

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO
TEACHER RETENTION
IN GEORGIA

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed method, survey-based inquiry was to determine how Georgia public high school faculty members perceive various pressures and experiences associated with a career in education. These perceptions were then analyzed as possible indicators of teacher attrition in order to improve retention rates. The independent demographic variables selected to analyze these perceptions included level of education attained, years of teaching experience, and school size based on student enrollment numbers. Qualitative data examined the role of an educator, why one would choose to remain in or leave the field of education, and the future plans of the current educators.

The faculty survey incorporated 30 items based on a Likert-type scaled response section with five qualitative open-ended questions. This mixed method analysis was chosen to provide more of a holistic examination of the state's teacher retention problem. A total of 545 surveys were analyzed from both the northern and southern counties of the state of Georgia. The implication of this study was to serve as guidance for future improvements of teacher retention rates throughout the state.

The quantitative data reveals that most teachers in the state of Georgia have obtained their master's degrees, are within the first 5 years of their educational career, and view administrative support and working conditions as positive aspects of their teaching experience. From the qualitative analysis, it was evident that teachers view their role as important due to preparing students for future careers or simply as a preparation for high-stakes testing. The majority of teachers feel that the role of an educator has changed over the years and most have

considered leaving their chosen careers due to low morale, low pay, and/or the amount of time required for the paperwork involved. Teachers stated that the reason they have chosen to remain in education is due to the intrinsic rewards such as making a difference in the life of a young person and the love or enjoyment that education provides. When asked about their future plans, almost half of the current teaching force was uncertain, and another one-third plan to leave the classroom.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Teaching remains one of the largest occupations in the United States and accounts for 4.9% of the entire civilian work force. There are over twice as many teachers as nurses and about five times as many teachers as lawyers or college professors (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). Nationwide, teacher shortages have been increasing since the 1980s, according to data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (Ingersoll, 2001). Although some of the reasons for these shortages stem from increased student enrollments, much of the empirical research points to attrition, or teachers leaving the profession, as the primary reason (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997). The turnover rate for teachers is consistently higher than many other occupations in the nation, and this factor is driving an inability to maintain high quality teachers in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2001).

During the 1990s, national teacher turnover rates were as high as 22-23% annually (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). According to the 2000-2001 Teacher Follow-up Survey, attrition rates have increased by 50% since 1990 and turnover rates rose 16.8% during the 2004-2005 school year (Luekens, Lyter, Fox, & Chandler, 2004). Projections indicate that half of the current teaching force is nearing retirement and fewer college graduates are choosing education as a career (Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2005). Therefore, most attention has been directed to teacher recruitment strategies, but recruitment holds little value if the teachers continue to leave the field of education. In the 1999-2000 school year, 534,861

teachers were hired, but by the end of the school year, 539,778 had decided to leave the classroom (Hunt & Carroll, 2002). High annual turnover indicates problems that can result in damages to the school environment as well as student performance (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). With a greater demand for teachers today than in the 1980s or 1990s, this does not bode well for the current state or the future of education. Researchers point to teacher retention as the key to solving this current educational dilemma (Hunt & Carroll, 2002; Ingersoll, 2003b).

Empirical research studies over the past 25 years have revealed characteristics in the teachers who typically leave education. According to research by Kelly (2004), the major characteristics include teachers with less than 5 years experience, those in rural small schools, secondary level teachers, and those in the Southern or Western area of the country. Boe and Bobbitt's (1997) research results reveal that fewer years of teaching experience and lower certification levels are additional factors that lead to high teacher turnover rates. Yet, the greatest predictor of teacher attrition, according to one study, is the teachers' perceptions of the daily conditions found within their respective schools (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005).

As research began to focus on the specific reasons behind these teachers' choices from the national data bases, a broad list emerged. Yet, if the analysis is narrowed to only one region of the country then the isolated factor of working conditions, such as collegial environment and supportive leaders becomes the primary focus (Futernick, 2007; Harrell, Leavell, & van Tassel, 2004; Hirsch, 2004, 2005; Quartz, 2003; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Second to working conditions, as in earlier research investigations, the national emphasis has been on low salary as the primary determinant (Liu & Meyer, 2005; Murnane & Olsen, 1990). Some school systems have noticed the downward trend and are attempting to lure prospective teachers with signing bonuses and extra pay. Although these strategies are still relatively new, they do not seem to be retaining the

teachers as well as originally anticipated. In order to work toward a positive outcome of retaining quality teachers until they reach retirement age, the underlying problem(s) must be identified and addressed. The most direct way to arrive at this point is to ask teachers based on their perceptions of their daily work experiences. North Carolina was the first state to address teacher attrition from the perspective of the teachers in 2002 (Hirsch, 2004). Although there are multiple reasons for each teacher's departure, the reoccurrence of these factors seems to be pointing to a source in great need of investigation. In order to reduce loss it is essential to know how these factors contribute to local attrition rates (Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon, & Stottlemeyer, 2000).

Beginning teacher attrition rates are higher than any other group of educators. Accumulating research indicates these rates to be highest within the first 5 years of entering the career. According to Ingersoll's (2001) research, 33% of all beginning teachers leave within the first 3 years and 46% have left the profession within 5 years. Even teachers who enter from an alternative path show high attrition rates with 40-60% leaving by their third year (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Nationwide, approximately 15% of new teachers quit within their first year and an additional 15% will change schools each year (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Research has also shown that teachers are more likely to remain if they make it past their fifth year of teaching (Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1988). Several studies have shown that new teachers need a greater degree of continuous assistance and not simply a brief induction program or a mentor for the first year (Berry, Hopkins-Thompson, & Hoke, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). Some research suggests that the major area of emphasis needed to reduce these high attrition rates is to provide adequate support to new teachers by better understanding their daily experiences (Kardos, 2002). The challenge to retain highly competent teachers affects all schools and must be resolved. The principals must look beyond annual pay

raises, occasional doughnuts in the workroom, and reserved parking for teacher of the year.

Administrators must hire the best and brightest teachers and support them throughout the years in order to succeed (Clement, 2000). “We believe that teaching can and should be a lifelong career” (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003, p. 234).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are leaving their jobs before reaching retirement age. This rapid turnover is known in the educational community as the “revolving door” (Ingersoll, 2001). About half of all teacher turnover is due to teachers seeking better career opportunities with more satisfaction and higher salaries (Adams & Dial, 1994; Boe et al., 2008; Shen, 1997). Yet, the reasons behind teaching not being a rewarding career has not been properly analyzed in the current research. By surveying individual teachers from a specific region, these reasons cannot only be properly identified, but also serve as a guiding force in teacher retention and educational improvements (Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006; Hirsch, 2004, 2005).

On average, teachers earn 12% less than other careers that require similar college credits (Allegretto, Corcoran, & Mishel, 2004). A number of recent studies have analyzed the costs associated with replacing these exiting teachers. Figures range from over \$7 billion per year nationally to \$43,000 per teacher (Carroll, 2007). Teacher turnover is expensive and impacts student achievement not to mention the costs associated with recruitment, hiring, and preparation of the new and/or replacement teachers (Hirsch, 2005). However, there has been relatively little concern with the costs and consequences of teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2003a). Research conducted by Harvard’s School of Education, entitled *The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers*, has emphasized that teachers will stay in education if they feel successful. In order to

feel successful, teachers need support from their colleagues, and administrators within their work environment (Johnson, 2006). Success is a growth process and must be earned over time through experience. As stated in the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education article, “Top Ten Issues to watch in 2007,”

We can pay now by investing in improving teacher quality . . . or we can pay later in decreased purchasing power, increased costs of remediation and job-training, increased need for social services, higher unemployment rates, and in the inability to attract and retain industry. (2006, p. 1)

Significance of Study

In an era of increasing pressures and demands on teachers the principle factors that determine whether a teacher remains in the profession or leaves is worthy of investigation. The most direct way to arrive at this point is to ask for input from the teachers about their own personal experiences and how these affect their perceptions of education as a career. North Carolina was the first state to address this issue from the perspective of the teachers in 2002 (Hirsch, 2005). Many of the current researchers emphasize the need of addressing these reasons from a local perspective in order to bring about understanding and effective changes (Elfers et al., 2006; Futernick, 2007; Hirsch, 2004, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003a; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Liu & Meyer, 2005). Only a few studies have decided to approach their research from this angle; therefore, more empirical studies are needed to properly attempt to evaluate the reasons for teacher shortages within specific areas of the United States.

There are a greater number of career options to college graduates today, especially women, than the current teacher retirees had available. Many of these options include better salaries and working conditions, along with fewer societal demands, than education offers (Johnson, 2006). Even those that do enter teaching do not plan on making it a life-long career

choice. Retirement accounts for only 12% of all teacher attrition. This coincides to a ratio of 3:1 for the number of teachers leaving for reasons other than retirement (Hunt & Carroll, 2002).

More focus must be directed to what matters to teachers, and from the current research it appears that working conditions that help promote success, such as a collegial environment and supportive leaders, are the most significant (Ingersoll, 2001; Luekens et al., 2004).

America's public school teachers are more educated and more experienced than they have been in history (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997). The United States requires the greatest number of work hours of its teachers than any other nation, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future as stated by Darling-Hammond (1997). Within education, this additional stress transcends to ineffectiveness in the classroom and student learning. Without this sense of accomplishment, confidence, support, or self-efficacy, teachers will leave for a more rewarding career (Nieto, 2003). Educators like any profession, work best in a stable and satisfying work environment. According to Clement (2000), leadership, empowerment, and opportunities for planning and collaboration are vital to assist teachers in raising student achievement levels. Teachers are professionals and should be treated as professionals.

One of the top 10 states in the United States with the greatest teacher loss per year, not including retirees, is Georgia (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). The demands on Georgia educators are due in part to the increased enrollment of students from population growth due to elevated birthrates and increased immigration rates. Pre-kindergarten enrollment has tripled since 1995 in Georgia. Extra policies to reduce class sizes have also increased the need for more teachers. Several southern states are facing concerns with educational policy, and teacher attrition is one of the top issues to watch (Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, 2006).

Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to examine Georgia public high school educators' perceptions of their daily experiences, as well as their current pressures, and to examine their possible association to reasons for attrition and/or retention. The independent variables selected to analyze these perceptions include level of education attained, years of teaching experience, and school size based on student enrollment within the state of Georgia. Qualitative research also attained data on teachers' perceptions of the role of an educator, why one would choose to remain in or leave education, and the teachers' future plans.

Research Questions

The following questions served as a framework for this study to address who is most likely to leave education and who is most likely to remain.

1. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on their level of education/degree attained (bachelor, master, specialist, doctorate)?
2. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on years of teaching experience?
3. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on school size (large with more than 1000 students, or small with less than 1000 students)?
4. What are the current teaching forces' opinions about their profession?
 - a. What do teachers feel is the role of a professional educator?
 - b. Why would a teacher leave or remain in the profession?
 - c. What are current teachers' plans for the future?

Definitions of Terms

Empowerment--A decision-making state characterized by a sense of competence and control.

Professionalism--A demonstration of beliefs and decisions that place the interest of others above your own.

Self-efficacy--A belief in one's ability to succeed at a given task.

Teacher attrition--The most prominent term used in research that refers to the rate at which teachers leave the profession.

Teacher migration--A term that refers to teachers who transfer to other schools, yet remain in education.

Teacher mobility--A term that refers to all teachers who move within education as well as out of education.

Teacher retention--A term that represents a method of maintaining teachers within the school or field of education.

Teacher turnover--The collective term referring to teachers departing their current schools.

Limitations

Following are limitations to this study that need to be addressed:

1. Because the administrator of the school was in charge of issuing the survey to the faculty, the overall responses may not be truly representative of the faculties' opinions. The administrators may have had some influence over the way the respondents answered the

questions, or fear of the administrator finding out if some items were marked negatively could influence the responses.

2. The research was confined to one southern state in the United States instead of a collective view of all southern states or a nationwide survey.

3. The research only analyzed the perspectives of public high school educators in Georgia instead of all educators.

4. Open-ended responses may not be a true reflection of their thoughts due to possible persuasion from the survey items selected to study.

Assumptions

Several assumptions were also made related to this research study.

1. The schools selected for this study were to serve as the representative for all public high school faculty opinions in Georgia.

2. The survey instrument was understood and properly addressed all of the current issues affecting teacher attrition.

3. Each respondent answered honestly and without persuasion.

Organization of Study

The organization of this research study will consist of five chapters. Chapter I, or the introduction, includes a statement of the problem, significance of the study, purpose of the research, research questions, definitions of terms, limitations, and assumptions. Chapter II is a comprehensive review of the literature and empirical research related to teacher attrition and/or retention. The actual methodology for the research will be addressed in chapter III and will

describe the population sample, instrumentation incorporated along with data collection, and statistical analyses procedures for the data. Chapter IV will discuss the findings from the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. A summary of these findings along with conclusions and recommendations for policy implementation and future research will compose chapter V.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The current literature review focuses on topics relevant to teacher retention. It is essential to provide a historical perspective to understand how education has changed and how teacher retention rates have been evaluated up to present; the trends that have influenced this issue are also examined. Next, the teacher attrition dilemma today is examined in terms of its impact on the future of education. The review includes an analysis of the major topics closely related to teacher attrition and retention, including low salary, a variety of working conditions, administrative support, collaboration, and self-efficacy. Finally, the review examines the issue of teacher retention and current research with various states in terms of problems noted and possible strategies for future policy implementation in Georgia.

Historical Background and Recent Trends

Public schooling began in this country during the 19th century with small one-room school houses found within each community. Typically, teachers would volunteer for these positions to earn privileged social status. Women chose to teach as a precursor to child bearing and men used teaching as temporary employment toward a better career (Strober & Tyack, 1980). Even though private schools were an alternative to public schooling, the public secondary schools had larger student enrollments during the 1880s. In 1870 it is estimated that 2% of teenagers were attending secondary schools. This number increased to 3.5% by 1890 and 6.4%

by 1900. Yet, between the years of 1910 and 1960 all public rural schools had declined by 90% due to larger urban schools increasing with the growth of industrialized cities and a new demand for skilled labor training (Tyack, 1974).

In 1947, teachers were leaving education in huge numbers due to low salaries and poor working conditions, which included overcrowded classes as well as parents losing confidence in public education resulting in low morale. This is the first time that America faced a teacher shortage (Tyack, 1974). The initial study on teacher attrition emerged in the early 1980s evaluating teacher turnover from the 1960s and 1970s. Although the study only encompassed one large urban school district from 1965 to 1974, the limited results shed light on the nationwide changes in the teacher mobility patterns of this period. Results were a 16% chance that a first-year teacher would leave education during the 1965-1967 school years and these numbers were almost double for the 1971-1974 school years at 33% (Murnane, 1981). Studies from the 1970s were revealing graduates never entering the field of education (Heyns, 1988; Mark & Anderson, 1985). Murnane's (1981) research coincides with other findings of the time period. According to Mark and Anderson's (1978) research, changes in student enrollment numbers became an important variable to teacher retention in the mid-1970s. Although student enrollments decreased in the 1980s, since the 1990s numbers have continued to climb and are reaching their highest levels ever. This trend is predicted to continue over the next 5 years resulting in an even greater demand for teachers (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997).

Education has looked to corporate America and business for ideas on total quality management as an approach to improving schools throughout educational history. The business world is now focusing on employee retention and skill development, but schools have yet to adjust (Eberhard et al., 2000). Schools are still based on a factory-era approach, although the

current era is more technological in nature. The bureaucratic organization of schools limit a teacher's control, and thus the turnover rate escalates (Futernick, 2007; Hunt & Carroll, 2002). With student enrollment numbers continuing to rise, decreasing qualified teachers choosing to enter education, and more veteran teachers reaching retirement status, school districts will find it extremely difficult to hire and retain classroom professionals.

The attrition rates in the United States have remained above 9.1% since 2003. Although these percentages look consistent, the replacement demands for those who left rose from 63.5% in 2002 to 86.3% in 2004 (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2006). An important and fairly recent contribution to the data pool has been by way of a national teacher survey instrument. The Teacher Follow-up Survey is conducted every 3-5 years and involves thousands of teachers. The National Center for Education Statistics sponsors the survey through the U. S. Department of Education, and the U. S. Census Bureau actually conducts the survey. Results from the survey are presented in various formats to allow individual schools the opportunity to use this information when making future decisions (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1998).

With the 2004-2005 survey, teachers who had left their schools that year were contacted and interviewed in an attempt to better determine the factors that contributed to their decisions to leave. From the total number of teachers who answered the second round of survey questions, 25.7% had moved on to another school and 35.7% had left the teaching profession entirely. For the teachers who had transferred to another school, 55% commented that they had more control over their own work in their new school location. As far as those who had left education all together, 65% stated their workload was more manageable and they were better able to balance their personal life in their new job (Marvel et al., 2006).

Another major contributor to teacher retention research and data has been the Harvard University School of Education. The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers has worked both quantitatively and qualitatively since 1999 to determine ways to attract, support, and retain new teachers. The first round of individual teacher interviews took place in 1999, with the second round following in 2001. Along with individual interviews, they also analyze and report the current empirical research in the field of teacher attrition. Their research consistently suggests that teachers' decisions are influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as well as daily working conditions and experiences (Johnson, 2006). Therefore each teacher's sense of satisfaction and efficacy is connected to their working conditions; hence, their decision to remain or leave the profession.

Teacher Attrition Reasons

Results from teacher attrition studies indicate that both extrinsic and intrinsic factors influence the decision to stay or leave the profession. In most cases the extrinsic motivators have contributed to teachers leaving education; while the intrinsic motivators allow teachers to endure. National research has revealed a vast array of reasons for teacher attrition. From these studies, the primary reasons stated for leaving education can be condensed down to poor working conditions, lack of administrative support, and low salary (Futernick, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Kelly, 2004; Quartz, 2003). The primary reasons stated by teachers for remaining in education have included a collegial work environment, support from the administration, and self-efficacy (Elfers et al., 2006; Hirsch, 2004, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kelly, 2004). Both new teachers and veteran teachers alike have stated these areas as rationale for their career decisions. Teacher turnover is a national crisis, yet few studies have used individual state

data to address local needs and concerns, which remains a limitation of the current research (Elfers et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2001). Therefore, the necessity to address teacher attrition from a more regional approach remains pertinent to make substantial strides in teacher retention (Eberhard et al., 2000). The most effective predictor of teacher turnover is to allow teachers to share their personal perceptions of daily experiences (Chapman, 1984; Elfers et al., 2006; Hirsch, 2004, 2005; Kardos, 2002; Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Loeb et al., 2005; Yost, 2006).

The major areas for teacher attrition or retention include working conditions, administrative support, salary, and self-efficacy. Each of these can be further analyzed with additional supporting research data. Poor working conditions seems to be a major category for dissatisfaction among teachers and include a variety of areas including but not limited to workplace conditions, lack of collegial support, excessive paperwork, lack of planning time, and resources, as well as unnecessary interruptions, job responsibilities, and duties (Futernick, 2007; Luekens et al., 2004). Administrative support is listed in both categories as a method to retain teachers or cause teachers to leave. Therefore, if administrative support is lacking it can result in high teacher turnover, but if support is strong it can also encourage teachers to continue (Darling-Hammond, 1997). From the Teacher Follow-up Survey, dissatisfaction with administration received a score of 38.2% as a reason for teachers to leave (Luekens et al., 2004). Although this research entails only 7% of public schools, it is a wide-view of various grade levels, states and schools consisting of 8400 teachers. In opposition to dissatisfaction with administrators, a collegial work environment that allows teachers a voice in vital school decisions and policy changes is revealed as an equalizing contributor to teacher retention (Darling-Hammond, 1997). One must interpret this research with caution since the later research only entails school system data from the state of California. Yet, other studies also point to a collegial work environment as

a predictor of low teacher attrition rates (Clement, 2000; Elfers, et al., 2006; Futernick, 2007; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Johnson & Birkland, 2003; Kardos, 2005). Although low salary has been pinpointed by multiple studies over the years, it does not seem to play as large a role in teachers' current career decisions, even though the Teacher Follow-up Survey results show 19.1% of teachers rank it as a reason to leave education (Luekens et al., 2004). The most recent focus has been to identify self-efficacy factors as predictors of teacher retention. These factors include personal satisfaction in one's role as a professional educator and the competence and self-esteem to fulfill the requirements which are extremely important to teachers (Bogler, 2001; Futernick, 2007). It is evident from the research that all of these factors come together to determine whether a teacher remains in education or leaves.

Poor Working Conditions

An underlying factor that is not sufficiently addressed in current research is how the working conditions influence who remains in the classroom and who leaves. These working conditions may include such items as daily workload, school supplies and resources, paperwork, school climate, and apathetic students. Working conditions continue to show up on surveys as one of the major determining factors that teachers list as a primary reason for leaving education. One's working conditions affect one's performance, and thus the satisfaction derived from one's work. When teachers feel demoralized, disrespected, and unsatisfied, their morale suffers and this affects their work. In many cases, the minute items such as adequate supplies and support within the school seem to matter the most to teachers. When a school system fails to address these basic needs, teachers will quit trying to make a difference in the lives of students. These

conditions are exasperated further in low-income schools and rural communities (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kelly, 2004).

In the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, working conditions were found to play a vital role in student performance as well as teacher retention (Hirsch, 2004). Moreover, teachers viewed their working conditions similarly regardless of their years of experience. The items that teachers ranked highly for improving working conditions included planning time, technology and instructional supplies, professional development, and having a role in decision making related to budget and the school improvement team. North Carolina's turnover rates were as high as 24% in some districts, which demonstrated the need to focus on retention efforts (Hirsch, 2004). North Carolina was the first state to address teacher attrition factors from the perspectives of the actual teachers. Governor Mike Easley established an initiative to evaluate the working conditions of teachers in order to make strides toward improving teacher retention rates in the state. His efforts provided school systems with data to drive their decisions toward improvement. With an analysis of 90% of North Carolina schools encompassing all the school systems and 34,000 individual survey responses, the findings provided powerful data for teacher retention as well as student achievement.

Many teachers, regardless of their years of experience, level, or subject taught claim that their workload is too demanding. This might encompass too many classes for a high school teacher or too many additional responsibilities beyond the classroom walls. Large amounts of paperwork and non-teaching duties contribute to an overbearing workload. In several studies, teachers respond that paperwork takes up valuable teaching time and increases their work after school hours and even at home. Planning periods are not used for planning the next day's lesson,

but instead they are used for completing paperwork and attending required meetings (Division for Educator Workforce Research and Development, GPSC, 2001a).

As the research demonstrates, working conditions are at the root of the teacher retention dilemma. Yet, most studies do not address this area completely. Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczak (2005) found that the strongest predictor of California teacher turnover rate was school conditions. This causes one to question why the most important factor to teacher retention has the least amount of empirical research. When working conditions are examined more closely, a multi-faceted problem is found that encompasses one's workload, supportive network, school climate, expectations and demands, paperwork, and students' ability levels. The dynamics of each school and individual classroom have various effects that contribute to teacher stress. Therefore, the best predictor of attrition would be to examine the local schools, or at least the schools in a given region, to find overarching similarities that can then be addressed to improve retention rates. Teacher stress amplifies, resulting in low morale, which can become another contributor to teacher attrition (Hunt & Carroll, 2002).

Lack of Support

Not only is support within the faculty important, support from the administration appears to play an even larger role in teacher retention. The statistic from the Teacher Follow-up Survey 2000-2001 stated that 38.2% of teachers who transferred reported support from administrators, or lack thereof, as a "very" or "extremely important" reason for their transfer (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Some of the research has stated that a lack of support from the administrative staff is a major factor contributing to teacher attrition (Anhorn, 2008; Blase & Blase, 2004; Division for Educator Workforce Recruitment, Research and Development, GPSC, 2006, 2001b;

Harrell et al., 2004). Yet, with all the studies on teacher attrition that have been conducted over the past 25 years, the area of administrative support remains one that is not fully understood because studies have not incorporated the teachers' perspective for possible improvements. Once again, the best way to derive data that will make a significant impact on teacher attrition is to collect data regionally from the individuals involved (Elfers et al., 2006; Hirsch, 2004, 2005).

Lack of administrative support includes a bureaucratic school climate with teachers having little say in the decision-making process. In many instances, principals are unsure as to why teachers leave. In a study conducted by Diamantes (2004), with data from five different schools, it was determined that principals believe teachers are most influenced by job security and appreciation of their work. Teachers in the study listed pay and working conditions as the most important factors to them. Blase and Blase (2004) have also focused on how principals influence teachers through their open ended questionnaire with 800 teachers. Their actions can have positive and negative consequences on teachers as well as the entire school climate. A good leader who is caring and considerate makes a huge difference in the establishment of a positive school environment. Supportive actions from the administration can include more equitable treatment; support when dealing with parents, students, and the community; and faculty involvement in school decision making (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Another area receiving attention in the current research is how quickly new teachers are leaving the profession. New teachers decide to leave education based on their experiences at the school after they have received their educational training. According to research by The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, new teachers want support from the administration, better teaching assignments, fewer student behavior problems, more equipment and supplies, collaboration time during the school day, and more professional growth opportunities (Johnson,

2006). In the classroom, teachers are alone with very little support. The actual support for new teachers is up to the professional culture of the school, according to research by Kardos (2005). The organizational structures in place at the school, the administrators, fellow teacher colleagues, and the policymakers all share a role in helping the first-year teacher succeed. These results evolved from work with the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers and consisted of a quantitative survey involving 110 new teachers in New Jersey. The challenges that new teachers face are very complicated and unfamiliar (Liu, 2005). Skills must be developed through experience and although mentors can assist new teachers greatly with this task, only with time can these issues be resolved. Both Kardos and Liu worked with the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers and chose to investigate new teacher retention and job satisfaction. While both focused on a select group Liu's research was more encompassing with four times as many respondents from four different states. His research was also piloted in New Jersey with Kardos's 110 respondents. Much of the research analyzed in this literature review has been interlinked which I consider to be a strength and not a weakness. More researchers scrutinizing the research results give various viewpoints to direct new educational policies to help retain our current teaching force.

McCann and Johannessen (2004) also focused their study on new teachers by conducting a qualitative study involving high school English teachers. The major questions they hoped to address were the significant frustrations that could influence new teachers to leave the profession and the supports, resources, and preparations that most influence new teachers to remain in the profession. After several interviews with the 11 participants, it was clear that beginning teachers have feelings of doubt, inadequacy, confusion, and frustration. Once again, their expectations do not meet with the actual experiences of a teaching career. According to the interviewees, the

isolation and never-ending workload are the most stressful parts of the job (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). While only 11 participants may seem extremely limited to a quantitative study, it can be extremely valuable in qualitative work. Although one still must question how the responses are influenced or even possibly led by the other participants. With an individual quantitative survey that includes open-ended responses, one has the ability to form their own reply without the possible persuasion of others.

According to research by Blase and Blase (2004), principals have a major influence on a new teacher's decision to stay. By reducing teacher stress through recognition and support, the burnout rate and attrition will reduce. New educators become disheartened quickly and need a sense of accomplishment or success in order to remain in the field of education. Therefore, a school's professional culture and supportive methods can encourage new teachers to stay and improve the school and hence student academic learning or they can cause the school to become an ever-revolving door to better opportunities. Teachers who have some experience and enter a new school are more likely to leave and look for better school dynamics if they are not satisfied, without feeling as if they have failed (Eberhard et al., 2000). It is also interesting to note that high school teachers were the largest category overall from this research study to plan to leave teaching. While most respondents stated an 18 – 33% possibility to leave, the high school respondents stated at least a 33% chance for females and as large as 53% likelihood for the males. A total of 228 new teachers were used in the survey taken in the South Texas region of the United States.

It is the principal's responsibility as leader of the school to create a positive environment that supports the growth of both teachers and students (Clement, 2000). When school leaders provide more collaboration and communication with their school, teacher performance as well as

student performance improves, leading to greater teacher satisfaction (Gruenert, 2005). Overall, the effects of the principal's leadership style relates to teacher satisfaction ratings, and consequently, retention (Blase & Blase, 2004; Halawah, 2006). Two major areas that administrators can change to make improvements are reducing paperwork and increasing unobstructed planning time. These actions can reduce teacher burnout as well as attrition rates (Blase & Kirby, 2000). Teachers also should have a voice in the decision-making process at their schools (Blase & Blase, 2004). Teachers work with students and the curriculum daily and thus should play a vital role in decisions that affect these factors. Input, respect, recognition, resources, and overall support are invaluable to ALL teachers (Clement, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Low Salary

Studies continue to show salary is a major determining factor as to why educators eventually leave the career, and has even been noted by college graduates as to why they do not choose to enter the field of education (Liu, Kardos, Kauffman, Peske, & Johnson, 2000; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). In 1991, a beginning teacher's salary was \$19,100 and ranked below every other college level occupation (Fineman-Nemser, 1996). When education is compared to other lines of work, pay has improved very little over the last 30 years (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003); actually, the earning gap has grown substantially over the last few years. One study states that the national average has only risen by \$135 in a 25-year span (Hirsch, 2004). Research has drawn correlations to teachers' low pay and society's low regard for the field of education (Liu et al., 2000). On average, teachers earn 12% less than other careers that require similar college credits (Allegretto et al., 2004). In a new era where short-term

employment is common, prospective teachers have more choices with higher pay, well-equipped work settings, and opportunities for rapid career advancement.

When Liu et al. (2000) interviewed the 24 mid-career entrants to the teaching field, most emphasized the huge pay cut that they had made to become a teacher. In many cases, a sacrifice as high as 50% of their previous salaries was noted. Many of the young, new teachers find the burden of making a living and repaying student loans impossible on a teacher's salary. Several studies concur that bright college graduates are less likely to enter the profession of teaching, and if they do, they leave in a short period of time (Adams & Dial, 1994; Shen, 1997).

In many states, educators can increase their salary by receiving advanced graduate degrees. In some states, pay raises are awarded to teachers who take additional courses even if an advanced degree is not earned. However, research in Texas has demonstrated that teachers with higher degrees will leave education sooner than teachers with only a bachelor's degree due to the better opportunities a higher degree offers (Kirby, Naftel, & Berends, 1999). Other research seems to contradict this statement and shows that teachers with advanced degrees remain in education longer due in part to the higher salary earned (Adams, 1996; Boe & Bobbitt, 1997; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Shen 1995). While some of these studies are from specific states, others are from a national perspective. However, all these studies were analyzing data from a source that simply lists various demographic factors such as age, gender, race, certification, and degree status. While this data is valuable for simple examination to state facts about the current education force, it does not address the problem from a point of which it can be attacked in order to find or work toward a solution. Once again, individual responses as to why some are leaving teaching before as well as after receiving advanced degrees is worthy of a deeper investigation.

Perhaps the variable is best determined by the individual's circumstances and is a collective factor consisting of many variables rather than simple comprehensive factor.

Throughout the years of teacher attrition research, salary continues to be listed as a major factor determining whether a teacher stays in the field. A number of researchers state this as an opinion after their quantitative research results reveal teachers unsatisfied with their salaries. Although it should be pointed out that if anyone was asked if they were getting paid enough for the job they were performing more than likely they would also request a higher salary. With this being said, some research results demonstrate that teachers are satisfied with their income and have even listed salary as a reason to stay (Inman & Marlow, 2004). It should also be noted that the research was conducted with a college class of beginning teachers preparing to enter teaching or already in their first year of teaching. Others have stated their opinion that the solution to high teacher turnover is to simply increase their pay (Chapman, 1994). Perhaps this is supported in the research, which reveals salary as a major reason for teacher attrition (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1988; Shen, 1997). Whether teacher attrition rates are rising due to transfers or due to those completely exiting the profession, the 2004 – 2005 Teacher Follow-up Survey demonstrates low salary as a major determinant ranking just behind working conditions (Marvel et al., 2006). The fact that all teachers receive the same pay regardless of student learning or how hard one works leads to frustration and turnover. Thus, the decision to seek a position at another school district with more favorable conditions results (Quartz, 2003). Although many states have identified this problem, no one has been able to sufficiently address the issue and consequently it remains a major obstacle to teacher retention.

Teacher Retention Reasons

Just like the reasons specified for leaving education, the reasons to stay within education are also linked to the working conditions and a supportive environment. Yet, the extrinsic factor of salary has been replaced with an intrinsic factor of self-efficacy. Support from colleagues remains highly influential in a teacher's decision to stay whether they are new or experienced. A supportive administrator continues to play a major role in a teacher's decision to continue or leave the profession. Although the demands are great, many teachers remain in education due to their feeling of accomplishment and the impact that they have on students regardless of the hardships they endure. Instead of seeing the daily challenges as excuses to leave, they recognize the difficulties as confirmation that they are needed. Ultimately, if a new teacher is unsatisfied with his or her job it will affect their decision to remain in education (Eberhard et al., 2000; Kardos, 2002; McCann & Johannessen, 2004). Likewise, if they perceive their job as a profession that is central to their lives and the lives of others, their satisfaction will increase and they will remain (Bogler, 2001). This is just another reason for addressing teacher retention or attrition reasons from a direct individualized approach with the actual teachers' perspectives analyzed.

Collegial Work Environment

Whether a new teacher or a veteran, a supportive work environment is crucial to retention. New teachers are more likely to remain in education when the school conditions include support, guidance, and proper resources (Berry, Hopkins-Thompson, & Hoke, 2002; Birkeland & Johnson, 2002; Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, & Liu, 2001). Colleagues help greatly with many of these factors along with encouragement and problem-solving strategies

necessary to succeed (Inman & Marlow, 2004). Collegiality, or a sense of working together for a common good, has been shown to increase teacher retention rates (Kardos et al., 2001). It should be noted that these research studies stated are limited in the fact that they encompass only a small sample size or they are only from one region of a state. Yet, when one considers the collegial environment of a school setting perhaps a smaller sample reveals a realistic view. Nationwide data is useful, especially for comparison purposes, but as many researchers continue to state, small regional data provides the specific details of how to address the problem and perhaps the best solution for each specific area. A collegial work environment remains one of the critical factors to be analyzed from the current research study as well.

Induction programs with true mentoring have also been shown to be positive influences in a new teacher's decision to remain (Berry et al., 2002; Hunt & Carroll, 2002). Mentoring allows the new teacher to adapt to the challenges they face and offers the beginner positive role models who are empathetic to their struggles. Teachers depend a great deal on their colleagues for support and hence their success and satisfaction are directly related (Liu, 2005). Even when the mentoring relationships were considered bad experiences, teacher retention rates improved (Eberhard et al., 2000).

School climate is another influential factor to teacher retention. This may translate to an integrated school culture, mentors with common planning time with the new teachers, supportive principals, or an overall team approach to education (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kardos et al., 2001). Peer observations and collaborative curricular planning has been shown through research to have the most positive effects on new teacher retention rates due to the professional culture that is created within the school (Kardos, 2005). Even novice teachers need colleagues that they can count on to ensure a positive working environment that supports all teachers. This integrated

professional culture helps everyone to constantly improve learning within the framework of the school environment (Kardos et al., 2001).

Eberhard et al.'s (2000) research from South Texas demonstrates a direct link between teacher attrition rates and low student achievement. The increased tension to remain on top or constantly improve leads to undue stress for teachers, principals, and students. Although in some school settings it has led to more focus and motivation to help ALL students succeed, which is the intended purpose. The social stigma tied to one's reputation is a very motivating factor. Initial research by Little (1982) noted the positive effect on student learning in a collaborative work environment. This qualitative research was an ethnographic study of 105 teachers and 14 administrators. Research consisted of both interviews and observations. More recent work from Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) also demonstrated increased learning based on a collegial environment or positive school climate. Although research on the professional community of a school can be quantitatively studied, only a qualitative study can reveal all the dynamic interactions that exist within a school community.

Support from Administration

In connection with administrators lack of support being a source of teacher attrition; support from administrators are strong indicators for teacher retention. According to the 2004 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, what mattered most in teachers' decisions to remain in education was to have a collegial atmosphere at school, along with a strong leader. It should also be noted that, according to the research, the view teachers have of a positive and collegial atmosphere does not always coincide with the principals' ideas of what a teacher needs. Teachers believe that in order to promote student achievement it is necessary for them to be

empowered to make decisions, especially at the high school level. Strong collaboration and communication must take place within the school environment in order to improve student learning (Hirsch, 2004). The avenue of collegiality including administrator support is the most important working condition that needs upgrading in today's schools, and it begins in the principal's office and his or her daily decisions.

A qualitative study consisting of interviews and observations of second year educators and then a follow-up interview 5 years later found that teachers were leaving education due to the lack of administrative support and the failure to attend to the new teachers' needs (Yost, 2006). This support and attention could be simple acts such as allowing common planning time for new teachers and their mentors, professional leave to attend conferences, or even monthly meetings with the new teachers for them to discuss or voice their opinions, concerns, questions, and feelings about their working environment and experiences (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Clement, 2000). A principal's effectiveness as perceived by the teachers is connected to the overall school climate and will impact teacher retention decisions (Liu et al., 2000). Therefore, in order for teachers to have the motivation, and confidence to meet the needs of the diverse student population today, principals must provide them with strong leadership, collaboration, and a shared vision (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Whether quantitative or qualitative research is conducted, teachers consistently mention administrator actions as contributing factors to their decisions. Quantitative research provides an overall view and incorporates a large population sample while qualitative research provides a more complex analysis of the teachers' experiences and decisions. A major limitation of qualitative research is the small sample size. In Yost's (2006) research, only 10 participants were interviewed. Yet, a limitation of a large samples size is major generalizations without any

explanations. Therefore, it was in the best interest of this research to incorporate both a quantitative survey and qualitative response sections to provide a holistic view of education in Georgia.

Self-efficacy (Teacher Morale)

Why do teachers remain in education with all the negative publicity they are receiving from society? One of the major reasons to emerge from the research recently has been identified as self-efficacy, or the feeling a teacher has that they are making a difference in the lives and learning of students (Grant, 2006; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Yost, 2006). Self-efficacy is a measure of success and everyone needs to feel a sense of accomplishment in order to continue work in any given profession. Likewise, the teachers who feel as if they are failing, and receive no support or encouragement, are more likely to leave the profession. Although this area has been receiving some attention from researchers lately, much of the research remains limited as far as focusing on details such as individual teacher perceptions as well as regional data analysis.

Many teachers enter education due to the deeply motivating intrinsic rewards associated with helping others. Yet, after facing the everyday challenges of making a difference, salary ranks as one of the major reasons for leaving. Fifty new secondary level teachers in Massachusetts were interviewed by Liu et al. (2000). Although the small sample size and restricted location was a limitation of the study it does provide a detailed view into the experiences of new secondary education teachers. From most of the research previously described, the secondary level is very limited in scope. Their findings reinforce previous studies that focused on the major reasons for choosing a teaching career as the value of meaningful work, love of working with children, and the enjoyment of pedagogy within their specific subject

matter. Therefore, enjoyment appears to remain more important than salary to most educators. As the demands and difficulty level increase, low salary becomes more oppressive and the intrinsic motivation is not enough for teachers to remain. This results in a decision to leave education in hopes of securing another career that is more rewarding from a financial as well as an intrinsic motivation standpoint.

A sense of accomplishment with students is essential to retaining teachers. Without the desire of students to learn, many teachers are at a loss. Ingersoll (2001), especially, found this factor at play within high poverty schools, which are shown to experience the greatest teacher turnover. Ingersoll's work remains the most comprehensive and has served as the standard by which additional research has been conducted. He is quick to make note of the limitations of his studies not focusing on regional data sets, but more of a nationwide snapshot of the trends noticed. Along this same line of self-efficacy with the student population is the contribution of attrition rates to the different ability levels of the individual classes (Kelly, 2004). The average ability level of the students in a teacher's classroom has a significant impact on one's satisfaction and self-efficacy. Teachers of lower track students receive less support within the school setting when they actually need more support. Some new teachers may not be willing to accept a higher track class due to increased pressures, demands, and expectations even though the student discipline problems could be reduced. Kelly (2004) used the Schools and Staffing Survey of 1990 – 1991 to evaluate the factors of teacher attrition. Although this does provide many generalizations, it is a wide lens approach that does not give any detailed measurements on which to make significant steps toward improvements. What must occur with such research is additional steps to pinpoint specific factors and then sufficiently evaluate these factors within

several subsets and regions in the United States. Only when researchers are able to narrow the focus of such research can significant progress be made toward improving teacher retention.

A feeling of self-efficacy relates directly to teacher morale, which has also been studied in the research and found to contribute to the teacher attrition dilemma. More high-stakes testing and exit exams place more pressures on teachers to make sure students learn no matter what the cost. Although empirical teacher attrition research has been limited in this specific area, one study, which included California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania, found that although student learning has improved, staff morale has declined due to the associated pressures with the No Child Left Behind implementation as well as Standards Based Learning accountability (Hamilton, Stecher, Marsh, McCombs, Russell, Naftel & Barney, 2007). It must be noted that although this study is enlightening because it incorporates Georgia educators it did not include secondary schools. So only a generalization can be extracted that NCLB actions including high-stakes testing are also associated with high school teachers' low morale status. Tye and O'Brien (2002) focused their research on the relation between teacher retention and accountability pressures due to California graduate students increasing complaints of a changing work environment and the increased pressures with their chosen professions of education. Although the response rate was extremely low, due to many graduates moving within the five years of their surveys being sent, they did find some interesting reasons. The number one reason stated by the elementary and secondary teachers who had left education were pressures that included paperwork, high-stakes testing, as well as the implementation of new standards.

Survey studies in the Washington, D.C. area have revealed that the NCLB policies are working against the nation's quality teacher supply and are actually hindering student improvement (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005). Amrein and Berliner (2002) found similar

results in their research and stated that the demands of high-stakes testing is actually escalating the dropout rates and leading to less student engagement. This study encompasses eighteen states with high-stakes testing including a graduation test that affects whether a senior graduates from high school or not. Georgia is one of the eighteen states evaluated. It is interesting to note that the two states with the highest number of standardized tests were North Carolina and Texas. Both of these states have shown up in various research articles discussed in this dissertation. It is also interesting to note that Georgia had the highest percentage of students to not graduate due to these high-stakes tests. It begs to question why Georgia is not on the forefront of additional educational research to determine the underlying factors affecting student achievement and perhaps its connection to teacher retention problems.

Georgia's Teacher Attrition

In 2006, Georgia replaced almost 16,000 teachers, while in 2001 Georgia teacher hires were lower at 11,817. Georgia hires more of these teachers from other states than from Georgia's own teacher prep programs (Division for Educator Workforce Research and Development, GPSC, 2001b). Recent predictions are that within 5 years, 34% of Georgia's teachers will leave the profession (Division for Educator Workforce Recruitment, Research and Development, 2006). According to data from the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (2006), new teacher attrition in Georgia is around 50% for the first 3 years, with a higher trend noted in urban districts. Georgia requires, on average, 14,000 new teachers each year at a cost of \$43,000 per teacher replacement. This creates a yearly total of \$602 million for Georgia teacher replacement costs (Hunt & Carroll, 2002). It was also noted from the department of labor figures that new

teachers do not become confident until experiencing up to 7 years in the classroom (Carroll, 2007).

In comparison to these Georgia figures, the state of Texas, which is the highest state in the nation for teacher attrition (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005), loses 15.5% of teachers annually with replacement costs hovering around \$329 million per year (Hunt & Carroll, 2002) to hire around 25,000 teachers with at least half of these new. Actually new teacher attrition rates in Texas are around 25% for the first 3 years (Eberhard et al., 2000). It is interesting to note that although Georgia is ranked eighth in high teacher attrition rates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005), Georgia's attrition rates for the first 3 years of new teachers' careers is double what it is in Texas, and Georgia's costs for teacher replacement is also higher than in Texas even though Texas must replace more teachers annually.

In Georgia, teacher salaries have increased to a ranking of 15th in the nation for the 2004-2005 school year. This attracts 22% of its annual hires from adjoining states. With several states feeling the pressures of teacher attrition, Georgia's adjoining states of Alabama and Florida are encouraging their teachers to remain by offering various incentives. Georgia must learn from its neighbors and focus on attracting and retaining its teachers in order to maintain a quality teaching force (Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, 2006).

A forum held in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 9, 2006, stated some of the concerns for the future of education in the state. The panel was composed of teachers, businessmen, college professors, and education representatives from the state department. Ideas slated to turn around this downward spiral of losing beginning teachers within the first 5 years included strengthening teacher preparation programs, providing support in a collaborative environment, and demonstrating that teaching is a rewarding career for the future (Carroll, 2007). Due to increased

demands for technical training for 80% of the jobs within the next 10 years, business leaders were also urged to work with schools. As a final plan for Georgia, panelists urged for a supportive environment for all of Georgia's teachers.

In Georgia's initial phase report by the Division for Educator Workforce Research and Development and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, several positive and negative aspects were discovered. Teachers stated that their interaction with students and the ability to make a difference, a collegial work environment, and strong, consistent administrative support were all positive aspects of teaching. Although these areas encourage college graduates to pursue a career in education, it is the negative aspects experienced that result in teachers leaving. Georgia's report noted paperwork, non-teaching duties, student apathy, lack of preparedness, lack of parent and community support, low salaries, lack of respect, and high occurrence of discipline as negative aspects (Division for Educator Workforce Research and Development, GPSC, 2001a). Although this was a substantial start to addressing the teacher attrition problem in Georgia, little progress has been made. Many of these areas will further be examined in the current research study and hopefully instigate strides toward improvements.

Improvements in Other States

In 1993, California was one of the first states to face the teacher attrition crisis. In response they gave beginning teachers 2 years of support with release time with their mentors. Every mentor also received training, and some new teachers received reduced teaching schedules. Their 5-year retention rates are now 84%, which is only 16% leaving within a 5-year span (Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, 2006). Ingersoll's (2003b) research on mentoring encourages that the same strategies can reduce attrition by up to one-half.

Data from research in South Texas has shown that mentoring is also very valuable during the second year of teaching (Eberhard et al., 2000). Their research demonstrates that having a mentor greatly increases the chance that a teacher will remain in education. Results illustrate that 90% of teachers in their first year said they would stay, while only 61% without a mentor said they would remain in education.

The state of Florida enacted an accountability voucher program in 1999, called the A+ Plan. Students could receive vouchers to attend another school if their current public school system was characterized as a failing school based on student test scores. These vouchers increased as the NCLB mandate continued and allowed incentives to the schools, their teachers and the students to improve performance. Goldhaber and Hannaway (2004) visited schools and conducted a case study that discovered a narrowing of instructional focus due to these increased pressures, and schools were more concerned with the societal interpretation of the failing status more than the vouchers. With only five schools chosen and included in the case study, it offers only a glimpse into how effective the program was, but the researchers did a good job of varying the characteristics of the schools. Once again, by speaking with the actual teachers affected by the programs pressures, they were able to identify actual factors contributing to the added pressures of accountability within each school. It was determined that the social stigma associated with being a “failing school” were the most detrimental to the morale of the school faculty.

North Carolina was the first state to allow teachers the opportunity to identify factors at play in their daily experiences that contribute to teacher attrition (Hirsch, 2004). In 2002 and again in 2004, Governor Mike Easley asked for a report on teachers’ working conditions by way of a teacher opinion survey. The vision was to allow the data to drive decisions about how to

improve teacher working conditions and improve retention rates. Some of North Carolina's schools witnessed turnover rates as high as 50% in one year, with the state averaging more than 12% per district. For teachers to remain in the classroom a collegial atmosphere (34%) and a strong instructional leader (27%) were essential factors (Hirsch, 2004). South Carolina found almost identical reasons with their 2004 survey, with a collegial atmosphere scoring 32% and strong instructional leader score of 26% for teacher retention (Hirsch, 2005). Because of the value observed in this type of approach, a parallel approach was incorporated for the current research study. Many of the findings from both North and South Carolina's survey results were connected to the study of high school public teachers' perceptions of working conditions for the state of Georgia.

Summary

Some researchers have argued that the only way to make teaching a more attractive profession is to change the societal norms and structure of the profession (Boe et al., 1997; Feller, 2005). One reason for such a high turnover rate in education, as emphasized by Rice (2005), is that teachers feel criticized by the public, and that society views teaching as an "easy" job with summers off. Rice's study also found a sense of guilt from teachers due to their commitment to care for the child, the pressures of accountability, and the need to be perfect, all contributors to emotional stress and thus low teacher morale. Teachers and schools are filling additional roles in society, and these pressures continue to increase. Tye and O'Brien (2002) affirm that the degree of job intensification that has taken place in teaching within the past decade is difficult to comprehend. Society continues to ask schools to take on more responsibilities, including many that used to be considered the responsibility of parents.

Therefore, many teachers lose sight of the reasons for becoming an educator and take their ambition and self-respect into other professions.

Teachers must face and persevere through more challenges with less respect from administrators, parents, students, the community, and the nation. Increased societal demands make education the hope for the future, as well as the scapegoat for past indiscretions. Therefore, it is no surprise that schools are experiencing a mass exodus of professional educators. Many teachers are leaving not only for better opportunities, but for more respect (Goodlad, 2001). Therefore, the fact that teacher attrition is a multi-faceted problem is not a new discovery. However, as a nation more research must address teacher attrition from the local teachers' perspectives in order to make significant changes for the future of education (Elfers et al., 2006; Hirsch, 2004, 2005).

According to National Education Association's (2003) research, some facts about teachers may not be well known to the public. Teachers devote an average of 50 hours per week on teaching duties and responsibilities, teach around 21-28 pupils per class, allocate about \$450 of their own money per year on school supplies, make an average of \$31,704 per year as a starting salary, and enter the teaching field due to a desire to make a difference in the lives of the next generation. Benjamin R. Barber refers to the Carnegie Foundation Report Card on School Reform findings that teachers have shown a "devastating decline in morale" due to remaining "dispirited, confronted with working conditions that have left them more responsible, but less empowered" (Goodlad, 2001, p. 17). High school teachers especially feel the pressures from parents and a lack of support leading to their leaving (Hill & Barth, 2004).

In the analysis of teacher attrition rates, several factors have been identified as having an impact on the decision to leave education. Whether the working conditions are encouraging or

oppressive, whether the leaders support their workers or not, and whether the salary is great enough to offset the negative impact of lowering self-efficacy, all of these are relevant to the current teacher retention issue. One cannot narrow the list to one primary factor, but a combination of these factors seem to be what ultimately determine a teacher's decision to remain or leave the field of education today. Also individual schools vary by way of their faculty, administrators, and professional climate. All of which suggest a variety of possible reasons that equally contribute to the problem of teacher retention.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter is organized to present the methodology and procedures followed during the conducting of the research study on teacher attrition rates in Georgia. Descriptions of the survey instrument used, the population sample selected as well as the analysis of the data will be explained. The University of Alabama's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects remained updated and permission was granted for these procedures prior to any research.

The purpose of the survey-based research was to determine how Georgia public high school faculty members perceive various pressures and experiences, and to relate these to the major factors previously determined to be early indicators of teacher attrition. A mixed method inquiry was used to quantitatively analyze the general perceptions among the faculty members and to better determine the qualitative reasons behind their responses. The demographics selected to analyze these perceptions included level of education attained, years of teaching experience, and school size based upon individual school student enrollment within the state of Georgia.

Research Sample

A listing of the public high schools in the state of Georgia was obtained from the National Center of Educational Statistics web site. Using this list, a total of 120 schools were selected based on their 9th-12th grade status and location not encompassing the Atlanta Metro

area. These selected schools comprised urban, suburban, and rural districts. Additional information that included the school's address, student population numbers, and current principal's email address was also obtained from the web site as well as individual searches for the actual school's web site. Each principal was initially contacted in June of 2008 through a mailing which included a personal request letter, postage-paid return postcard, and a copy of the faculty survey instrument. Each of the 16 principals who agreed to actively participate promptly received a large envelope with a sufficient number of faculty surveys, faculty informed consent letters, and a postage-paid return envelope for the completed faculty surveys. From these 16 packets, only 12 were returned. Since these numbers were determined by the researcher as inadequate, a follow-up email was sent to the 104 principals who had not responded by August of 2008. From this second attempt, another 16 additional high schools agreed to participate.

The researcher wanted to ensure maximum return rates. Therefore, all schools received ample surveys to distribute to all faculty members currently employed, the subjects were assured that all information provided would remain confidential, and the survey items were succinct to allow a shortened time to respond. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and informed consent was required of all participants. There were no known foreseeable discomforts or risks expected for the participants nor were there any direct benefits.

A total of 24 survey instrument packages were received by the researcher as of November 2008. This resulted in a total of 545 completed faculty surveys from the original 2,100 that were mailed to the respective high schools. This produced an overall return rate of 25.95%. This was determined to be an adequate sample size due to the total sample size of Georgia's faculty members being greater than 1,500 and the percentage return rate totaling more than 20% (Gay & Airasian, 2003). If one analyzes the sample size from the total Georgia faculty members initially

invited to participate, a sample size of 400 was also adequate since the 120 high schools asked included more than 5,000 faculty members overall (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

Demographic Data

By using a mixed-method survey instrument, an attempt was made to provide both a quantitative snapshot of faculty perceptions via the survey items as well as specific details about the educational career provided by the qualitative response section. From the 545 total surveys returned, 287 (52.7%) were from large schools comprised of more than 1,000 students and 258 (47.3%) surveys were from small schools with fewer than 1,000 students (see Table 1). Other demographic variables included education degree held and years of teaching experience. A total of 180 teachers held bachelor's degrees (33%), most teachers held master's degrees at 233 or 42.8%, only 110 had attained their specialist degree (20.2%), and a mere 22 had a doctorate (4%), as shown in Table 2. Years of teaching experience ranged from beginners to those with over 36 years with an average of 13.4 years. If these are broken into 5-year increments, the percentages of teachers who would be labeled as beginners with 0-5 years teaching experience make up the largest category encompassing 25.87% ($n = 141$). A ranking of the remaining categories were 6-10 years experience group making up 19.82%, 11-15 year experience group was 17.25%, those nearing retirement with more than 25 years group at 13.94%, 16-20 year group with 13.21%, and the smallest percentage was the 21-25 year group at only 9.91%.

Table 1

Response Rates for Survey

School population size	<i>N</i>	%
Large School Surveys (>1,000 students)	287	52.7%
Small School Surveys (<1,000 students)	258	47.3%

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Faculty Participants

Demographic variable	<i>n</i>	%
Highest Degree Held		
Bachelors	180	33.0
Masters	233	42.8
Specialist	110	20.2
Doctorate	22	4.0
Years of Teaching Experience		
0-5 years	141	25.87
6-10 years	108	19.82
11-15 years	94	17.25
16-20 years	72	13.21
21-25 years	54	9.91
25+ years	76	13.94

Instrumentation

The research study employed survey methodology using a self-report anonymous survey instrument developed by the researcher (see Appendix A). Items on the survey were based on information gathered from the review of literature and previously developed pilot study survey instrument (see Appendix B). Before the research could be completed, approval was granted by The University of Alabama's Institutional Review Board, and various modifications were made from suggestions made by the educational experts on the dissertation research committee.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in the Spring of 2007 and involved a convenience sample of 81 participants encompassing two Georgia high school faculty. Of those surveys distributed, only 74 were used in the final analysis with 7 being discarded due to incomplete sections. The quantitative portion of the survey consisted of 29 Likert-type opinion questions regarding

personal teaching experiences and pressures based on a 4-point scale. Demographic items including highest degree attained and years of teaching experience were at the conclusion of the survey. Three open-ended questions were also included, but had very limited in-depth responses from the participants.

From the 74 respondents in the sample there were 22 teachers with a bachelor's degree, 23 with a master's, 26 holding specialist degrees, and 3 with doctorates. The four demographic categories related to years of teaching experience included 26 participants with up to 9 years experience, 25 participants in the 10-19 year category, 18 in the 20-29 year category, and 5 participants with 30 or more years of experience.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient for reliability rating for the pilot study was .941. From the results and suggestions from the pilot study, the present instrument was crafted.

Present Study

The quantitative portion of the survey consisted of 30 statements requiring a valued opinion regarding personal teaching experiences and pressures perceptions. These 30 items were scored based on a Likert-type scale response section consisting of *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, and *strongly agree* selections. Demographic items, as well as five open-ended qualitative questions, were at the conclusion of the survey. Demographics, including size of school population, highest level of education attained, and years of teaching experience, were used to determine whether a significant difference exists between the sample participants. The written responses to the open-ended qualitative questions were another way to evaluate how teachers perceive their daily rituals and pressures, which could be used to better determine and understand the factors related to teacher attrition and retention rates.

The present study survey instrument of 30 quantitative items had a reliability factor using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .933. After dropping item 5 due to its low item-to-total correlation, the new revised Cronbach alpha coefficient of .936.

Data Collection

A total of 120 principals were contacted initially for approval. Upon agreement of the school principals, research packages that included letters of consent, faculty survey instruments, and a postage paid return envelope, were mailed. Upon teachers returning from summer break, the survey instrument was to be distributed and collected within a 2-day window. Once all completed surveys were collected, these were to be returned in the postage-paid envelope from the original mailing. The full postage paid return envelope was included with the letters and faculty survey instruments in an effort to improve the response rate. As the packages were received in the mail, each survey instrument was analyzed for completion and numbered consecutively. There were no names recorded on the survey to ensure anonymity.

Data Analysis

Various data analyses methods were incorporated to determine reliability, validity, and significance. These methods consisted of Cronbach alpha, frequencies, item-to-total correlation, factor analysis, and descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics for the 30 quantitative statements using the Likert scale data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS®) software. The 4-point scale used for the data analysis varied from *Strongly Agree* (4), *Agree* (3), *Disagree* (2), and *Strongly Disagree* (1). From the qualitative open-ended questions, various comments were used to better explain the quantitative data results. An association will be

suggested from the current research to previous research relating the factors contributing to teacher attrition.

A mixed method approach to research has been determined to provide a valuable way to “generate insights that are deeper and broader, and to develop important knowledge claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspectives” (Greene, 2001, p. 251). Due to this focus, the present research study encompassed the use of the following research questions to guide the investigation.

1. Do teachers’ perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on their level of education/degree attained (bachelor, master, specialist, doctorate)? (Data to determine overall differences in perceptions were analyzed using an ANOVA. Chi square analysis was used to determine differences in opinion for individual items.)

2. Do teachers’ perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on years of teaching experience? (Data to determine overall differences in perceptions were analyzed using a one way ANOVA. Chi square analysis was used to examine differences in opinion for individual items.)

3. Do teachers’ perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on school size (large with more than 1000 students, or small with less than 1000 students)? (Data to determine overall differences in perceptions were analyzed using the *t* test. Chi square analysis was used to examine differences in opinion for individual items.)

4. What are the current teaching forces’ opinions about their profession?

a. What do teachers feel is the role of a professional educator?

b. Why would a teacher leave or remain in the profession?

c. What are current teachers’ plans for the future?

(Participant responses were analyzed qualitatively by recording and examining the data to determine any patterns or relationships that coincided with the quantitative results evaluated from the statistical analyses as well as a basic knowledge of teachers' opinions.)

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to examine Georgia public high school educator perceptions of their daily experiences and pressures, as perceived by the teachers. A mixed method approach was employed to best reveal the current reasons behind Georgia's high teacher attrition rates and also serve as guidance for future improvement of the retention rates throughout the state. Both quantitative and qualitative responses were analyzed for a more holistic examination using descriptive summaries, ANOVAs, *t* tests, and chi-square analyses. This chapter presents the findings of this study by correlating teacher responses to four research questions that encompass both quantitative and qualitative research:

1. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on their level of education/degree attained (bachelor, master, specialist, doctorate)?
2. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on years of teaching experience?
3. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on school size (large with more than 1000 students, or small with less than 1000 students)?
4. What are the current teaching forces' opinions about their profession?
 - a. What do teachers feel is the role of a professional educator?
 - b. Why would a teacher leave or remain in the profession?
 - c. What are current teachers' plans for the future?

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability of the survey instrument was established through statistical methods. The quantitative portion of the survey consisted of 30 Likert-type items and had a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .933. The item-to-total correlation ranged from .290 to .759. Item 5 had the lowest item-to-total correlation which was below .30. Because correlations less than .30 are not reliable, item 5 was dropped. This resulted in a new Cronbach alpha coefficient of .936 for the remaining 29 items. A new and final item-to-total correlation range of .367 to .759 resulted after this deletion, which supports internal consistency of the survey. The standard error of measurement was found to be 2.97.

The responses from the survey instrument were subjected to exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood analysis with a varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization. This method was incorporated to provide evidence of validity as well as to define the dimensions of the variables in construct validity. From the 30 items, there were five factors determined to exist with eigenvalues of 1.00 or greater. Factor I explained 38% of the variance with all five factors explaining a total of 56% of the variance. The scree plot for the five-factor loading values is represented in Figure 1.

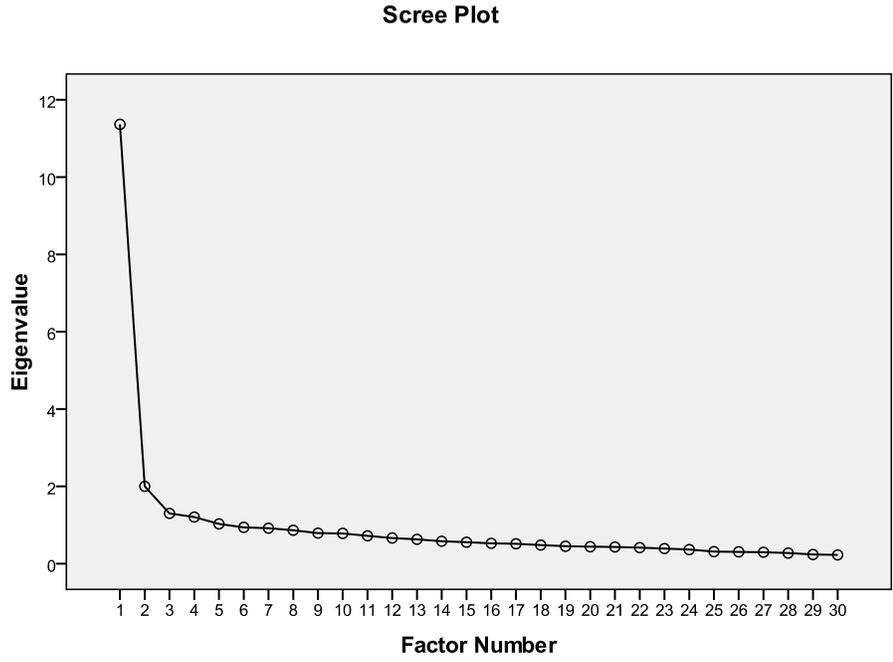


Figure 1. Scree plot of five-factor loadings.

After examining the principal component analysis, a five-factor solution was retained, which provided the best simple structure. Table 3 presents the factor loadings for each item.

Table 3

Factor Loadings Using Maximum Likelihood Extraction Method

	I Supportive Administration	II Self- Efficacy	III Working Conditions	IV Technology & Resources	V Decision- Making	Communalities
Q3	.715					.601
Q2	.688					.579
Q29	.652					.686
Q10	.586					.476
Q25	.549					.584
Q9	.540					.552
Q24	.480					.621
Q13	.456					.482
Q22	.342					.400
Q16		.678				.586
Q28		.613				.606
Q15		.589				.499
Q17		.579				.488
Q18		.542				.646
Q30		.445				.412
Q8		.374				.335
Q11		.325				.333
Q19		.325				.416
Q20			.518			.316
Q23			.475			.586
Q6			.452			.354
Q1			.350			.223
Q27			.335			.231
Q14			.285			.220
Q7			.284			.240
Q5				.866		.465
Q12				.706		.459
Q21				.470		.381
Q26					.792	.592
Q4					.493	.557
% of Variance	38%	7%	4%	4%	3%	Total = 56%

Item loadings are all above .284, which represents evidence to the construct validity for the instrument. The underlying dimensions of factors that affect teacher retention rates in the

state of Georgia were identified by each relationship in the following areas: I) Administrative Actions, II) Self-Efficacy/Professional Improvement, III) Working Conditions/Pressures, IV) Technology & Resources, and V) Decision-Making.

Research Question 1 Results

Research Question 1 was, “Do teachers’ perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on their level of education/degree attained (bachelor, master, specialist, doctorate)?” Overall differences in perceptions were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), $F(3, 541) = 3.680, p = .012$. The various degree categories for the faculty members was analyzed to see whether there was a difference of perception based on this demographic factor. With four different educational degree categories analyzed, ANOVA found a significant difference at $\alpha = .05$ between faculty members with a master’s degree and those with a specialist degree with $p = .012$. Further analysis using chi-square analysis tests determined that there were significant relationships between educational degree attained and eight individual survey items at $\alpha = .05$ due to no missing cells within the groupings. Table 4 represents the Pearson chi-square values and p values per item.

Table 4

Chi-square and p-values Per Significant Item at $p < .05$ (Degree Attained)

Survey Item	χ^2	p
1. The local community members, including parents, are involved in school decisions.	22.357	.008
4. Decisions that affect the entire school are made collaboratively.	17.553	.041
12. The availability of student access to computers at school is sufficient.	19.212	.023
13. Expectations are communicated effectively.	18.720	.028
16. Administrators have confidence in my professional judgment of curricular implementation.	22.686	.007
23. The overall expectations of faculty members by the administration are reasonable.	22.750	.007
25. Administrators provide feedback for improvements.	20.663	.014
26. I have the opportunity to play an active role in the decision-making process at my school.	18.282	.032

Research Question 2 Results

Research Question 2 asked, “Do teachers’ perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on years of teaching experience?” Overall differences in perceptions were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The various years of experience for the faculty members were analyzed to see whether there was a difference of perception based on this demographic factor. These categories were in 5-year increments of 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, 21-25 years, and 25 years experience or more. With multiple categories analyzed no significant difference was found at $\alpha = .05$, $F(30, 514) = 1.076$, $p = .361$. Yet, further analysis using chi-square analysis tests determined that there were significant relationships between years of teaching experience and eight individual survey items at $\alpha = .05$ with no missing cells within the groupings. Table 5 represents the Pearson chi-square values and p values per item.

Table 5

Chi-square and p-values Per Significant Item at $p < .05$ (Years of Teaching Experience)

Survey Item	χ^2	p
11. My school allows opportunities for professional/staff development during school hours.	116.749	.031
12. The availability of student access to computers at school is sufficient.	125.078	.009
14. Overall the number of students in my classes are reasonable.	119.668	.020
16. Administrators have confidence in my professional judgment of curricular implementation.	116.138	.033
20. The required paperwork for teachers is reasonable.	125.016	.009
21. My school provides sufficient instructional resources, supplies, and equipment to meet the needs of the students.	124.213	.010
23. The overall expectations of faculty members by the administration are reasonable.	122.223	.013
24. Teachers are empowered at my school.	114.349	.043

Research Question 3 Results

“Do teachers’ perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on school size?” was Research Question 3. Large schools were those high schools in the sample with over

1000 students and small schools were those with fewer than 1000 students. Overall differences in perceptions were analyzed using an independent samples *t* test. The various responses for the 545 faculty members were examined to determine whether there was a difference of perception based on the student population or school size. A significant difference was determined to exist between the perceptions of faculty members at large schools ($M = 89.3345, SD = 11.31740$) versus small schools ($M = 90.3101, SD = 12.66282$), $t(543) = -.950, p = .041$. Chi-square analyses were performed to determine significances between school size and individual items. There were 5 individual survey items that resulted in a significant relationship of opinions based on school size at $\alpha = .05$ with no missing cells within the groupings. Table 6 represents the Pearson chi-square values and *p* values per item.

Table 6

Chi-square and p-values Per Significant Item at $p < .05$ (School Size)

Survey Item	χ^2	<i>p</i>
3. The administrators seem willing to make changes as necessary for school improvement.	8.027	.045
6. The additional assigned duties (committees, parent meetings, morning/afternoon or Lunch/hall duty, etc.) are reasonable expectations for faculty.	12.053	.007
10. Rules for student conduct are enforced by administrators in a consistent manner.	8.909	.031
11. My school allows opportunities for professional/staff development during school hours.	13.067	.004
21. My school supplies sufficient instructional resources, supplies, and equipment to meet the needs of the students.	8.020	.046

Research Question 4 Results

Question 4 consisted of qualitative responses from the survey instrument. There were three specific parts to the research question needing analysis, “What do teachers feel is the role of a professional educator?”, “Why would a teacher leave or remain in the profession?”, and “What are current teachers’ plans for the future?” For each part of the research question, the researcher used a qualitative approach for analyzing and reporting the results. Narrative

responses from the survey participants were in the researcher's opinion the best method for explaining the perceptions of the faculty members from the open-ended questions at the conclusion of the survey instrument.

The specific open-ended questions used to address Research Question 4a were, "Describe your role as a professional educator" and "Has this role changed over the years? If so, in what ways?" Common themes emerged as the researcher analyzed the individual responses. Of the 545 participants who returned the survey instrument, 373 (68.4%) answered open-ended question 1 and 359 (65.87%) answered part 2. From these numbers it was also determined that 59.05% ($N = 212$) believed that the role of the professional educator has changed over the years and 33.15% ($N = 119$) believed that this role has not changed. The remaining 7.8% ($N = 28$) respondents were unsure.

As far as the common themes that emerged from this analysis of the professional role of an educator, some were positive statements while others were more negative in their connotation. Most stated the obvious based on the standard definition of a teacher to help students learn, to teach, to educate, to coach, to counsel, to serve as a role model, or to prepare them for the future as in a career or college. A couple of specific examples from the respondents include the following:

Teacher, mentor, role model, confidante, cheerleader, positive influence, nurturer (Respondent 13).

Empowering students, life skills coach, mentor, counselor, pseudo-parent, trainer, encourager, paper pusher, guide (Respondent 15).

Another theme noticed in the teacher responses to the professional role of a teacher were those that chose to take more of a societal stand and stated they were preparing students to be

lifelong learners, future leaders, or for citizenship. Some of these faculty responses were more passionate.

Respondent 202 stated,

The most important thing I will do in my life second only to being a mother to my own children. I view teaching as an extension of that role; I am helping to shape the future of my students and their children. I may view this too seriously--but that is why I take my career seriously and want to do the best job possible. I want to continue to learn, grow and be an asset to our school.

Respondent 168 replied, "To teach young people knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to succeed in their working and personal lives. according to respondent 168."

Respondent 244 wrote,

As a professional educator my role is to empower students with the knowledge skills, and abilities necessary for them to succeed in the real world of work. Not only that but to be a positive impact in the lives of students so that they will make the right decisions to be successful in life.

Respondent 201 stated,

My role as an educator is to promote and encourage critical thinking in order to preserve democracy. I must constantly challenge my students academically- but most importantly demand they consider their neighbors and their role in making the world a better place.

Others took the bureaucratic approach and simply stated that their role was to prepare the students to pass the End-of-course-Test, Graduation Test, or based on the No Child Left Behind legislation, to prepare all to be successful. Below are some of these responses:

Respondent 243 summed their role up as a way to "try to empower students to pass all of the state/national tests that supposedly measures their knowledge level."

Respondent 249 stated,

My role as a professional educator is to ensure that students are properly supervised, the classroom is pretty and meets Standards Based Doctrine, implement the curriculum at the minimalist level in order for all students to pass and No child is left behind.

It seems that teachers are expected to complete more tasks than is possible for an individual to complete. Multi-tasking is the norm and if you have a minute teach; however, the state and federal government are going to hold you accountable for your students' standardized test scores. Also, you no longer have the flexibility to teach within the curriculum what you want, when you want, and how you want. We are all going to teach the same topic, at the same time and use the same activities and evaluation strategies. (Respondent 40)

Respondent 106 wrote, "To facilitate student mastery of GPS and 'teach tests'. To enforce school policies and maintain/contribute to a safe, orderly learning environment."

Respondent 229 simply stated their role appeared to be the "filler of a pail and not the lighter of a fire."

In order to properly analyze part b of Research Question 4, "Why would a teacher leave or remain in the profession?" Once again a qualitative approach was incorporated and consisted of two additional open-ended questions from the survey instrument. Narrative responses from the survey participants were in the researcher's opinion the best method for explaining the perceptions of the faculty members. The specific open-ended questions used to address this research question were, "Have you ever considered leaving teaching? If so, what was the major reason(s)?" and "Why have you remained in education?" As the individual comments were analyzed, common themes emerged. Of the 545 participants who returned the survey instrument, 423 (77.61%) answered the first open-ended question for this research question and 419 (76.88%) answered part two. From these numbers it was also determined that 60.28% ($N = 255$) had considered leaving the profession of teaching while 39.72% ($N = 168$) had not considered the prospect of leaving education. A few individual responses were selected to be representative of these two options from the survey samples collected. The responses given are for "yes, I have considered leaving education for the following reasons . . ." followed by "no, I have not considered leaving education because. . . ."

One of the yes respondents was 191 who stated,

Absolutely- constant changes in administration and lack of teacher governance under what I saw as incompetent and uninformed people all the way to superintendent made it hard to do what was best for students and myself at times. If that had not changed this year, I had planned to leave. I also found it hard to get support these past 2 years for pursuing content area professional development opportunities.

Another faculty member who has considered leaving, respondent 201, wrote,

At least once a week. Students see school as a formality, in which they are entitled to success without hard work or critical thinking. I rarely feel like my long hours and diligence are valued by the community. Bureaucracy and standardized test work against my values/reasons for teaching.

Respondent 249 says, “Yes, the challenges that teachers face are overwhelming and exhausting. Also, the salary in the teaching profession has not caught up with the rise in gas prices, groceries, or day-to-day living!”

On the other hand, respondent 197 wrote,

I have never considered (and hopefully will never consider) leaving teaching. I have always wanted to teach and thus far I have found it to be a complete joy. Teaching has exceeded my expectations. I will say there is more paperwork involved that I had originally thought there would be, but that isn't a reason to leave the profession. After all, the trading paperwork helps assess our teaching and student learning and the paperwork we have to do for administration helps our administrators keep us accountable, so it is expected.

While respondent 235 summed up their feelings with, “No, I enjoy my job and look forward to helping students prepare for their future.”

Several reasons emerged as to why teachers had considered leaving their chosen professions. Several teachers even listed multiple reasons. Of all the faculty responses analyzed, the most common reasons stated included stress/low morale (28.4%, $N = 92$), low pay (20.4%, $N = 66$), paperwork/time requirements (17.9%, $N = 58$), administrators (13.0%, $N = 42$), students (11.4%, $N = 37$), and changes in family or new career opportunities (9.0%, $N = 29$). As far as the reasons for remaining in the profession, there were two major themes that emerged. The most

common one being the love or enjoyment of the job which accounted for 55.37% ($N = 232$). The second most common theme noticed was another intrinsic reward of seeing their chosen profession as a calling in which they can make a positive difference (24.34%, $N = 102$). A few chosen responses were selected to highlight the respondents' opinions and are given below:

Respondent 69 stated, "It's a profession that makes all others possible. I enjoyed sharing my knowledge with students and nurturing their development."

Respondent 115 wrote,

I love it! I love the kids--they keep me young. Never a dull moment. The challenge is always there and keeps me engaged. There is nothing more satisfying than to watch students work, struggle, and then finally "get it"! There is no better job on earth!

The main reason for respondent 137 was, "When students that have graduated return and say thank you for teaching me and helping me find a job I realize what I do is worth the effort."

Respondent 235 stated, "I believe education is the key to a better life and by helping students realize this, they will be able to live a successful life"

Another close comment was given by respondent 211. "I believe that as a teacher I can have the greatest influence in the lives of young people!"

True feeling come forward in respondent 240's response:

Because there are still enough positive students to make it all worthwhile. I'm here for those smiling faces, those students who attempt, struggle, and need me. The students who get excited when they figure it out. I'm here everyday trying to create positive learning experiences.

Respondent 197 went into more detail than any other respondent. Due to their passion and time devoted to answer the question in great depth, the researcher chose to give the entire response below:

I have remained in education because I have found it more gratifying than I ever thought was possible. I have wanted to teach since I was in first grade and haven't changed my mind. I did worry briefly before I started teaching that it wouldn't meet my expectations,

but luckily I have found it more enjoyable than I ever could have imagined. I am lucky that I teach a subject (Spanish) that no other teacher has been able to influence so I am immediately able to see the product of my teaching and student learning. I have also been able to form bonds with my students that have allowed me to have great class control without being a strict disciplinarian (which isn't my personality anyway so I am able to be myself). I also work for a wonderful administrative staff that supports us not only by being there for us when we need them, but also by providing us with opportunities to further our education with professional/staff development. While these are all good reasons I have and plan to stay in education the main reason is for the students and because I feel I make a difference. Although my subject is typically considered a difficult one and may not prepare students for the graduation test there is a good possibility they will be able to use what they learn in my class in college and in the "real world" outside of school. I truly feel that I am a good teacher and my students allow me to feel that way every day because they work with me and they learn. I have high expectations for my students. My class is not an easy one, but in my class we all agree to be family and work together. As corny and cheesy as that may sound I have been blessed with few discipline problems and a high pass rate without sacrificing quality or quantity of subject matter. While I would be happy to assume that by the end of my career I may make a difference in the life of one child or child's education I love being able to strive to make a difference in every child's life and education. I have remained in education because as far as I am concerned teaching isn't a job or a choice, but a calling and I feel blessed to have the opportunity to teach.

Respondent 81 chose to simply state, "Because I'm a teacher. . . ."

Part c of Research Question 4 was, "What are current teachers' plans for the future?"

Once again, these responses were analyzed from a qualitative approach through open-ended questions on the survey instrument. The actual open-ended survey item question was, "Where do you see yourself professionally in the next 2-5 years?" A total of 413 responses were collected for a 74.8% response rate. Since most responses were very short and to the point, only a quantitative summary will be provided. The common reasons that were noted included obtaining a higher degree (18.64%, $N = 77$), retired from education (18.4%, $N = 76$), career advancement such as administrative position within education (15.01%, $N = 62$), in another career field (2.91%, $N = 12$), and the highest percentage of respondents stated that they were unsure of their future professional decisions or they did not foresee any changes in their current educational status (45.04%, $N = 186$).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction and Purpose

A major obstacle facing the field of education today is finding and retaining an adequate number of quality teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). This is extremely evident within the public high schools of the state of Georgia, where it is estimated 14,000 new teachers are needed each year to replace those who leave education (Hunt & Carroll, 2002). According to the Schools and Staffing Survey from 2003-2004, Georgia teachers who have been at their current school for 3 or fewer years makes up 54.2% of the teaching force. Only six other states besides Georgia, those being Alaska, Arizona, Maryland, Nevada, North Carolina, and Texas, have higher than 50% teacher attrition rates, according to recent annual data (U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). From the current empirical research pertaining to teacher attrition, one of the recurring recommendations for further study remains surveying individual teachers from a specific region about their daily experiences in an attempt to best address the needed improvements (Chapman, 1984; Eberhard et al., 2000; Elfers et al., 2006; Futernick, 2007; Hirsch, 2004, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003a; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kardos, 2002; Kelley et al., 2005; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Loeb et al, 2005; Yost, 2006). “To understand teachers’ work and how to support it in greater depth, one must get information directly from teachers and from the sites of their daily practice” (Elfers et al., 2006, p. 102).

The research conducted in this mixed methods study examines Georgia public high school educators’ perceptions of their daily experiences, as well as their current pressures, in an

attempt to address the various reasons behind high teacher attrition rates. Data were gathered through a Likert-type 30-item survey instrument with additional demographic and qualitative questions. The demographic categories used in the analysis were level of education attained, years of teaching experience, and school size based on current student body population numbers. Qualitative research also attained data on teachers' perceptions of their role as an educator, why they choose to remain or leave the field of education, and what the teachers' plans were for their professional future. The specific quantitative and qualitative research questions are listed below:

1. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on their level of education/degree attained (bachelor, master, specialist, doctorate)?
2. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on years of teaching experience?
3. Do teachers' perceptions of school experiences and pressures differ based on school size (large with more than 1000 students, or small with less than 1000 students)?
4. What are the current teaching forces' opinions about their profession?
 - a. What do teachers feel is the role of a professional educator?
 - b. Why would a teacher leave or remain in the profession?
 - c. What are current teachers' plans for the future?

Findings

This dissertation has attempted to analyze the perceptions of Georgia's secondary teaching force in an effort to better understand reasons behind high turnover rates in hopes of improving retention rates. Open-ended qualitative questions were incorporated into the research to allow teachers the opportunity to state actual opinions without any incorporation of researcher

bias. From the total 2100 surveys mailed, a 25.95% return rate was attained ($n = 545$) which, according to Gay and Airasian (2003), is an adequate sample size due to the fact that it is over a 20% return rate since the total number of teachers within Georgia totals more than 1500. Another way to evaluate the adequacy of the research sample is to view the entire Georgia faculty asked to participate being larger than 5000; therefore, at least 400 completed surveys were needed for an adequate sample size (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

Demographic factors used in the analysis are highest degree status, years of teaching experience, and school size. From the completed teacher surveys, 233 (42.58%) had master's degrees, 180 (33.0%) had bachelor's degrees, 110 (20.2%) held their specialist degrees, and the remaining 22 (4.0%) had their doctorate degree. Because the majority of the current teaching force holds the most basic degree required, a Bachelors or one step above this being a master's, this finding agrees with one research study comment that teachers with higher degree status are more likely to leave for higher paying jobs, administration, or college level careers (Kirby et al., 1999). This result is not in agreement with other research studies that state teachers with advanced degrees will remain in education longer due to the larger salary received for advanced degrees (Adams, 1996; Boe & Bobbitt, 1997; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Shen, 1995).

The years of teaching experience category to have the most teachers was the 0-5 year range consisting of over a quarter of the sample size (25.87%, $n = 141$). The second place category was those with 6-10 years of experience making up another 19.82% ($n = 108$). Therefore, almost half of the sample size was relatively new teachers with less than 10 years teaching experience. This coincides with the research that states that most teachers leave education within the first 10 years, requiring replacements for the next school year (Luekens et al., 2004). Another major category noticed was those with 25 or more years who were nearing

retirement. These accounted for a total of 76 respondents, or 13.94%, while the smallest category was those with 21-25 years experience. This reinforces the research data from other studies that most teachers are leaving the field of education before reaching retirement due to better opportunities (Henke et al., 2000; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Kardos, 2005). It is also interesting to note that the retirement percentage of 13.94% is higher than the expected national average of 12% (Hunt & Carroll, 2002).

As far as school size, the variable of student population size greater than or less than 1000 was used to separate large schools from small schools. From the data attained, 52.7% were large schools ($n = 287$) and 47.3% were small schools ($n = 258$) resulting in an almost even split. The current literature review reveals little data evaluating teacher attrition in relation to school size. Due to the different dynamic factors found at various school sizes, this affirms the need to further address teacher attrition as well as retention from this vantage point.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study demonstrates good reliability and validity, according to the following discussion of the psychometric properties of the research. The Cronbach alpha value was found to be at .94 which demonstrates a highly reliable survey instrument. Reliabilities with an alpha rating of .90 are considered robust (Gregory, 1996, p. 95). The standard error of measure (SEM) value is determined to be 2.97. Item to total correlations were found to range from .367 to .759, which supports internal consistency of the survey. Sampling errors are low due to a large sample size and the psychometric properties used for the statistical analyses.

Factor analysis identifies the minimal number of dimensions measured by a test. This method is also a test to determine validity of a survey instrument. The current survey instrument measuring faculty perceptions on various experiences and pressures received an exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood analysis with a varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization. This method was incorporated to provide evidence of validity as well as to define the dimensions of the variables in construct validity. Using the 29 final survey items, there are five factor loading values determined to exist based on eigenvalues greater than 1.00 and the Kaiser rule of thumb. This indicates that these specific questions from the survey instrument are measuring the same or similar opinion with the participating faculty members.

Factor I was determined to relate to supportive administration and its actions. Factor I explained 38% of the variance, which consists of 9 survey items. From the literature review, empirical research studies identify administration actions as a major reason for teacher attrition (Anhorn, 2008; Blase & Blase, 2004; Division for Educator Workforce Recruitment, Research and Development, GPSC, 2006, 2001b; Harrell et al., 2004; Yost, 2006). Ironically, teacher retention rates have also been contributed to supportive administration actions (Blase & Blase, 2004; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Clement, 2000; Liu et al., 2000). Therefore, if administrative support is lacking it can result in high teacher turnover, but if support is strong it can encourage teachers to continue (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Therefore, it should be no surprise that the current research also found administration actions as the factor contributing the greatest variance.

Factor II is identified as self-efficacy with an individual variance of 7% accounting for an additional 9 survey items. Self-efficacy remains one of the new topics of research related to teacher retention rates and from the current results conveys a major involvement to teacher retention decisions. From multiple studies, this intrinsic factor appears to be at the core of

teachers choosing education as a career (Grant, 2006; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Liu et al., 2000; Yost, 2006). As a researcher, it is encouraging to see this area as another major factor identified in the present research results.

The next factor identified accounted for 4% of the variance, but consisted of 7 survey items, and was entitled working conditions. This factor consists of a multitude of arenas, all of which contribute on a daily basis to the teacher's effectiveness (Division for Educator Workforce Research and Development, GPSC, 2001a; Hirsch, 2004). Perhaps this is the reason for poor working conditions continuing to be revealed in the research as a prime cause for teacher attrition (Loeb et al., 2005). Although the research is currently very limited, there is no denying the fact that future research is needed in this area to properly begin to identify the complex variables that encompass teacher working conditions.

The remaining two factors accounted for the last 7% of the total 56% of variance identified and consisted of only 4 total survey questions. These factors are identified as technology and resources (Factor IV) at 4%, or 2 questions, and decision-making (Factor V) at 3% for the final 2 questions. Teachers never seem to have all of the resources necessary to meet the ever-growing demands of education. Therefore, this factor is another facet of the working conditions category that has been seen as the primary reason teachers leave an educational career. The lack of resources is exacerbated in small, rural schools (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kelly, 2004). Even in the North Carolina working conditions survey, a need for more technology and supplies was given in order to improve current working conditions (Hirsch, 2004). Although the reason stated as "working conditions" is multi-faceted, it cannot be denied that technology and resources are high on the list of needed improvements in order to retain the current teachers.

All five factors explain a total of 56% of the variance. Each of these factors affects teacher perceptions and are common themes found throughout the literature.

Research Question 1

As Research Question 1 is inspected, the four degree categories of the faculty members that completed the survey found a significant difference determined to exist between the four categories at $p = .012$ with $\alpha = .05$, according to an ANOVA. With further inspection of the data using a Tukey analysis, the specific differences exist between those with master's degrees and specialist degrees with $p = .048$. This reinforces the statement that furthering one's education or receiving advanced degrees changes the perceptions of the teachers and could contribute to a greater retention rate, according to Boe and Bobbitt's (1997) research results.

When further analysis was conducted using chi-square analysis there was significant relationship also found with eight of the survey items at $\alpha = .05$. Both of the decision-making Factor V loading questions (items 4 and 26) fell into this category as significant. With greater education attained, teachers desire to have a voice in the decision-making process at their respective schools (Blase & Blase, 2004). Both item 4 and 26 revealed significant relationships in opinion between these two groups of teachers. Item 4 states, "Decisions that affect the entire school are made collaboratively." and item 26 states, "I have the opportunity to play an active role in the decision-making process at my school." While both those with master's and specialist's degrees primarily agreed with these statements, those with specialist's degrees agreed more at 75% and 77%, respectively. Likewise, those with master's degrees disagreed more with these statements than the specialist's degree faculty at 34% and 30%, respectively. Perhaps this is due to the additional confidence that comes from receiving an advanced educational degree or

perhaps the administrators feel more confident asking these faculty members to play a more active role in the decision-making process due to their advanced educational courses and degree attainment. A parallel to these factors was also seen in research conducted by Blase and Blase (2004), when they determined that faculty morale improved with shared decision making at the local school that was led by the principal.

Another item that had very contrasting results also related to decision-making was item 1, or “The local community members, including parents, are involved in school decisions.” Once again, both faculty with master’s degrees and specialist’s degrees had higher percentages in the agree categories; those with specialist’s degrees agreed more at 76% while master’s was only at 69%. Even more impressive is the disagree categories which reveal the master’s ranking higher at 31% and specialist’s at only 24%. In other words, almost one-third of teachers with their master’s degrees believe that school decisions are made without the input of parents and the community, while specialist degree teachers disagreed at less than one-fourth. Once again it is in my opinion that these differences are seen due to a more active role being played by those with advanced degrees. By being an active participator on various committees involving the local community, including parents, they are more informed of the process that is a continual part of education instead of a narrow view by only knowing what goes on inside one’s classroom.

The remaining survey items resulting in a significance distinction relate to expectations and discussions of decisions that occur between the school and the community as well as within the school between faculty and administrators along with professional expectations. When actual answers are analyzed, it is determined that a major difference in opinion is seen in item 16, “Administrators have confidence in my professional judgment of curricular implementation.” While 61.4% of faculty with master’s degrees agreed with this statement, only 49% of those with

specialist degrees agreed. Yet, those with specialist degrees did strongly agree at 47%, while master degree faculty members strongly agreed at only 31.7%. Hence, a lower percentage rate overall demonstrates that advanced graduate level classes result in teachers feeling that administrators have more confidence in their professional judgments. This finding relates to the research results found by Johnson et al. (2006) that teachers with advanced degrees leave sooner due to more career options, yet those with master degrees stayed longer than those with bachelor degrees.

It is evident from the analysis of item 23, “The overall expectations of faculty members by the administration are reasonable,” that those with specialist degrees have a greater understanding of the administrators’ expectations than those with only master’s degrees. The reason for this statement is, while 34.5% of those with specialist degrees strongly agreed with item 23, only 18.9% of those with master’s degrees strongly agreed. Although, it is interesting to note that when both agree and strongly agree categories are combined, the totals are identical for both groups.

Faculty members with less graduate education are usually newer to education and therefore need additional support and feedback from the administrators. This research affirms this statement with the results from item 25, “Administrators provide feedback for improvements.” While 11.6% of the faculty members with master’s degrees disagreed with this statement, only 7.2% of those with specialist degrees disagreed. Likewise, while only 14.2% of those with master’s degrees strongly agreed with the statement, there were 19.1% in the specialist category who strongly agreed.

In conclusion, all eight items that were found to show a significant relationship between faculty members with master’s degrees versus specialist degrees based on the chi-square

analyses showed a majority of faculty agreeing with the statements. The differences that were discussed remained less than 10% and in several instances were no difference at all when the categories of agree and strongly agree were combined. Overall, these results demonstrate how higher degrees results in a greater awareness and therefore a more active role in the decision-making process at their schools. More knowledge about the expectations of administrators was also seen to influence these groups differently with the Specialist degree faculty members more understanding of administrative actions. This could also be due to these faculty members considering moving into an administrative role in their near future.

Research Question 2

When the demographic factor of years of teaching experience is explored, there was no significant difference found at $\alpha = .05$, according to an ANOVA. This is possibly due to the open response section, which resulted in 31 different categories instead of 5- or 10-year pre-established category choices. When chi-square analysis tests are examined from the data, there are significant relationships between years of teaching experience and eight individual survey items. Factor IV, which includes items related to technology and resources fall into this area of research analysis. Due to prior analysis based on 5-year groupings, the data were grouped before any percentages were calculated for the various years of experience groups contributing such variation. In most instances, even though there was a statistical significant relationship noted, the majority of respondents answered the items with “agree” choices. The researcher determined that a value of 50% in the “agree” choice would be used as a basis. Most respondent percentages were closer to 60% in the agree category.

It is interesting to note that both items 11 and 16 ranked very high in the agree and strongly agree categories. Item 11 stated that the school allowed professional development during school hours, and item 16 stated that the administrators had confidence in the teacher's "professional judgment of curricular implementation." Item 11 had an 87% overall agreement ranking and item 16 was even higher at 94% with only 4 out of the total 545 respondents answering this item with strongly disagree. It is also worth noting that the years of experience grouping with the greatest percentage of responses in both of these agree categories were the new or beginning teachers with 0-5 years experience. Either the principals at these schools are extremely supportive or the new teachers are still living in what Wong (1997) refers to as the "Fantasy" stage of teaching. Perhaps this is also a sign of the times and how educational principles are changing. The administrators are doing so by allowing for more professional development to take place at the school while also placing more trust in the teachers' professional decisions.

For item 12, "The availability of student access to computers at school is sufficient," the faculty members that agreed with the statement only had an overall percentage of 51%. Instead, a relatively high percentage of 35.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The specific age groupings that adjusted the values were in the 6-10 years experience category (42.6% disagreed), followed by the 26-30+ years experience (39.5%), and the 16-20 year category, with 36.1% disagreeing. Most likely the results for this question reside within the actual schools themselves. While some schools have ample computers, others are extremely limited. Perhaps this is one area that could be researched further with greater distinction placed on school location and technological funding sources.

Item 20 relates to required paperwork for teachers being reasonable. In multiple research reports, paperwork has been listed as a major contributing factor to teacher attrition (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Division for Educator Workforce Research and Development, GPSC, 2001a; Futernick, 2007; Luekens et al., 2004; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Therefore, it is no surprise to the researcher that this question was determined to be significant with various years of experience groupings. The overall totals were 62.2% agreed or strongly agreed that teaching entails too much paperwork, with 37.8% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement. Once again, the beginning teachers with less than 5 years experience agreed the most with this statement at 71.6%. The veteran teachers in the 21-25 years experience group was the only group that disagreed more with paperwork being excessive than agreed. The totals were almost evenly split, with disagreeing totaling 51.9%, while agreeing totals were 48.1%. One might suggest that this represents teachers with more experience being more capable of controlling the paperwork through time management. This theory is not supported by the 25+ years experience group, which demonstrates a higher percentage of respondents agreeing that the paperwork is reasonable albeit at a low percentage of 54%. One must also keep in mind that all high school subject area teachers were used in this study with no differentiation between special education, academic subject area teachers, or fine arts teachers, which could have also contributed to diversified numbers. Another factor to be considered is that new teachers do not have any previous years on which to compare the paperwork load. The teachers who have more than 20 years teaching experience have endured through many educational changes and, according to this study, the paperwork has increased to the point of not being reasonable.

Items 14, 21, and 23 all had very similar responses between the years of experience categories. Item 14 showed no significant relationship when both agree and strongly agree

choices were combined. All groups show at least an 80% agreement with the number of students in classrooms being reasonable. As far as items 21 and 23, respondents agreed on average except for one category. With item 21, which relates to sufficient instructional resources being supplied, teachers agreed on average at 80%. Yet, the age group of 26-31+ years teaching experience only agreed at 72.4%. This is relatively low considering some groups agreed as highly as 84.7%. Once again it is, in my opinion, due to individual school circumstances and budgeting. With item 23 related to expectations of faculty from the administration being reasonable, most agreed strongly at about 90%. Although, the 21-25 year experience group agreed as well, it was only with 83% of the respondents. This is another area that is greatly influenced by the individual circumstances at the school. What is most important with these items is that most faculty members agreed with these statements while various other researchers have revealed these as possible areas currently contributing to high teacher attrition rates. This is another positive area to continue to focus on for future research within Georgia as well as in other states and local school systems. This reinforces that the teachers' perceptions of their daily conditions found within their respective schools was the greatest predictor of teacher attrition (Loeb et al., 2005).

When the last item identified as significant is evaluated, it is once again seen as an overall positive statement by most respondents at around 80% feeling empowered by their school. Yet several categories do not rank as highly. The 11-15 year experience group only agreed at 75.5%, the 26+ year experience category only agreed at 72%, and the lowest percentage was in the 21-25 year category, which agreed at 70%. It is not known to the researcher exactly why some of these numbers are significantly different from the others. A feeling of being empowered is greatly influenced by one's individual experiences in the classroom, whether successful or not, as well as with the interaction with the administration at

the school. With this item showing the greatest variation within the teacher group responses, it bodes well for the fact that one's self-efficacy plays an extremely valuable role in one's decision to stay in education or leave. More research needs to be conducted in this area to fully address the reasons behind individuals feeling empowered versus those who do not feel empowered at their respective schools.

In summary, Research Question 2 evaluated years of teaching experience to the survey items. Beginning teachers in the 0-5 year category show more positive rankings overall related to the administration, as well as working conditions. This appears to be a very positive statement for Georgia because these are the two most cited reasons behind teacher, attrition according to previous research (Anhorn, 2008; Eggen, 2002; Elfers et al., 2006; Futernick, 2007; Harrell et al., 2004). Most teachers in general viewed these statements the same regardless of their years of teaching experience. This reveals a direct relationship with research conducted in North Carolina when teachers were also personally asked to comment on their daily working conditions and pressures in the Working Conditions Survey (Hirsch, 2004). Although statewide data is extremely valuable, there is no substitute to individual schools conducting their own in-house research to best meet the unique needs of each group of school faculty.

Research Question 3

When an independent t test was conducted on the data with the small versus large school size demographic factor, a significant difference was found to exist. The number of students at the school that distinguished large from small was 1000 and not 600, as in Ingersoll's (2001) research analyses. The few research studies that addressed school size found large school faculty

members more prone to leave (Ingersoll, 2003b; Rollefson, 1993), while at least one study stated that smaller schools are more prone to teacher attrition (Harrell et al., 2004).

Additionally, there are five individual items that show significance with $\alpha = .05$ when the chi-square analysis is conducted between the two school sizes. The survey items were 3, 6, 10, 11, and 21. When these individual items are examined more closely it becomes evident that the only difference that exists between large and small school size, with items 3 and 21, is between the agree and strongly agree statements. If both the agree and strongly agree choices are combined, both school sizes have roughly the same averages at 92% and 80%, respectively. Consequently, there is no need to discuss these two items in detail.

Item 6 addresses additional assigned duties as reasonable expectations of faculty members, and there were differences noted between large and small school size respondents. While both school sizes had the highest percentage of responses in the agree category, large schools had higher agree totals at 70%, while small schools only agreed at 58.5%. This could be due to the fact that smaller schools have fewer faculty members to carry the load of all the school-wide duties and responsibilities. The larger the faculty populations, the more evenly divided the responsibilities can be. Additional workload and hours contribute to additional stress, which can lead to low teacher morale and thus teacher attrition.

According to the results from item 11 related to professional development, Georgia appears to be offering the majority of this requirement during school hours. Even with this being said, the greater faculty population numbers at a larger school lend themselves more to this embedded staff development. Due to budget constraints, some small schools may not be able to offer these to the staff. It is the researcher's opinion that this is the reason for the larger schools more strongly agreeing with this statement (item 11) at 91%; while small schools agreed as well,

they only did so at 83%. Small school administrators must pay careful attention to the devotion of its teachers and ensure a balance exists to avoid burnout and possible attrition. This is another area in need of further research. These schools are also typically more rural in nature, which is another contributing factor to high attrition rates according to some researchers (Boe & Bobbitt, 1997; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kelly, 2004).

As far as rules consistently enforced for student conduct, which was item 10 from the survey instrument, both school sizes primarily agreed with this statement. Although, small schools agreed more strongly at 77% and large schools only agreed at 66.5%. This significant difference is more than likely due to the fact that large schools will likely have more than one assistant principal handling school-wide discipline. Consequently there is a greater tendency for the rules to be enforced differently or similar situations to be viewed differently due to the various viewpoints of the disciplinarians. Smaller schools are more likely to have one administrator in charge of discipline, which would reveal more consistency in the enforcement.

Research Question 4

A qualitative approach was selected to sufficiently analyze Research Question 4, which addressed the current teaching force's opinions about the professional role of a teacher, why one would leave or remain in education, and their future plans. From the survey instrument, these opinions were gathered from the open-ended questions listed at the conclusion of the 30-item Likert-type question section as well as the demographic section. The researcher found it extremely interesting that of the 545 completed surveys, 65.9% ($n = 359$) chose to answer at least one of these open-ended questions. However, only 17.4% ($n = 95$) answered all of the open-ended questions. Due to time constraints and additional effort required, it was doubtful if the

teachers would choose to take the time to sufficiently address these questions. This reinforces the need to address more teacher attrition research from the perspective of the regional teachers, as multiple researchers have suggested. This approach allows the teachers to use their own voice to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction revealed from the probative quantitative questions of the survey. In an effort to better summarize the multiple responses, comments were categorized into themes as identified by the investigator. Table 7 summarizes the common themes identified from the respondents' narrative responses.

Table 7

Summarized Themes from Research Question 4a

<u>Describe your role as a professional educator.</u>	
General description (teacher, educator, counselor, parent, coach, role model, etc.)	
Major importance (to prepare students for future, create life-long learners, citizenship, etc.)	
Prepare to take standardized tests (GHSGT, EOCT, etc.)	
<u>Has this role changed over the years? If so, in what ways?</u>	
YES	Average % 59.05%
(accountability, technology, pedagogy, family structure, politics, standardized testing, Georgia Performance Standards, No Child Left Behind mandates, pressures, paperwork, expectations, less respect, etc.)	
NO	33.15%
UNSURE	7.8%

The initial reason for a qualitative section to be incorporated into the research was to better analyze the quantitative responses. Although the qualitative section reveals comments that coincide with the survey items, it also reveals more depth to the actual reasons behind some teachers' frustration with education and thus can reveal significant reasons for high teacher attrition rates in Georgia.

The first qualitative part for Research Question 4 finds three recurrent themes emerging as defining roles of the professional educator. While most remain true to their job description as simply a teacher, many have expanded this role into one that holds more intrinsic rewards. By viewing one's profession as being of major importance and valuable for the future, many teachers have remained in education. It is believed that this is one of the major reasons for 95% of the participating faculty to state that they enjoy teaching at their current location, as seen with item 30. One area that needs further investigation is to ask those teachers who have exited the field of education if they were lacking this sense of teaching offering intrinsic rewards. If this area receives more emphasis it can very well lead to an increase in teacher retention. The research also reveals how much the bureaucratic nature of education affects teaching, with many stating their role was to prepare students to pass state and national standardized tests. This correlates with item 27 from the survey instrument, which revealed 59.5% of the teachers disagreeing with the No Child Left Behind actions bringing about positive changes within their school system. This fact was also evident from previous researchers who found that the bureaucratic organization of schools, or those that limit the control of teachers, experience higher teacher turnover (Futernick, 2007; Hunt & Carroll, 2002).

Part b of Research Question 4 coincides with national teacher attrition research in revealing that the majority of teachers have considered leaving the profession thus resulting in a continuous increase in high attrition rates across the United States (Table 8). The top three reasons stated as to why 60.28% of Georgia's current teachers interviewed had considered leaving education were stress or low morale, low pay and paperwork, or time requirements.

Low morale can be linked to a lack of self-efficacy, or a feeling that they can make a difference, which current research states is critical during the first few years of teaching (Grant,

2006). Low pay came in second place as a reason for teachers considering leaving the profession. This once again coincides with previous years of research in teacher attrition reasons. It was surprising to the researcher that this item from the quantitative survey was not seen as relevant. No significant difference was seen with item 7, which stated, “The salary provided by the school system is comparable to other professions.” When the actual percentages are analyzed, it is an almost even split, with 51% disagreeing and 49% agreeing with the statement. If salary were such a major impact on a teacher’s decision to remain in education, it should have received a more noteworthy difference in opinions with the faculty completing the survey. The third place reason stated by teachers corresponds with the working conditions category from the current research study. Although working conditions can encompass a vast array of areas, it is interpreted by this research as primarily workload, paperwork and resources.

Table 8

Reasons Stated for Research Question 4b

Have you ever considered leaving teaching? If so, what was the major reason(s)?	N of respondents	Average %
YES	255	60.28%
Stress/Low Morale (28.4%)		
Low Pay (20.4%)		
Paperwork/Required Time (17.9%)		
Administrators (13.0%)		
Students (11.4%)		
Family/Career Changes (9.0%)		
NO	168	39.72%

There were two major reasons stated by teachers for remaining in the profession and both of these are self-efficacious reasons (Table 9). The first was the love or enjoyment of the job and the second was a belief that they can make a difference in the life of a young person. As

previously stated, the intrinsic rewards teaching can provide seem to be much more valuable than the extrinsic rewards. In order for more teachers to choose and remain in education, these factors must come to the forefront of the school systems with constant encouragement and support.

Table 9

Reasons for Research Question 4b Responses

Why have you remained in education?	Average %
Love / Enjoyment of the Job and the Students	55.37%
Can make a Positive Difference / Job is a Calling	24.34%

The final qualitative portion of the research addresses the teachers' future plans (Table 10). It was the intention of the researcher to prompt the faculty members to look into their own personal future and evaluate their plans. With national data from previous researchers stating that retirement numbers were currently around 12% (Hunt & Carroll, 2002), it was also an area to be assessed and used to determine the state of Georgia's retirement numbers. Actually, Georgia numbers were higher than anticipated, at 18.4%. Also disturbing was the fact that 17.92% of the current teachers planned on leaving the classroom for another job either in administration or in another field. This reveals more than one-third of the current teachers planning to exit the classroom and instruction of students within the next 2-5 years. This is in agreement with a prediction in 2006 that 34% of Georgia's teachers would need replacing every 5 years (Division for Educator Workforce Recruitment, Research, and Development, 2006). Another disturbing fact revealed is that almost half (45.04%) of the current teachers remain uncertain of their future decision. If only a quarter of these choose to leave education, then the totals rise to almost 50%.

Georgia’s education system cannot afford this great of a loss, which reinforces the need to address teacher retention immediately.

Table 10

Summary of Research Question 4c

Where do you see yourself professionally in the next 2 – 5 years?	Average %
EARNING AN ADVANCED DEGREE	18.64%
RETIRED FROM TEACHING	18.40%
ANOTHER CAREER	17.92%
UNSURE	45.04%

Additional Important Findings

A couple of additional questions were analyzed strictly for comparison with data reported in other research for the sake of comparison of Georgia’s faculty to the nationwide numbers. According to data reported by the National Education Association (2003), teachers spend an average of 50 hours per week outside the classroom working on additional paperwork, including copying, grading papers, and lesson planning. From the current study, teachers were asked, in the demographic section, to list the number of hours per week on average that they devote to class work outside the regular school day. While both large and small school faculty members collectively recorded an average of approximately 11 hours, many mentioned higher numbers consisting of at least 3 – 4 hours per night or 15 – 20 additional hours per week. Therefore, this finding does not agree with the national data reported. This could verify the positive comments related to paperwork on item 20 where 62.2% of the faculty agreed that the required paperwork was reasonable. Once again, it should be noted that this study did not isolate different subject areas of secondary teachers.

Although survey item 7 was not found to be significant at $\alpha = .05$ in any of the demographic categories measured in this study, it is worthy of further discussion. Item 7, which stated, “The salary provided by the school system is comparable to other professions,” is found in many of the empirical research studies related to teacher attrition rates. In most cases, the earliest research salary was determined by the researchers to be the major reason for teachers leaving education (Futernick, 2007; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001; Kelly, 2004; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Marvel et al., 2006; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Murnane et al., 1988; Quartz, 2003; Shen, 1997) as well as the reason for college graduates choosing not to enter education (Liu et al, 2000; Murnane et al., 1991). Because of the strong research background, it is interesting to note that of the faculty members questioned in the current research study, the overall percentage of faculty that disagreed with the statement is 51% and the overall percentage for those that agree with the statement 49%.

If salary is such a huge determining factor, the numbers that disagree should have been much higher than simply an even split between agree and disagree. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that perhaps those who felt the strongest about the teaching salary being too low had already left education. However, the current research does not support at any level that any of the current teaching force strongly feels salary as a major determining factor to attrition nor retention. The current research does relate to only secondary level teachers, which could connect to the findings of Liu et al. (2000) on the major reasons for choosing a teaching career as the value of meaningful work, love of working with children, and the enjoyment of pedagogy within their specific subject matter. If various levels of educators were selected, this could be a factor that differs between elementary and secondary teachers as well as between public and private school teachers.

Conclusions

Teacher attrition is not a new phenomenon. Since 1947 teacher attrition has been investigated and the two major predictors seem to consistently be poor working conditions and low salary (Tyack, 1974). Poor working conditions would include the administrators support or lack thereof. As teacher attrition continued, beginning teacher attrition rates continued to escalate. In the years of 1965-1967, there was a 16% chance of a first-year teacher leaving. By the 1971-1974 term, first year teacher attrition had risen to 33% (Murnane, 1981). More recent data reveal that, overall U.S. attrition rates are also on the rise, with 63% of teachers needing to be replaced in 2002 and 86.3% by 2004 (Marvel et al., 2006).

Throughout the review of literature, multiple reasons were grouped into extrinsic and intrinsic factors. It was determined that poor working conditions, lack of administrator support, and low salary were all extrinsic factors contributing to teacher attrition from the previously conducted research data. The intrinsic factors of a collegial environment, administrator support, and self-efficacy contribute to teachers remaining in the profession according to previous work. It is interesting to note that most of the faculty members were in agreement with the wording of the survey items. This demonstrates a positive perception overall of the Georgia secondary level public educators toward daily policies and procedures.

Areas that were not completely positive perceptions and could reveal negative teacher perceptions were items 7 and 27. Item 7 has already been discussed and was related to salary being reasonable, which had a pretty even split of 49% of the faculty agreeing and 51% disagreeing. Another essential result is seen with item 27, which stated, "The No Child Left Behind actions have led to positive changes within my school." A revealing 59.5% of all respondents declared that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. A direct link

can be made between this quantitative statement and the qualitative responses from the teachers related to the bureaucratic nature of schools related to such actions as standardized testing. This legislative act has led to the greatest change within education in recent history and continues to guide the future of educational improvements. This is another area of great stress and burnout to many teachers.

Although the current research study reinforced Boe and Bobbitt's (1997) findings that there is no single predictor to teacher turnover, there is no doubt that further research in this area remains necessary. Each school must learn to identify stress and provide teachers with ample assistance and support in order to meet the growing demands placed upon them. These improvements are mandated to retain the qualified teachers in the schools to meet ever growing accountability measures. The results from this survey can lead the way in new policy implementation toward faculty, administration, and student relationship improvements not only within the state of Georgia but nationwide. From the results, it would appear that most respondents have the same general opinions regarding school policies and procedures and that they view these as positives. As future research continues to determine areas for improvements, it is up to the individual administrators and faculty members to initiate these changes.

Limitations

1. Because the administrator of the school was in charge of issuing the survey to the faculty, the overall responses may not be truly representative of the faculties' opinions. The administrators may have had some influence over the way the respondents answered the questions, or fear of the administrator finding out if some items were marked negatively could have influenced the responses.

2. The research was confined to one southern state in the United States instead of a collective view of all southern states or a nationwide survey.

3. The research only analyzed the perspectives of public high school educators in Georgia instead of all educators.

4. Open-ended responses may not be a true reflection of their thoughts due to possible persuasion from the survey items selected to study.

Implications for Georgia and Recommendations for Further Study

As indicated in the review of literature, anywhere from 30-50% of novice teachers leave the teaching profession within their first 5 years of teaching. Although many states have chosen to take immediate measures in hopes of stopping or slowing these trends, teachers are still leaving the profession rapidly. While some of these states have selected a strategy that pays teachers a higher salary, an increase in salary alone will not retain teachers sufficiently. Many states have chosen to do nothing in hopes that graduates will continue to replenish the teacher workforce. Yet, as the research has demonstrated, graduates are not choosing education as a life-time career (Adams & Dial, 1994; Henke et al., 2000; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2005; Liu et al., 2000; Murnane et al., 1991; Shen, 1997). Most research has shown working conditions to be at the root of teacher attrition (Futernick, 2007; Harrell et al., 2004; Hirsch, 2004, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Kelly, 2004; Lukens et al., 2004; Quartz, 2003; Tye & O'Brien, 2002) and self-efficacy (Birkeland & Johnson, 2002; Grant, 2006; Johnson & Birkland, 2003; Kelly, 2004; Shen, 1997; Yost, 2006) the major determinant to teacher retention. This research from the state of Georgia is in direct correlation to these previous research findings. In all actuality, the intrinsic factor of self-efficacy appears to play the most vital role in teacher retention. All the

negatives that teachers may encounter through the pressures that encompass their profession, they believe this role is essential because they are making a difference in the lives of young people.

In retrospect, several additional areas need to be addressed to best identify the factors contributing to teacher attrition and/or retention rates. One additional area of research would be to evaluate the important role self-efficacy plays in teacher retention or the lack thereof that contributes to attrition. Although a few studies have mentioned this area of empowerment for teachers, none have actually approached the study from this position solely. Another recommendation is that research should be done on more of the rural or small schools. From the present research, there were differences noted in smaller school sizes. It is believed to be due to all the additional responsibilities of the school falling upon a smaller group of faculty members.

Final recommendations are confined to the existing research study. A revised instrument with greater correlation of statements to the five factors identified by principal component analysis would benefit further research. Although the five factors were associated to a majority of the items, more questions would have led to a superior in-depth view of Georgia's teachers opinions. Another aspect of research should be conducted concerning the teachers who have left or who are choosing to leave before they exit the school. By questioning these teachers, one can get a direct causation effect toward making direct improvements at the school.

As originally recommended by Elfers et al. (2006), state and district leaders should examine school level working conditions as possible factors contributing to teacher mobility. Within this dissertation research study, an attempt was made to better address the factors related to teacher retention within the state of Georgia from a high school perspective. The only other states to address research studies around teachers have been the states of North Carolina and

South Carolina. Hirsch (2004, 2005) led the research field in this direct line approach, and more research in this area within each state and/or school district is immensely necessary to properly address the teacher mobility issues we are currently facing in this nation. The majority of research up to this point has been from a national view, with a very slim margin of teachers actually choosing to participate in the surveys. From the national data, most teachers were from the elementary level, while secondary education teachers exit the teaching profession more frequently. Only by focusing more research efforts on individual states, or more specifically individual schools, and asking teachers their personal opinions, can we properly identify all the factors that affect the high rate that teachers continue to leave the profession. Once the reasons are identified, changes can be initiated and a new era where more teachers remain and more graduates choose to enter the field of education for the intrinsic rewards it offers. This is the only way we will change the downward spiral of our current educational dilemma of teacher attrition. We must face the future with a sense of heightened responsibility to no longer idly sit by and accept the large attrition rates of teachers who directly will shape our future world.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS AND
FACULTY SURVEY--CURRENT STUDY

June 16, 2008

Dear High School Principal:

With educational pressures such as No Child Left Behind mandates, Annual Yearly Progress requirements, and SACS Accrediting processes, a set of highly-qualified educators are necessary for each school to be successful, and meet these growing demands. Yet, teachers are leaving education faster than they can be replaced. Georgia is one of the states experiencing the greatest teacher shortages, with 35% of new hires leaving within a five-year period. In 2003, Georgia had to replace 69% of public school teachers due to high attrition rates. By identifying the factors that cause teachers to remain in education, attrition rates as well as the time required for new hiring interviews could be reduced.

You are being invited to help by participating in a study for a dissertation research project. Your role would involve issuing the attached survey to your faculty. The survey contains items concerning aspects of school climate, student body, administration, and faculty experiences. You may choose to administer the survey during a faculty meeting or by simply placing these in the faculty mailboxes. I will pay all return postage for these surveys. The results will be completely anonymous.

While participation in this research will provide no direct benefit to you immediately, the knowledge gained will benefit education, society, and overall school policy implementation and change. Results from this research will be available to you upon request. Each year, you face the challenge of hiring and retaining highly competent teachers. By helping to better understand the predictors of teacher attrition we can assist in the high rates of teacher turnover within our state.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me, Tina M. Locklear, at 706-235-0286 or at e-mail address lockiii@comcast.net, or my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Douglas McKnight, at 205-348-1449 or at e-mail address dmcknigh@bama.ua.edu. You may also contact, Ms. Tanta Myles, Research Compliance Officer for The University of Alabama at 205-348-5152, or by e-mailing cmyles@fa.ua.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Tina M. Locklear

July 23, 2008

Dear Faculty Member:

You are being requested to take part in a research project exploring teacher perceptions of experiences at your current school. Your participation in this project will involve completing a short survey, which should take you approximately 15 minutes. The survey items relate to aspects of school climate, administration, resources, time, and daily pressures. You will also be asked to record your highest degree attained, and years of teaching experience at the conclusion of the survey, as well as answer a few open-ended questions. This survey has been issued to all faculty members at your school. As you exit the room, please place your completed survey in the designated envelope, in order to ensure your anonymity. If you are unable to complete the survey at this time, please return it to your principal / administrator within 2 days.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may skip any question, or stop at any time. There are no known risks or discomforts involved in answering the survey items. To assure anonymity of responses, I am asking that you **not** provide your name or any other identifying information on the survey. While participation in this research will provide no direct benefit to you immediately, the knowledge gained will benefit education, society, and overall school policy implementation and change for the future.

By completing the enclosed survey, you are consenting to be a research participant. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me, Tina M. Locklear, at 706-235-0286 or at e-mail address lockiii@comcast.net; or my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Douglas McKnight, at 205-348-1449 or at e-mail address dmcknigh@bama.ua.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact, Ms. Tanta Myles, Research Compliance Officer for The University of Alabama at 205-348-5152, or by e-mailing her at cmyles@fa.ua.edu.

Thank you in advance for your contribution!

Sincerely,

Tina M. Locklear

Faculty Survey

This survey is to determine possible risk factors contributing to teacher attrition. All responses will be anonymous. Please do not put your name on the survey.

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current working conditions. Circle your best response as :
strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), or strongly agree (SA).

- | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|----|
| 1. The local community members, including parents, are involved in school decisions. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 2. There is trust and mutual respect within the school among teachers and administrators. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 3. The administrators seem willing to make changes as necessary for school improvement. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 4. Decisions that affect the entire school are made collaboratively. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 5. The technological resources available per classroom are adequate. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 6. The additional assigned duties (committees, parent meetings, morning/afternoon or lunch/hall duty, etc.) are reasonable expectations for faculty. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 7. The salary provided by the school system is comparable to other professions. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 8. I feel respected by the local community for the services I provide. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 9. Administrators are usually accessible to me when needed. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 10. Rules for student conduct are enforced by administrators in a consistent manner. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 11. My school allows opportunities for professional/ staff development during school hours. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 12. The availability of student access to computers at school is sufficient. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 13. Expectations are communicated effectively. | SD | D | A | SA |

(Turn Over)

14. Overall the number of students in my classes are reasonable.	SD	D	A	SA
15. The administrators are supportive of teachers pursuing higher degrees.	SD	D	A	SA
16. Administrators have confidence in my professional judgment of curricular implementation.	SD	D	A	SA
17. The observation / evaluation methods fit my needs as an educator.	SD	D	A	SA
18. Administrators are interested in my opinions.	SD	D	A	SA
19. There are opportunities for professional advancement at the school.	SD	D	A	SA
20. The required paperwork for teachers is reasonable.	SD	D	A	SA
21. My school provides sufficient instructional resources, supplies, and equipment to meet the needs of the students.	SD	D	A	SA
22. Collaboration between teachers at school is encouraged.	SD	D	A	SA
23. The overall expectations of faculty members by the administration are reasonable.	SD	D	A	SA
24. Teachers are empowered at my school.	SD	D	A	SA
25. Administrators provide feedback for improvements.	SD	D	A	SA
26. I have the opportunity to play an active role in the decision-making process at my school.	SD	D	A	SA
27. The No Child Left Behind actions have led to positive changes within my school.	SD	D	A	SA
28. Overall, I am treated as a professional by the administrative staff.	SD	D	A	SA
29. The administrators are effective leaders within the school.	SD	D	A	SA
30. I enjoy teaching in my current location.	SD	D	A	SA

(Next Page)

Please respond to the following demographic items.

1.) On average, how many hours per week do you spend on class work outside the regular school day?

2.) What is the highest degree you have attained?

_____ Bachelors _____ Masters _____ Specialist _____ Doctorate

3.) How many total years of teaching experience have you completed? _____
Include the current school year.

4.) How many years have you been teaching at your current school? _____
Include the current school year.

Please answer the following open-ended questions.

Describe your role as a professional educator.

Has this role changed over the years? If so, in what ways?

(Turn Over)

Have you ever considered leaving teaching? If so, what was the major reason(s)?

Why have you remained in education?

Where do you see yourself professionally in the next 2 - 5 years?

If you are willing to discuss any of the requested information further, please give me your name and contact information in the space below, or you may call or email me at 706-235-0286, lockiii@comcast.net. Thank you!!

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER TO PRINCIPAL, INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT,
FACULTY SURVEY--PILOT STUDY

Cover Letter

Dear Principal:

With educational pressures such as No Child Left Behind mandates, Annual Yearly Progress requirements, standardized testing, and SACS Accrediting processes, a set of highly-qualified educators are necessary for each school to be successful, and meet these growing demands. Yet, teachers are leaving education faster than they can be replaced. Georgia is one of the states experiencing the greatest teacher shortages, with 35% of new hires leaving within a five-year period. In 2003, Georgia had to replace 69% of public school teachers due to high attrition rates. One of the greatest disadvantages is the effect on student performance. By identifying the factors that cause teachers to remain in education, attrition rates as well as the high-costs could be reduced and retention rates increased.

You are being invited to help by participating in a pilot study for a dissertation research project. Your role would involve administering the attached survey to your faculty. The survey contains items concerning aspects of school climate, student body, administration, and faculty experiences. You may choose to issue the survey during a faculty meeting or by simply placing these in the faculty mailboxes. I will pay all postage for these surveys. The results will be completely anonymous.

While participation in this research will provide no direct benefit to you immediately, the knowledge gained will benefit education, society, and overall school policy implementation and change. Results from this research will be available to you upon request. School districts face the challenge to retain highly competent teachers. Help me better understand the predictors of teacher attrition so that we can assist in resolving this educational crisis within our state.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me, Tina M. Locklear, at 706-235-0286 or at e-mail address LockIII@aol.com, or my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Douglas McKnight, at 205-348-1449 or at e-mail address dmcknigh@bamaed.ua.edu. You may also contact, Ms. Tanta Myles, Research Compliance Officer for The University of Alabama at 205-348-5152, or by e-mailing cmyles@fa.ua.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Tina M. Locklear

Informed Consent Letter (Anonymous Survey)

Dear Potential Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a research project exploring faculty perceptions of professional policies and practices at your school. Your participation in this project involves completing the attached survey, which should take you approximately 10 minutes. The survey contains items concerning aspects of school climate, student body, administration, and faculty. You will also be asked to record your highest degree attained, and years of teaching experience at the conclusion of the survey, as well as answer three optional open-ended questions. This survey has been issued to all faculty members at this school. As you exit the room, please place your survey in the designated envelope, in order to ensure your anonymity. If you are unable to complete the survey at this time, please return it to your administrator within 3 days.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You may skip any question, or stop at any time. There are no known risks or discomforts involved in answering the survey. To assure anonymity of responses, I am asking that you **not** provide your name or any other identifying information on the survey. While participation in this research will provide no direct benefit to you immediately, the knowledge gained will benefit education, society, and overall school policy implementation and change for the future.

By completing the enclosed survey, you are consenting to be a research participant. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me, Tina M. Locklear, at 706-235-0286 or at e-mail address LockIII@aol.com, or my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Douglas McKnight, at 205-348-1449 or at e-mail address dmcknigh@bamaed.ua.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact, Ms. Tanta Myles, Research Compliance Officer for The University of Alabama at 205-348-5152, or by e-mailing cmyles@fa.ua.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely yours,

Tina M. Locklear

Faculty Survey

This survey is to determine your current opinion regarding various aspects of your school. All responses will be anonymous. Please do not put your name on the survey.

Please circle your best response to the following statements by choosing:
strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), or strongly agree (SA).

- | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| 1. The school system uses a good mentor program for new faculty. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 2. Students feel safe at this school. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 3. The administrators seem willing to make changes as necessary for school improvement. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 4. Decisions that affect the entire school are made collaboratively. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 5. The technological resources available per classroom are adequate. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 6. The staff development in my school has been beneficial. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 7. The salary provided by the school system is comparable to other professions. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 8. I feel respected by the local community for the services I provide. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 9. The No Child Left Behind changes at my school have been meaningful. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 10. The student dress code is reasonable. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 11. The student dress code is enforced. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 12. My school allows opportunities for professional development during school hours. | SD | D | A | SA |
| 13. The availability of student access to computers is sufficient. | SD | D | A | SA |

			<i>(Turn Over)</i>	
14. Informal visits by administrators are helpful.	SD	D	A	SA
15. Student discipline is dealt with consistently.	SD	D	A	SA
16. The administrators are supportive of teachers pursuing higher degrees.	SD	D	A	SA
17. Administrators have confidence in my professional judgment of curricular implementation.	SD	D	A	SA
18. The observation / evaluation methods fit my needs as an educator.	SD	D	A	SA
19. Administrators are interested in my opinions.	SD	D	A	SA
20. There are opportunities for professional advancement at the school.	SD	D	A	SA
21. The required paperwork for teachers is reasonable.	SD	D	A	SA
22. The additional assigned duties (committees, parent meetings, morning/afternoon or lunch/hall duty, etc.) are reasonable expectations for faculty.	SD	D	A	SA
23. Collaboration between teachers at school is encouraged.	SD	D	A	SA
24. The overall expectations of faculty members by the administration are reasonable.	SD	D	A	SA
25. Teacher pay has influenced me to stay in the teaching profession.	SD	D	A	SA
26. Teacher benefits, such as insurance, have encouraged me to stay in the teaching profession.	SD	D	A	SA
27. The No Child Left Behind actions have led to positive changes within my school.	SD	D	A	SA
28. Overall, I am treated as a professional by the administrative staff.	SD	D	A	SA
29. I enjoy teaching in my current location.	SD	D	A	SA

(Next Page)

Please answer the following open-ended questions.

Describe your role as a professional educator.

Has this role changed over the years?

If so, in what ways?

Have you considered leaving teaching?

If so, what was the major reason?

Why have you remained?

Does your school have a mentor program?

Has this program been beneficial in you remaining?

Please respond to the following demographic items.

What is the highest degree you have attained?

Bachelors _____

Masters _____

Specialist _____

Doctorate _____

How many years of teaching experience have you completed?

Beg. – 9 yrs. _____

10 – 19 yrs. _____

20 – 29 yrs. _____

30 – 30+ yrs. _____

If you are interested in discussing these topics further, I would love to sit down with you for a one-on-one interview. Feel free to simply email me your personal contact information at LockIII@aol.com, or by calling me at 706-235-0286 at your earliest convenience.