----yeah yes
23. Accepted norms-----not in my classroom...(h) kids know that they have to perform...(e) I want them to know that they care

CC/FW Interview  
9-24-10  
CW entered half-way through

CC----7 yrs all been here; 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> Science; Master's Elem. Ed k-6; don't live in community but do attend church here

FW----22<sup>nd</sup> year and all been here; K, 1, 2 and 6<sup>th</sup> Social Studies; Double BS k-3 1-6; yes live here

CW---"if you had told me I was going to teach the grade I am now, I would have changed my major."

1. Originally intend to teach in a middle school setting?---(c) I did not intend to but when I did my student teaching I was in second grade and my cooperating supervisor goes this is not your cup of tea and I go you're right 8yrs olds and I did not ge-ha together when I student taught 5<sup>th</sup> grade much more comrodinary between us and then I love teaching the sixth grade because most of the time they are respectful not currently though...but no I didn't intend to start there (w) I started out wanting to be like my second grade teacher so I started out in K because that was the only thing open at that time and gradually moved up because I started experiencing burnout and I wanted to get more into the kids instead of like play all day so when the chance came open I moved up and that was 10 yrs. Ago
2. But you were already feeling worn??? (w) Yeah
3. Did you intend to be in a rural setting? (w) I grow up in city schools so teaching in a county school never even entered my mind and.....in the city you basically had to know somebody to get a job or interview and so when a position came open in the county I jumped on it and now I would rather my child be in a county school than the city so...(C) and I really did not care...I just happened to have an administrator that went to church with me [c---and it is all about who you know not what you know]
4. Most stressful for you personally in the middle school----- (c) I think class size is something ...like last year we had close to 29 in every class and this year we are down to 26 or less in a class but still it makes it very difficult because when you have the trying kids who won't take anything you say seriously as far as teaching them or correcting them I don't feel like right now that I can even get through to my kids to teach them the content area because I am having to correct their behavior so much and I do think that numbers have a lot to do with that ...uhhh...backing from the administration has a lot to do with that and the parents too because we are having a lot of bickering between the parents too that is filtering on into our school day you know...(w) I agree with her the struggle that I am seeing right now that I am kind of involved in in around about way is that we are bending over backwards to help the students at their level but the parents are more worried about the social aspect instead of the instructional time their learning ...you know....for their futures...basically they are more concerned with being popular than being smart and prepared
5. Aspects of being in a rural setting????----- (w) well....(c) they are all neighbors here and not that they wouldn't be either its ....where I live they all live next to each other and go

to school right there...but I ...honestly don't look at where you come from because we have got people in this school building that live in the city...(w) yeah... (c) you know so...but you know I have never really taken that part into consideration

6. So you don't think the rural-ness...the smallness...impacts----(w) the difference that I see is that I have friends who teach in the city and of course I teach in the county and then with my daughter subbing she has even said the same thing a lot of the city schools the teachers are so dog eat dog try...you know....try to outdo the others...if someone puts up a cute bulletin board in the hallway oh then we got to go tomorrow and outdo them and then I tell them about our school and how we all work together you know what is mine is yours so .....(c) I just don't ...I mean I am just a country kind of girl I come to church out here I have lived a little bit of everywhere and so ...the makeup of the kids too like I said we have gotten kids who live so in the city
7. Comparison to larger schools not necessarily city----(c) we cannot offer as much as those schools but you don't think that you
8. You don't think that because you are rural that those things cause you more stress----- (c) no, no (w) no; I think what we are experiencing could happen anywhere
9. Some factors that they had to learn to deal with----church, conversations at the grocery store,....----- (w) at the ball field---ok .....[laughter] -----(c) it makes me stay away from those other places.... I mean obviously not church but makes me go in and do my thing and leave and try not to have to be a part of it ----so it does impact how you----(w) yes, yes....now the people I go to church with I work with them and I have kids there but I will have to say that at church very rarely do I get cornered with school questions anymore...at the ball field I find myself like avoiding going or I go and watch my son play ball and I would want to go watch some of my students play but I could not because the parents wanted to have a conference and they should be watching their child and they should let me enjoy watching them their children (c) right right (w) so it got to where I could not go and watch my students play because I did not want to have to deal with "momma drama" (c) it is because we are so close that because we do go to church together I don't mind if you have a question as a parent but it needs to be about me not about another co-worker or something else you know that is going on because....let's say I don't know about it I can't do anything about it so some people just hound you and you know (w) I found myself bringing chairs and not sitting in the bleachers because I don't want to have to listen to the parents dog another teacher because I want to turn around and say you don't know the whole story but yet you know I don't need to be getting all up in their business either...so it's like a tug of war (c) it's almost like a role conflict sort of
10. Do you feel that there are accepted norms or norms that are maybe different because it is a rural middle school???--- (c) for the kids or us---you----(c) I don't feel that everybody is always considered the norm so sometimes you are left alone there are some norms but maybe not everybody knows about them ...like you ask me that question I really don't

know what you are talking about .....ok----(c) but I feel that if an administrator does not come to me and say that you are doing this wrong...then I am not going to change it cause I don't know that I am doing it incorrectly....so if I don't know the norm then I don't even know if I am striving to be there

11. Movies working hard,, examples of a norm----(w) ummm ummm (c) I am afraid to do it because honestly I am afraid that an administrator will come back that one day and whether it's on the science topic or not that there will still be an email sent out on my behalf saying we don't need to be showing movies (w) right right (w) well, I can say.....I thought I was doing my job ...did I get slack some days yeah.....but when one of the administrators let it be known that he would be walking the halls and walking into your classroom at any time I felt like it jacked me up and said hey when he walks through that door I want to be doing a fantastic job like I should be doing all the time anyway....do I want to be putting on a dog and pony show no but (c) but I don't want to be sitting at my desk (w) don't want to be there letting the kids watch movie while I surf the internet or something; it does tick me off when I am busting my rear doing all these different kinds of hands on things...group work..Individual..paper/pencil...no paper/pencil...and then I know from experience having a child go through there that ummm...all it is is read the chapter answer the questions, do the vocabulary, uhhh...test on Friday when we have been...I sat by these people in workshops and we have been told these things don't work all the time you know change things up is it ok to do it sometimes...yeah...we all need need a mental day when you give them busy work but every day week by week and the kids know oh it's Monday we are doing vocabulary oh we are doing the reading check questions oh we are doing the assessment questions at the end of the chapter test on Friday; the kids get bored and you know umm...I just (c) which makes it harder on us
12. No motivation, drive by students to do their best----- (c) there are no consequences if they don't strive to do their best (w) ummm...I agree I have given back some papers...we had a vocabulary test yesterday ...some kids were like having a party that they made an a or b on the test and then one kid made an F and thought it was funny and I know that kid could do better if they had a little more parental support at home but the parents are always making excuse
13. Other issues were the principals role, role model, professionalism and the support you receive as an educator -----survey almost evenly split role model vs. not at all----( w) I have watched enough CSI can we do this off the record....sure.....[laughter] (c) I will go...point in case today...we have been in school seven weeks and we have still yet to have a class meeting with the principal for our students to see that he is in charge and that when they need to visit him it is possible we have struggled all four of us...so we decided today at lunch to say something usually we would go to the second in command but I thought we needed to go to him first and he said...I said can you come speak with them please.....they need to see you they need to hear you and (w) I reminded him of an incidence that happened like a couple of years ago (c) several years ago (w) and I said it

is like daisavue all over again and (c) and he said he would come and I will bring second in command with me...umm. And I am thinking well dang I would have just gone to him first and I know he would take care of it...and because our kids see him more and when they are getting discipline these days it's coming from him not the principal so I will be anxious to see if he comes or not because we really need some backing from the principal because our kids are just .....(c) are running over us...(w) we even got on to some kids with him sitting there and even with him sitting there they would continue to get loud to the point where she is the loudest (c) and that shows you that (together) even with him sitting there it did not bother them ....(c) God himself could have been sitting there so that shows you that the whole role model thing is maybe not.....(w) it bothers me that we have not seen him either expect one time (c) and only some of you saw him them (w) right that's right and even last year we were having an issue with inappropriate touching with students and stuff like that and sooooo..... we were ask to go talk to the girls as females...so we used one of the pe classes and with Coach H we discussed appropriate and inappropriate touching you know like we would with our own daughters we were told that that the same topic would be discussed with the boys it never was...and that really bothered me (c) follow through is a big problem (w) because we could have really gotten into some trouble (c) that we stuck our necks out there and did it because we were told too.... (w) right right.....-----so you feel less than supported---- (c) absolutely (w) right right

14. Reaction to parent pressure----- (w) well let's just say that we had an issue a little while back with a parent and word of mouth through the hallway rumors we hear he is not going to support the teachers...come hell or high water.....never one time came down here and ask what was going on what the reasoning behind it was so other people had to explain the reasoning .....and to this day has still not ask us about the reasoning (c) he did back up or he ended up backing us up but only in this case...in all other previous cases he has ruled in the parents favor and it has not always been the best for the child or the teachers....---the parents carry more weight???----(c) yes especially for behavior (w) and I have already made this be known to the administrator that I am to the point that I don't want to hear if you knew where this child comes from (know this child's home life)...ok we know their home life they don't have a positive role model at home so that is going to be part of my job...I need to teach them that stealing is wrong and just because you have a terrible home life you can overcome that if you have proper guidance from somebody and for some of these kids we are the only positive role model in their lives and I feel that sometimes we need to quit making excuses and quit being their hindrance
15. Your co-workers.....(c) I enjoy coming to do my job..I think the co-workers in my grade we get along very well I think we feed off each other and complement each other very well and makes us want to come and do our jobs and for our students....I don't think leaving at 3:15 is a bad thing if you have done what you are supposed to have done whether it is lesson plans, grading, or what have you....some people just work like that

they get here early so they can be ready to go at 3:15 they work their whole planning period so they can be ready to go so as far as ...that is our work day I think that is ok...but and I even have moments like this and I have seen other people have moments like this...umm... moments where ...gosh I got to do this again...and there is sometimes when we don't want to be here some more than others and that sometimes...you just have to try and separate yourself from it and not be a part of that ( and ) like I said I think if you have got your work done, whether its venting, or outside of school...I think we have a good relationship outside of school where we can go eat supper together and you know take care of each other's kids and stuff like that ....it's good...(w) I think down here our grade level we help each other out....5<sup>th</sup> grade they are close because we are down here...sometimes I feel although grades 5-8 are a middle school I still feel like we are two separate schools because it is not the teachers one thing it is the set up of the school we are down here and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> are up there and we never have a chance to interact except at a faculty meeting which we might have once a month (c) and we are all ready to go home (w) and so sometimes I feel like we need to have something that all the teachers ....now I have spoken to the new teacher and introduced myself...said I am here if you need anything send someone down if I have it you can use it or if not maybe I know who would have it and that is it....I just ....We do have a good working relationship but I feel like sometimes because we are pulled between the two areas that the morale gets lost another thing....5<sup>th</sup> graders are still typically elementary and yeah sometimes they don't need to be in the same assembly with 8<sup>th</sup> graders but we have to work with what we have got and sometimes I feel that this school is divided

16. \*\*\*\*\*Willis enters the conversation\*\*\*\*\* we are talking about our co-workers if you would like to join in------(wil) just because I leave the school building does not mean that I stop my job....[impression was one of defensive mode????] (c) and even if I go home at 3:15 I might have a bag of papers with me (w) right (wil) I have games to go to ..... (c) I cannot be worried about what everyone else is doing after 3:15

17. Personal beliefs and equality of ideas.....---- (w) through my experience sad to say but I have learned that if I take my idea to the administration and turn it in such a way that he will eventually believe it was his idea....then time is spent discussing it...but if I go in off the street with an idea most of the time that is as far as it gets...I don't feel like I am given the time to explain before decisions are even made (c) I think if the idea comes to the office first then the administration goes to the people he sees first which happen to be those people in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and maybe some resource people because those are the first people that are seen and by the time they....they don't even make it to our end of the building as far as opportunities to go to workshops or be on different committees or what have you....I feel forced to be on committees sometimes via email is not the way to let us know that we are in charge of something however, if you think you find something that suits me then come and see me and let's talk about it and I agree with her that if it is our idea sometimes it is not thought about and pursued unless we can get it to be someone

else's thought the administrators....that is nothing against the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers but I do think that sometimes it is strictly who he sees and wham bam there you are and you are going to go do whatever....or or if if .....they turn it down up there then it may trickle down here but again it is the makeup of the building and that sometimes we don't get to be in the know until it is way past gone.....(wil) I guess I see this more from the coaching side.....I just know there are a lot of things talked about that....after school the administrators are in the gym often and we are all in kind of a big group and I understand it being non-tenured....it does not offend me, it does not bother me I completely understand....but being non-tenured your opinion is definitely not valued or at weigh less....because it is just order of operations there but....(c) they will let you listen but they won't let your vote count....(wil) even though I have been asked to take a couple of steps back or I have been in there asking for opinions of the group and they will literally say but I don't mean to leave you out but .....literally you are not tenured.....I don't want your vote.....which I understand it like I said it does not offend me but it is almost like I STILL work here.....

18. If you were not such a strong person would that bother you.....influence you as a new teacher....----- (wil) I guess it would kind of make you feel insecure like is it because they plan on letting me go or because if they taught I was going to be tenured then why wouldn't .....I just kind of view as if I am on a trial basis but ....or it will be where they will say we should not be saying this around you but ...oh well we are....(c) that would really scare some people like her I am a fairly strong individual and they would work for another year and a half going am I going home in 3 yrs..and I think it would affect some people's classroom disposition (w) I could see it affecting my relationship with my co-workers not so much my classroom ....it would ...(wil) like last year the one on the coaching staff that was not tenured like me was like treated the same way I was and now this year she has the T by her name so it's like you can be in now....it is verbal and open it is not behind your back or unwritten behavior
19. Professionalism/school climate----- (as they giggle) (wil) this year we appear to be equal despite degrees....(w) yes (c) by who????---yes I get a thank you I could not do it...from friends and family...(w) I agree but there are a few who I feel or sense that they see us as a glorified babysitter and all we do is sit up here behind a desk and hand out assignments and as the old saying goes if they had to walk a mile in my shoes....or even some of them have said I did not know that teachers had to do all that stuff .....especially if they have never subbed and then they sub one day....I feel like some do not see us as a professional in the aspect of being equal ....what am I trying to say...as other people with degrees.....
20. What about in your school climate???----- (c) I do think so but we do have our little cliques within the faculty there are people in our faculty that I would have the opportunity to go to supper with but I think we can be professional while we are here at school and that does not take anything away from it....personally here...we are all in the same boats...some may have different higher degrees but we are..... we should all be

here for the common good in the same thing and want to come to our jobs....(wil) I guess I am kind of looking at it from a different way....like when we had someone there at a faculty meeting workshop thing and we have got adults who are our equal professionals getting in trouble for giggling and talking and playing on their phones...like the kids are so in that aspect I think we lose some professionalism there but I think we all look at each other as professionals

21. Enthusiasm with which we do our jobs...---- (maybe we were having a good week when we answered those questions) (w) like lesson plans I redo my lesson plans each year I could not tell you what I did on this lesson last year....If I did something was great and stuck out I put a posted note in my manual if I did an activity that totally stunk I write do not ever do this again....so I feel like I keep the enthusiasm we me by not doing the same thing year after year so I don't start developing burnout....and I try hard that even though I get frustrated...my head may be frustrated....I may be mad at the world but I try not to be that with the kids during the lesson...but now a few weeks ago I feel like we were busting our tails to meet the needs of the individual child and we had parents complaining that the kid did not like the person they were sitting with or they got on their nerves and they don't want them In the class anymore....I went home frustrated saying why am I there????....my job is to teach those children at their ability levels and to take them higher.....not worry about if they are in a room with their best friend and it really got to me....but yet the next day, regardless I had to come in here and do my job and I had to do it with enthusiasm because if I were not enthusiastic the kids were going to sit there like knots on a log....(c) they are going to run us over if we don't have some kind of enthusiasm whether it be in our lesson planning or just our personality just being with them because I love my content area...a love the hands on activities could do it every day however the children sometimes...like right now...are making it very difficult to be enthusiastic I tell them numerous times we can go back to reading the book and doing the section review and doing the chapter review and then test and IIIII would be miserable if that is the way I taught so ummm....there aren't many days that I just lay in the bed going I just can't go today...so as far as wanting to come out here to work....I want to....for the co-workers and the students ....I like to see the people and I like to do my job and see the kids learn but sometimes co-workers and students make it difficult (w) both of my girls are going into education....one started out wanting to go into business, fashion design,, design her own fashion line....had been in school for a semester and came in and said I cannot do this every day....I really want to teach....my response was you will not get rich but you'll like what you do....will you come home frustrated yes but you sleep on it and get up and it is a whole new day it is not the same thing over and over (wil) this week we have all been frustrated and we have all been venting about it and I don't know...I don't think it is a negative attitude....it is just frustrated....(c) it is just the facts (wil) but in my class room I am still teaching enthusiastically if not even more

because of the energy behind the frustration...I am still teaching enthusiastically while being frustrated does that make sense

## Appendix E IRB Approval

August 2, 2010



Kristy T. Black  
Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
College of Education  
The University of Alabama

Re: IRB # 10-OR-242 "Rural Middle School Teachers: Efficacy and Stress"

Dear Ms. Black:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of written documentation of informed consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

*(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Your application will expire on July 29, 2011. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure Form. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



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Box 891117  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35687-0117  
(205) 348-8461  
fax (205) 348-8882  
tru.mh (877) 820-3066

Carpa~~nto~~ T. Myles, MSM, CM  
Director & Research Compliance Officer  
Office for Research Compliance  
The University of Alabama

Appendix F  
Permission to Use Efficacy Scale

COLLEGE OF  
EDUCATION AND  
HUMAN ECOLOGY

ANITA WOOLFOLK HOY, PH.D.  
PROFESSOR  
PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Dear Kristy Black

You have my permission to use the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* in your research. A copy of both the long and short forms of the instrument as well as scoring instructions can be found at:

<http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/researchinstruments.htm>

Best wishes in your work,

**Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D.**  
Professor

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
29 WEST WOODRUFF AVENUE  
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210-1177

[www.COE.OHIO-STATE.EDU/AHOY](http://www.COE.OHIO-STATE.EDU/AHOY)

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