ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: REDUCING TEACHER ATTRITION: THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUILDING PRINCIPALS IN A LARGE URBAN DISTRICT TO SUPPORT TEACHER RETENTION

Shawna Detrice Holden, Doctor of Education, 2016

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The high rate of teacher attrition in urban schools is well documented. While this does not seem like a problem in Carter County, this equates to hundreds of teachers that need to be replaced annually. Since school year (SY) 2007-08, Carter County has lost over 7,100 teachers, approximately half of (50.1%) of whom resigned, often going to neighboring, higher-paying jurisdictions as suggested by exit survey data (SY2016-2020 Strategic Plan). Included in this study is a range of practices principals use to retain teachers. While the role of the principal is recognized as a critical element in teacher retention, few studies explore the specific practices principals implement to retain teachers and how they use their time to accomplish this task.

Through interviews, observations, document analysis and reflective notes, the study identifies the practices four elementary school principals of high and relatively low attrition schools use to support teacher retention. In doing so, the study uses a qualitative cross-case analysis approach. The researcher examined the following leadership practices of the

principal and their impact on teacher retention: (a) providing leadership, (b) supporting new teachers, (c) training and mentoring teaching staff, (d) creating opportunities for collaboration, (d) creating a positive school climate, and (e) promoting teacher autonomy. The following research questions served as a foundational guide for the development and implementation of this study:

1. How do principals prioritize addressing teacher attrition or retention relative to all of their other responsibilities? How do they allocate their time to this challenge?

2. What do principals in schools with low attrition rates do to promote retention that principals in high attrition schools do not? What specific practices or interventions are principals in these two types of schools utilizing to retain teachers? Is there evidence to support their use of the practices?

The findings that emerge from the data revealed the various practices principals use to influence and support teachers do not differ between the four schools.

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By

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Section 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

Carter County is one of the largest school districts in Maryland and has one of the highest teacher attrition rates in the state. Teacher retention has become a major problem for the district, as more than 9.3% of teachers leave their positions each year. While this does not seem like a county problem, this equates to hundreds of teachers that need to be replaced annually. Since school year (SY) 2007-08, Carter County has lost over 7,100 teachers, approximately half of (50.1%) of whom resigned, often going to neighboring, higher-paying jurisdictions as suggested by exit survey data (SY2016-2020 Strategic Plan). According to Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson (2005), when a teacher leaves, they are often replaced by a teacher with less than three years of experience, and newer teachers are not as effective as experienced teachers. This turnover impacts the county as well as individual schools as principals and district leaders work to provide the support teachers need to fulfill for the organizational needs of those schools.

High annual rates of teacher turnover also come with economic consequences. The human resources department must devote time to process exiting teachers while recruiting and hiring new teachers. Researchers have found that many contextual factors – such as school climate, demographics, socioeconomic status of students, lack of autonomy, and limited administrative support influence teachers' decisions to remain in or leave their positions (Brown & Wynn, 2007). This "revolving door" of teachers was one of the biggest challenges the researcher faced as a new principal in 2012.

Over the years, district leaders have attempted to address the problem of teacher retention; and since SY 2011 and SY 2014, the county has experienced a 5.2% decrease in

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teacher attrition among teachers with less than one to five years of experience ("Maryland Staffing Report," 2014). According to the "Transition Team Report" (2014), a number of factors have contributed to challenges of retaining teachers including salary and benefits that may not be competitive enough with surrounding districts, as well as limited supports available to teachers to implement high quality instruction. Despite the county's efforts, teacher attrition and retention remain a problem at the county level and an acute problem at the school level. Maintaining a stable work force in schools is critical. According to the Educational Research Service (ERS; 2002), "There is evidence that points to a direct connection between quality teachers and high student achievement that is so compelling that schools should be putting more and more effort into making sure they find and keep the highest quality teachers" (p.1). Principals must identify the supports, challenges and conditions that create an environment to retain teachers, otherwise, principals are negating one of their best chances to improve teacher retention, student achievement as well as develop the skills and experiences of teachers.

Justification/Rationale

The importance of effective leadership and practices among principals is well documented; however, few research studies have identified specific practices that principals use to influence teacher retention. Greenlee and Brown (2009) surveyed 77 teachers to identify principal leadership behaviors and incentives that were most effective in creating a school environment that fostered teacher retention. The findings from the study showed that financial incentives, working conditions, and principals' behaviors all played an important role in keeping teachers in the classroom (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). Respondents also noted that the presence of a positive school culture and conditions that enhance the staff were the

top principal behaviors that would encourage them to remain at their school (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). Grissom (2011) reviewed national data to explain both teacher satisfaction and turnover, focusing on the role of effective principals. The analysis indicated that high teacher turnover in disadvantaged schools' results, in part, from the performance of school leadership (Grissom, 2011).

Mangin (2007) examined conditions that led elementary principals to support the work of school-based instructional teacher leaders. The study provided a link between principals' knowledge of the role of the teacher leader position, their interaction with teacher leaders, and their support for teacher leadership (Mangin, 2007). The findings suggest that districts should build principals' knowledge of teacher leadership and foster principal-teacher leader interaction as a way to promote teacher retention (Mangin, 2007).

Each of these studies spoke to the importance of principal leadership, but demonstrate the dearth of information about specific practices used by the principal to retain teachers. The dearth of literature on the impact of principal leadership on teacher retention is particularly evident when seeking case studies of successful or unsuccessful practices. Repeated searches for cases that (1) identified and described schools similar to those in Carter County, (2) contained the profile of the principal actions (3) specified how principals spend their time, and (4) identified specific practices that supported teacher retention revealed few results. The studies that were available did not specifically examine the aforementioned elements, nor did they identify specific practices that principals employed to retain teachers.

Carter County School District is not alone in the difficulties it faces in trying to improve teacher retention. This issue is a challenge faced by school systems across the state and throughout the nation. The sections provide national, state and local contexts for the

complexities that are faced in retaining teachers.

The national challenge. Research indicates that teacher attrition is an expensive and complex problem to address at the national level. Ingersoll (2002) compared the process of continually training new teachers without retaining the existing teaching force to pouring water into a bucket with a fist-sized hole in the bottom. As Ingersoll explained, the "bucket" will never be filled given the number of teachers that leave each year.

A number of studies have noted that rates of teacher attrition are exceptionally high, particularly among new teachers. Approximately half a million teachers in the US either move or leave the profession each year, which costs the US up to $2.2 billion annually (Alliance Report, 2014). Brown and Wynn (2007) noted the following well-known statistics: Almost one-third of new teachers leave the field within the first three years, and half leave after five years (citing Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Several researchers have explored the high attrition rates of new teachers since the late 1980s, but used only rough estimates derived from cross-sectional national data. However, in a recent study, Perda (2013) used national longitudinal data to document more accurately the cumulative rates of attrition among novice teachers. Perda found that more than 41% of new teachers left teaching within five years of entry. He also concluded that these already high levels had been increasing since the late 1980s. Specifically, rates of attrition for first year teachers rose from 9.8 to 13.1% from 1988 to 2008, a 34% increase (Perda, 2013).

The Alliance Report (2014) suggested that the best way to improve this ongoing problem was to pay more attention to teacher induction, particularly among new teachers in hard-to-staff schools. As Ingersoll stated in a 2014 webinar, national reform efforts have been "very successful in bringing people (teachers) in, but then a whole lot of them are

leaving. We need both recruitment and retention. Doing one alone is not going to close the parity gap" (p. 62).

The challenges in Maryland. Early career attrition is also a problem at the state level in Maryland and follows the national trends. According to the Maryland Staffing Report (2014), state leaders typically determine rates of attrition by identifying the number of teachers who leave the state annually. Table 1 depicts the number of novice teachers in the state of Maryland (teachers with 1-5 years of experience) before leaving the state (Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2012-2014). As Table 1 shows, Maryland has lost more than 38% of the teaching workforce with less than one to five years of experience annually since October 2010. In 2012-2013, the Maryland attrition rate for teachers with 5 years of experience or less was 39.9%. These data show a downward trend of 3.7% from 43.6% in 2010-2011. Since 2011, Maryland has lost more than 6% of the teaching workforce (Maryland Staffing Report 2014).[1] These data mirror the literature regarding the national attrition rates among teachers.

Table 1

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[1] These numbers only include staff whose primary position is a teacher, including reading specialists (Maryland Teacher Staffing Report 2014).

School year	Total # teachers	< 1year	1-5 years	Total attrition	Total percent attrition	Total percent attrition: < 1-5 years
2010-2011	59330	103	1441	3541	5.6	43.6
2011-2012	58351	133	1759	4485	7.1	42.1
2012-2013	58544	128	1553	4204	6.7	39.9
2013-2014	59315	204	1396	4161	6.6	38.4

While teacher attrition in Maryland is decreasing slowly, attrition continues to be a concern. In response to this issue, educational leaders at the state level have implemented incentives and strategies designed to attract and retain public school teachers. These strategies include tax credits, the Teachers of Promise mentoring program, the retire/rehire program and the comprehensive induction program.
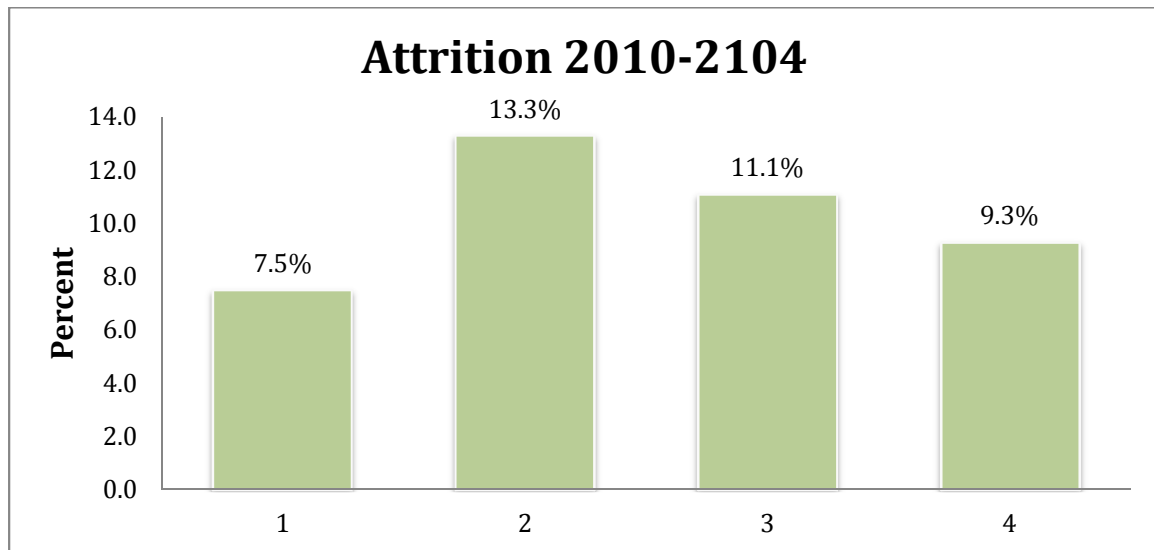

Figure 1. Carter County's Annual Attrition Percentages by Year from 2010-2014

The challenges in Carter County. Teacher attrition in the Carter County district is

below the national average for urban school systems; however, the district continues to have one of the highest attrition rates of all Maryland counties. Figure 1 shows the district's annual attrition percentages. As Figure 1 indicates, the district has lost more than 6% of its teaching workforce each year since 2010. These data show a slight improvement since 2011, but the attrition rate continues to exceed that of neighboring districts as noted in Table 2.

Table 2 details the rates of attrition among Maryland teachers by years of experience ("Maryland Teacher Staffing Report," 2012-2014). As Table 2 shows, Carter County has an overall attrition rate of 9.3%, compared to 3.6% in County 16, 5.9% in County 14 and 7.2% in County 2. County 9 has the lowest teacher attrition rate of all Maryland districts at 1.6%. Only County 4 has a comparable rate of teacher attrition at the district at 9.2%. Between October 2013 and October 2014, 415 (48.3%) teachers with less than five years of experience left the district. During the same period, 145 (37.3%) teachers left County 16, compared to 149 (35.3%) in County 2 and 74 (30.8%) in County 14. As seen in Table 2, County 4 overall attrition rate (12.2%) is higher than any other Maryland District, but the number of the teachers that left County 4 with less than five years of experience 339 (46.1%).

Although the overall attrition rate is improving, Carter continues to have a significantly higher rate than neighboring counties, as well as the highest number of teachers in the state who exit the county with less than five years of experience. These data confirm that teacher retention and attrition is a major problem that significantly impacts the county. The statistics also support Ingersoll (2003) and Perda's (2013) findings, which indicate that a significant number of teachers leave the profession during their first five years of teaching.

Table 2

Maryland Public Schools Teacher Attrition by Years of Experience (Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2012-2014).

Local school system	>1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26-30 years	<30 years	Total attrition	Total teachers	% attrition
State	204	1396	940	454	238	205	162	562	4,161	59,315	6.6
1	0	0	5	2	2	2	5	17	33	634	4.9
2	21	128	108	28	21	23	26	67	422	5,405	4.2
3	64	135	115	66	37	38	23	62	538	7,440	6.7
4	25	314	103	72	45	49	23	103	734	5,284	12.2
5	1	5	19	6	10	2	4	13	60	1,049	5.4
6	0	3	4	3	2	0	1	1	14	405	3.3
7	0	22	13	22	4	4	2	3	70	1,897	3.6
8	0	28	10	5	3	3	6	3	58	1,149	4.8
9	3	11	7	3	1	1	0	2	28	1,704	1.6
10	6	7	4	2	1	0	3	6	29	373	7.2
11	0	42	47	23	14	10	6	39	181	2,704	6.3
12	0	1	1	2	2	0	1	5	12	295	3.9
13	8	36	30	14	13	11	1	28	141	2,826	4.8
14	6	68	49	29	17	14	10	47	240	3,858	5.9
15	0	8	2	0	0	0	1	1	12	161	6.9
16	22	123	84	39	27	17	14	62	388	10,394	3.6
Carter County	40	375	262	99	25	16	13	28	858	8,364	9.3
18	0	11	5	3	1	0	1	2	23	510	4.3
19	0	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	10	39	20.4
20	1	26	22	8	2	2	8	12	81	1,069	7.0
21	0	5	1	4	1	3	1	6	21	224	8.6
22	0	6	3	3	0	0	1	3	16	316	4.8
23	6	21	20	9	6	8	7	27	104	1,532	6.4
24	1	8	16	8	4	2	3	11	53	1,089	4.6
25	0	8	7	2	0	2	2	14	35	594	5.6

Critical Literature and Supportive Documents

For the past decade researchers, policy makers, school districts leaders, and school administrators have identified public school teacher attrition as a significant issue that greatly impacts professional development, class size, scheduling, curriculum planning, and a variety of other factors. According to the Alliance Report (2014), approximately 13% of the 3.4 million public school teachers in the US either move (227,016) or leave (230,122) the

profession each year. Studies show that the issue is even more pronounced among new teachers. As several policy reports and media accounts indicate, 50% of novice teachers "flee" the profession during their first five years of teaching (e.g., Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Gaskin, 2015; Lambert, 2006; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2003). Researchers have found that many contextual factors— such as school climate, demographics, socioeconomic status of students, lack of autonomy, and limited administrative support—influence teachers' decision to remain in or leave their positions (Brown &Wynn, 2007). Their decision to leave often has a number of ramifications that reach beyond the classroom.

As teacher retention remains a priority for most urban school districts, it is necessary to recognize that the research suggests that there are multiple ways to retain teachers (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). "Understanding why teachers leave is the first step in getting them to stay," (WestEd, 2005, p.11). Numerous studies have examined factors associated with teacher retention and mobility. These studies historically have focused on the characteristics of teachers who leave particular schools and districts, or on those who leave the profession entirely, with some attention going to the reasons departing teachers give for their decisions. Researchers have also lent an increasing amount of attention to the working conditions that influence turnover rates in schools.

Reasons teachers leave. Researchers have found that many personal and organizational factors affect teachers' decisions to leave the profession or change schools (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Kirby, & Nataraj, 2006). Sass, Flores, Claeys, and Perez (2012), for example, sought to find correlations between teacher characteristics, school variables, and attrition. While the authors noted that several of the teacher characteristics that

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influenced attrition were unchangeable (e.g., gender, age, race, etc.), they explained that administrative decisions influenced other variables that could lead to increases in retention rates (Sass et al., 2012). The findings revealed that numerous factors contributed to whether a teacher remained in the profession (Sass et al., 2012). The researchers concluded that regardless of the educational setting and policy, it is critical that teacher preparation programs, school district administrators, and policymakers understand how these factors influence teacher attrition (Sass et al., 2012).

In a similar study, Ndoye, Imig, and Parker (2012) examined the relationships among teacher empowerment, school leadership, and teacher intentions to stay in or leave their positions at various North Carolina charter schools. The results indicate that leadership significantly influenced teachers' intentions to stay or leave the profession or to move to a different school, district, or state.

Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo (2009) conducted a comprehensive examination of the Chicago Public School System in 2009. Approximately 100 of the schools they studied had predominantly African American or Hispanic student populations and showed drastic teacher turnover rates (about a quarter of the teachers left each year). Allensworth et al. found that racial and socioeconomic conditions were not the only factors that contributed to teacher attrition. According to the study, teacher-parent relations, school size, and a supportive administration were all noted as contributing factors of teacher retention (Allensworth et al., 2009).

Ladd (2009) investigated administrative and school-level responses to surveys of school climate data in schools in California and North Carolina. Ladd's findings revealed that teachers were most concerned with the lack of teacher empowerment, inadequate school

leadership, lack of viable facilities, and insufficient opportunities for professional development. Ladd's study concluded that school leadership is highly predictive of a teacher's decision to remain at their school.

Bennett, Brown, Kirby-Smith, and Severson (2013) found that administrative support and relationships significantly influenced two novice and two experienced teachers' decisions to remain in the teaching field. The study also referenced the importance of providing mentors for new teachers, helping teachers with behavior management, and finding ways to create positive school environments (Bennett et al., 2013).

Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczak (2005), for example, conducted a study that used teacher survey data from California to examine how teaching conditions predicted turnover among teachers at the school level. The study revealed a significant relationship between high teacher turnover and poor working conditions, low salaries, and student characteristics (Loeb et al., 2005). Their research also suggested that schools are more attractive to teachers when they are "organized for productive collegial work under a principal's effective leadership" (Loeb et al., 2005, p. 67).

DeAngelis, Wall, and Che (2013) explored the effects of pre-service preparation and early career support on new teachers' career intentions and decisions. Their findings support the notion that pre-service preparation, in combination with induction support, is a component of efforts to address teacher attrition.

Johnson, Berg, and Donaldson (2005) found that if a large portion of a school's student population comes from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and the teacher does not have the skills, training, or support needed to meet the students' needs, they are likely to become discouraged and consider leaving the school or district. The

researchers concluded that the effectiveness of school leadership directly impacts the satisfaction of the teachers in the school (Johnson et al., 2005).

Research suggests that the absence of essential professional supports is one of many reasons why teachers leave the profession or seek transfers to other schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Ingersoll's organizational analysis of teacher turnover (cited by Brown & Wynn, 2007) indicates that teachers also leave because of a lack of empowerment, poor administrative support, and dissatisfaction with school climate. The school principal is central in all these concerns.

The consequences of attrition. The loss of teachers that leave the profession or move to other schools is costly, both for the students who lose the valuable experience of receiving instruction from an experienced teacher, and for the school and districts that must recruit and train the former teachers' replacements. High turnover breaks down the coherence of school communities by disrupting relationships among teachers and between teachers and students (DeAngelis & Presley, 2007). Turnover also erodes collegiality; jeopardizes trust among teachers; and cuts into valuable knowledge about procedures, curriculum, and culture. Research has suggested that without trust, teachers are less likely to take on leadership roles, collaborate, or form learning communities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, & Luppescu, 2010; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).

The large exodus of teachers in the early years of their careers can cause particularly huge financial hardships on a school due to the channeling of scarce resources into recruiting, hiring, orienting, and mentoring new teachers (Carroll, 2007). According to the NCTAF cost calculator, [2] Carter County spent approximately $7,507,500 to pay for recruiting and hiring

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[2] Calculate the number of leavers by entering the number of teachers who left the district. Select "Urban" to generate an estimate for Recruitment ($1600), Hiring Incentive ($2150), Administrative

the replacements for the 858 teachers that left the district between October 2013 and October 2014 (Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2014). Turnover costs can result from efforts to address (a) the separation process (e.g., exit interviews), (b) hiring procedures, (c) classroom vacancies (hiring substitutes), and (d) training costs. Teacher turnover costs schools and districts money that leaders would ideally spend elsewhere.

The high rates of teacher attrition and the resulting teacher turnover have implications for the quality of the education students receive. The constant turnover of teachers has negative impacts on student learning (Voke, 2002). When teachers leave schools, for example, previously held relationships and collaborations are lost, and new ones must be formed. Bryk and Schneider (2002) argued that the quality of relationships (trust) among teachers, and between teachers and students, is related to student performance. Not only does turnover disrupt the formation or maintenance of these relationships, it may also harm student achievement (Voke, 2012). Teacher turnover also affects the distribution of experienced teachers across schools in a district. Typically, schools replace novice teachers (1-5 years of experience) with even newer teachers, so the teachers' median years of experience keeps declining (Allensworth et al., 2009; Marinell & Coca, 2013).

As the previous sections have indicated, a number of factors influence teacher turnover, but research indicates that the principal plays a critical role in reducing attrition. Fullan (2003) reported that effective leaders have the ability to change organizational culture, which in turn, can create an atmosphere of job satisfaction that produces higher retention rates. Brown and Wynn (2007) found that principal support is a significant factor in the retention of new teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Studies have defined appropriate support

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Processing ($700), Induction ($600), and Professional Development ($3700). This estimate does not include school-level costs, the costs to student learning, and many other hidden costs that are the result of teacher turnover.

in many ways, even within single studies (Brown & Wynn, 2007). According to one principal participant, "Support means a lot of different things...discipline, organization, affirmation, resources, parents, teachers, curriculum, instruction....Everything you do, I think, falls under the umbrella of support" (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Nine of the 12 principals that participated in the study specifically identified lack of support as the primary reason that so many teachers have left the profession during the first five years (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Hence, school leaders play an important role in influencing building-level factors that can affect new teachers' attitudes toward the profession.

Although many researchers consider administrative support to be a component of school climate, some studies have focused on principal leadership outside of the larger school context and examined its relationship to teacher retention (Hirsch, 2005). Research findings indicate that effective leaders foster collaboration and create opportunities for teachers to learn from one another throughout their careers (Wong, 2004). While ineffective principal leadership often leads to teacher attrition, effective principal leadership often leads to teacher retention (Fullan, 2003). How principals execute their leadership affects school organization, the culture of the school and working conditions in it, which in turn, affects job satisfaction and teacher retention (Cornella, 2010). Useem (2003) found that strong administrators who promoted a collegial staff climate could foster higher rates of teacher retention. As Loeb, Kalogrides, and Beteille (2012) stated, school leaders can also control the quality of the teaching staff at their school by hiring "high-quality" teachers, retaining good teachers, removing poor teachers, and developing the teachers already at their school. This is particularly true for new teachers, who Danin and Bacon (1999) found perceived building principals to be the vital link in their success. Angelle (2006) confirmed the principals'

critical role in the initial experience and socialization of new teachers. Absent such involvement by the principal, high rates of teacher attrition seem inevitable.

Despite the important role that principals can play in retaining teachers, because of the many factors involved in a teachers' decision to remain in their positions, many administrators find addressing attrition to be a daunting task. It is critical for principals to find appropriate ways to support teachers. This study would support these efforts by examining the various roles of the principal, including (a) providing leadership, (b) supporting new teachers, (c) training and mentoring teaching staff, (d) creating opportunities for collaboration, (d) creating a positive school climate, and (e) promoting teacher autonomy.

Leadership. DeAngelis (2012) found that school leadership was a particularly important factor in teachers' decisions to leave the profession. As Brown and Wynn (2007) discovered, new teachers want a capable leader with a clear vision and a penchant for including teachers in the decision-making process. The researchers revealed that both teachers and principals want supportive and shared leadership, and that principals who retain teachers are accessible, establish trust, know their instructional staff, and are proactive (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Similarly, Angelle (2006) concluded that administrators who spent a lot of time with student discipline, completing paperwork, and leaving teachers alone increased new teachers' fears and caused the teachers to want to leave. Likewise, teachers believed that principals who merely fulfilled state and district observation and feedback requirements provided insufficient support for beginning teachers (Angelle, 2006).

School leaders who exhibit respect for their employees, strong communication and interpersonal skills, and effective organizational strategies encourage teachers to feel supported and foster among teachers a commitment to the school and to their classroom

responsibilities (Fullan, 2003). In a Canadian study of beginning teachers, Fantilli and Dougall (2009) found that having a principal who supported a collaborative school culture mitigated some of the challenges that teachers faced. In a study of nine novice teachers in small urban schools, Carter and Keiler (2009) found that while the new teachers valued the opportunity to know their colleagues and administration well, they received little curriculum support from administrators and had haphazard mentorship experiences.

Research supports the notion that the school climate that principals foster and the support that they provide play a significant role in teachers' decisions to remain in their positions. Therefore, principals must examine the leadership structure within the school to determine if they are adequately meeting the needs of teachers, particularly those who are new to the profession.

Supporting new teachers. Research shows that principal support is a significant factor in the retention of new teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2007). According to the authors, principals should avoid treating new teachers like their more experienced colleagues because novice teachers have unique needs, and principals must allocate time and resources to address these needs (Brown & Wynn, 2007). As Greenlee and Brown (2009) explained, to retain new teachers, principals must take time to differentiate the support provided to these novice educators from that given to their more senior or tenured counterparts.

Administrative support can assume a variety of forms, ranging from providing professional development opportunities to protecting teachers from district office mandates (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007). Brown and Wynn (2007) and Angelle (2006) found that principals' informal observations also play a significant role in retaining teachers. Specifically, Angelle concluded that principals' frequent visits to new teachers' classrooms

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and their provision of informal feedback, whether positive or negative, reduced teachers'

feelings of fear and isolation; whereas formal observations and processes, as well as outside

assessor observations required by the state/district, increased feelings of frustration and

anxiety.

Teacher induction and mentoring. One of the most effective ways to retain novice

teachers is to ensure that a good induction and mentoring program exists, and that principals

can play an important role in the development of quality mentoring and training offerings.

Research has found that the most critical component of induction programs is a mentoring

relationship between new and veteran teachers (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Corbell,

2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Specific definitions of induction usually refer to formal and

highly structured staff development programs that take place during the beginning years of a

teacher's career (Wong, 2004; Wong et al., 2005). Mentors give crucial support and advice to

new teachers in a number of areas, including pedagogy, classroom management, lesson

planning, and emotional support. Mentor relationships typically begin during induction

programs, and remain in place through a new teacher's first and second year of teaching.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that having a mentor in one's field reduced the risk of

leaving at the end of the first year by about 30 percent.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) revealed in their study that while the lack of

administrative assistance and support are strongly related to teacher turnover, several types of

assistance are not statistically significant by themselves in reducing the risk of teachers

leaving, including one-shot induction seminars, classes for new teachers or reduced work

load and extra resources for new teachers. New teachers receiving no induction support have

a 41% predicted rate of turnover at the end of their first year. New teachers receiving basic

induction support (mentor and supportive communication) have a 39% predicted rate of turnover. New teachers receiving basic induction support plus increased collaboration (common planning time and classes/seminars for beginning teachers) have a 27% predicted rate of turnover. New teachers that receive induction plus increased collaboration, affiliation with an outside support network, and extra resources have only an 18% predicted rate of turnover. According to Smith and Ingersoll, these data indicate that new teacher induction can be very effective in reducing turnover when the appropriate support is available.

Principals can play a significant role in ensuring that beginning teachers have good induction experiences by identifying and assigning good mentors and ensuring that new teachers receive substantial support (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Principals also need to establish two-way communication between themselves, the teachers, and other school personnel. Communication in schools and school systems has a broader purpose than simply conveying information; it serves as an interpretative process of organizing activities, creating understanding, and building acceptance of organizational goals (Heide et al., 2005). This notion aligns with Brown and Wynn's assertion that principals must provide clear channels of communication with new teachers by being responsive to questions, either via email or in person, and sharing important information. According to Van Dick and Wagner (2001), such direct communication and support from the principal and other administrators diminishes stress and promotes job satisfaction.

Promoting collaboration. Researchers have found that teachers tend to remain in their positions when they experience a collaborative school environment and receive support from colleagues and administrators (Hirsch, 2005, citing Loeb et al., 2004). Effective leaders foster collaboration and create opportunities for teachers to learn from one another

throughout their careers (Wong, 2004). Brown and Wynn (2007) and Angelle (2006) found that when principals promoted common planning time and provided other ways for teachers to work together, the educators were more engaged and saw the school as a positive place to work. According to Smith and Ingersoll (2004), principals who provided common planning time, enabled regular collaboration with other teachers in their subject area, or ensured that teachers engaged with their colleagues on instructional issues reduced the likelihood of attrition among novice teachers by 43%. According to Brown and Wynn's (2007) study of principals in the St. Louis metropolitan area, 8 of the 12 respondents noted the importance of involving teachers in school-based decisions, promoting teacher collaboration, and inviting opinions and feedback.

Promoting teacher autonomy. Research has also indicated that a relationship exists between autonomy and teacher attrition. Ingersoll (1996) defined *autonomy* as the decision-making power that teachers hold. The Glossary of Education Reform (2014) defined autonomy as the professional independence of teachers in schools, especially the degree to which they can make sovereign decisions about what they teach to students and how they teach it. According to Ingersoll (1996), providing teachers with some autonomy in their classrooms and opportunities to affect school policies and instruction is essential. Ingersoll (2001) reported that schools have lower rates of attrition when teachers feel free to make independent decisions in the classroom. Pearson and Moomaw (2006) found that when such conditions existed, teacher satisfaction and professionalism increased, on-the-job stress decreased, and teachers experienced greater job satisfaction. Ingersoll (2001) also explained that a lack of control in the classroom could make teachers feel hindered and ineffective, leading them to pursue other employment options.

Likewise, in studies reviewed by Firestone and Pennell (1993), teachers' autonomy in making classroom decisions and participating in school-wide decision making proved to be a key factor in predicting whether teachers would stay or seek transfers to other schools. Firestone and Pennell (1993) found that teachers are more likely to stay in schools where they have the opportunity to contribute to school-wide decision-making processes involving scheduling, selection of materials, and the identification of professional development experiences. According to Hirsch and Emerick (2007), consistent administrative support for teachers and systems that encourage teachers' participation in decision-making and problem-solving processes support teacher retention.

School climate. Administrative leaders directly shape the climate of a school and influence the development of processes that allow teachers to feel supported in their work (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006). Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) categorized *climate* as "the enduring characteristics that describe the psychological character of a particular school, distinguish it from other schools, and influence the behavior of teachers and students, and as the psychological feel that teachers and students have for the school" (p. 82). Researchers have clearly linked working conditions, a component of school climate with the retention of novice teachers (Angelle, 2006). Principals have the power to create positive work environments where teachers feel respected as professionals, receive adequate support, and feel that the administration consistently enforces rules (Grissom, 2008).

While Brown and Wynn (2007) were clear that building level factors were not the only reasons for high rates of teacher retention, they also stressed the importance of school climate. Likewise, Angelle (2006) equated school leadership with the process of fostering a positive organizational climate and socialization of new teachers into the school

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environment, setting the tone for interaction with both new and experienced teachers and all other members of the school community. In a survey of literature on climate and culture, Greenlee and Brown (2009) similarly found that teachers need principals who maintained a positive school culture which created conditions that enhanced their staff's effectiveness, motivated their workforce to focus their energy on achieving educational excellence, and facilitated the development and implementation of a shared vision.

Understanding the role of the principal and practices they use to support teachers and encourage teachers to remain in their positions is essential. It is also important that principals understand that they have the power to effect changes that can increase the teachers. District leaders must look more closely at the roles and responsibilities of school principals and the practices they use along with the district to retain teachers.

Prior Attempts to Address the Problem in Carter County

As mentioned above, high rates of teacher turnover have direct monetary costs and alter the distribution of teacher experience and skill across districts. Recognizing this issue and the impact it was having on the district, upon his appointment in 2013, the new superintendent of Carter County formed a Transition Team that included four subcommittees, one of which was the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC). The TLC examined and researched professional literature and determined that in order for students to receive a high-quality education that prepares them to succeed in postsecondary opportunities, staff members must have instructional resources and professional learning opportunities to build their capacities to deliver high-quality instruction (Dukes et al., 2014).

According to the Transition Team Report Dukes et al. (2014), the work of the committee compiled findings in four core areas: written, taught, and assessed curriculum;

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instructional technology, professional development and specialty programs and other areas. Of those areas, Area III (professional development) and Area IV (specialty programs and other areas) have a direct impact on teachers' decisions to stay or leave the school or district. The report noted that the school district faced challenges in efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers for specialty programs and other areas (Area IV). According to the report, these challenges were due to a number of factors, including (a) lack of competitive salary and benefits, (b) limited supports available to help teachers provide "high-quality" instruction, and (c) inconsistent teacher evaluation procedures that did not produce useful feedback or data (Dukes et al., 2014). Based on the results from the report, the TLC developed 12 key recommendations. One critical recommendation addressed teacher attrition and suggested that district leaders assess or clarify the issues around the hiring and retention of highly qualified and high-performing teachers (Dukes et al., 2014). These findings suggested that the district must find better ways to retain teachers and can no longer afford to be complacent about teachers exiting the profession, leaving the system, or transitioning between schools.

Carter County District leaders were determined to improve teacher retention and to accomplish that goal, recommendations from the Transition Team Report placed an emphasis on organization and staffing within the district. The Transition Team prioritized potential improvement efforts and developed the Strategic Plan with one area focused on a High-Performing Workforce to guide the work. The goal was to attract, develop, and retain high quality employees who represent cultural diversity are committed to growth and to support the needs of all schools ("Carter County Strategic Plan," 2016-2020). The Strategic Plan prioritized the following investments under the High-Performing Workforce Focus Area: increased compensation to retain the most experienced teachers, increased stipends for

National Board Certified Teachers with incentives for working in highest-need schools, increased and targeted professional development for teachers and increased teacher mentoring and support ("Carter County Strategic Plan," 2016-2020). County leadership began to design, negotiate and implement competitive and innovative compensation packages that, when combined with comprehensive, high-quality professional development and career growth opportunities would make Carter County the employer of choice among school systems. The Strategic Plan was not the district's first attempt to address this challenge of teacher retention.

For many years, Carter County has instituted many interventions and programs across the system to improve teacher retention. Among the many programs and interventions were the following:

Mentor teachers. Full time mentors were assigned to support new teachers by Carter County to assist in their successful transition. From 2010-2011 through 2013-2104, mentor teachers were assigned to support first year and selected second year teachers as a required component of the residency phase of the alternative teacher preparation program. However, the number of mentor teachers continued to fall short of what was needed to provide comprehensive induction support during the first three years of professional service ("Proposed Budget Q&A," 2016). Additionally, reductions to some previously accessible funding sources (such as Title II) have, over time, limited the opportunities for enhanced school-based mentoring supports for new teachers. For SY 2014-2015, 20 additional mentor teacher positions were allotted, and presently 30.5 mentor teachers in the Office of Talent Development provide support to resident teachers as well as teachers who have entered Carter County through traditional certification routes ("Proposed Budget Q & A," 2016).

The addition of the full time employees expanded the capacity of mentors to support specific schools. It is believed that the addition of the mentor teacher positions will have a significant impact on support efforts for Carter County's newest teachers, allowing greater opportunities to provide a wide variety of support as part of the comprehensive induction program. According to the "Proposed Budget Q & A" (2016), Carter County plans to further assist beginning educators as they navigate the increasing complexities of the teaching profession by deploying highly skilled mentor teacher teams to schools to provide comprehensive and tailored support. This customized, focused collaboration is intended to provide a more effective approach to teacher development and professional learning across schools and the school system and increase retention levels over time.

Professional Educator Induction Program (PEIP). The Professional Educator Induction Program (PEIP) facilitates the professional development of teachers during the induction period. Through this program, new teachers to Carter County receive guidance and training designed to assist them in developing their skills and facilitating understanding in implementing programs and curricula required by the school system. An integral component of PEIP is the August pre-service induction program for teachers new to teaching in the district. During this three-day training, new teachers are introduced to school system leaders and fellow educators, and receive information regarding curriculum, systemic initiatives, priorities, beginning routines and procedures to help teachers transition into the first month of school. Sessions are led by lead teachers and content supervisors and are differentiated according to instructional level and content area. In addition to the initial August training, follow-up sessions are available during the year to further assist teachers with their professional development needs and to encourage reflection upon their practice.

Peer assistance review (PAR). In July of 2014 Carter County began implementation of PAR. The primary purpose of PAR is for high effective teachers to provide regular, consistent support (particularly peer-coaching and peer-observations) to non-tenured teachers. The program provides teachers with assistance in developing the competencies to make them successful (A District Guide to the Peer Assistance and Review Program, 2015). The County plans to phase in support for tenured teachers over time. The ultimate goal of such support is to increase student achievement by ensuring that the pedagogy of all teachers aligns with best practices.

There are three phases of support. Phase one of the PAR program provides support for a limited number of teachers, new to the district, who have been referred by the principal. Phase two will expand to provide support to non-tenured teachers who received a final evaluation rating of "ineffective" as well as new teachers referred by principals for multiple ratings of "1" on initial observations. Finally, Phase three will extend PAR support to referred veteran teachers whose observations or final evaluations demonstrate a need for enhanced professional performance. The program is currently in phase one. Current research on PAR programs is underway by the Next Generation of Teachers Project of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Early findings show increased retention rates of novice teachers (Papay & Johnson, 2011).

Job-alike mentor. The job-alike mentor program began as part of an external grant the County secured during the 2001-2002 school year ("Application for Federal Education Assistance," 2000). In 2005, all novice teachers (teachers who have less than two years of teaching experience and who required a review of their international certification) received the assistance of a school-based "job-alike mentor." The goal was for job-alike mentors to

provide the types of in-school support described by Elmore (2002). Each month, mentors were provided a specific focus for their mentee in order to facilitate inquiry and discussion around effective teaching practices. During this time, most schools in need of the in-house support were less able to identify tenured staff to take on these roles. If schools had only a handful of experienced classroom teachers available, then the job- alike mentor responsibilities become overwhelming. The goal of the program was to provide support, collegiality, and resources in order for novice teachers to become successful members of the teaching community.

  National Board Certified Teacher Program (NBCT). The National Board Certified Teachers Leadership Development Office was established in 2007 as a recruitment and support program for teachers seeking advanced certification via National Board Certification and a leadership development program designed to build mentoring, coaching, and the leadership skills of teachers. The NBCT program provides support to National Board Certified teachers as well as to current and potential NBCT candidates. The primary goals of the NBCT program are to increase the number of Carter County Nationally Board Certified teachers and capitalize on the expertise of current National Board Certified teachers and to assist with improved teacher quality and student achievement. The Office of Talent Development also partners with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards® to offer Candidate Support Training for mentors and teacher leaders in the school system.

  Carter County has addressed teacher retention challenges through these several interventions. Likewise, the County has offered a wide range of professional and personal development opportunities to enhance teacher performance in order to improve teacher retention. Many of the opportunities were systemic, while some were school-based. All of

the opportunities were designed to address and support the needs of teachers in order to improve teacher retention.

Summary

The existing literature provides a number of recommendations to improve teacher retention. The connection between school leadership and teacher retention has been affirmed in many studies (e.g. Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo, 2009; Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001). Research has further shown that principals wield great influence in schools in both formal and informal ways (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Ingersoll, 2003; Lortie, 2009). One critical component emerged from Ladd's (2011) study in which she highlights the importance of school leadership; she writes, "The higher the perceived quality of school leadership, the less likely teachers are either to plan to leave or actually to leave the school" (p. 256).

While the current body of research has provided a significant amount of useful information on teacher retention, few studies have elicited specific practices principals have used to support teachers and ultimately improve retention at their respective schools. While many research studies have illustrated the power of a principal in an individual school to shape a school's culture and learning environment, and many studies have highlighted why teachers leave schools, there is limited research about how principals address the challenges of teacher turnover. In fact, one recent study by The New Teacher Project (TNTP) reported that, according to teachers, principals "often don't even try" to retain high performing teachers (TNTP, 2012, p. 4). The recommendations for future research listed in Boyd et al.'s (2011) study also highlighted this gap. The researchers asserted that it was "necessary to investigate...what in particular the administration does or does not do that influences a teacher to stay or leave" (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 329). To fill this void, the researcher examined

the practices principals provided teachers in four Carter County elementary schools – two schools with a retention rate above 80% and two schools with a retention rate below 80% to identify evidence based best practices each principal used to support teacher retention in their individual school. The study incorporated both principal and teacher perspectives to better understand the practices principals used.

Section 2: Investigation

This study explored the principal's role in reducing teacher retention. Given the researcher's role as a principal, the researcher is aware that retaining quality teachers is critical. Consequently, clarifying the reasons teachers leave their positions and the practices that school leaders can adopt to reduce attrition is essential. To this end, the researcher examined the practices and interventions four principals in this study believe have proven effective in reducing attrition and increasing retention in their schools.

The purpose of this study was to examine the practices four elementary school principals used to support teachers to aid in the improvement of teacher retention. While previous studies have noted that principals have a significant impact on teacher retention, there is insufficient information on specific practices that principals can adopt to encourage teachers to remain in their positions. Understanding what these principals have done to retain teachers will aid educational leaders in their efforts to replicate proven successes at other schools in the county. To create a comprehensive and clear model to explore ways to more broadly conceptualize this field, it was necessary to identify commonalities across the literature to more appropriately frame the roles and responsibilities of principles and the practices they use to support teacher retention. Therefore, the researcher developed a framework to build upon this work. The purpose of the framework is to identify the absence and presence of practices and supports principals can implement to improve teacher retention and reduce attrition. This framework offers a lens to interpret the data in this study and to inform future research studies.
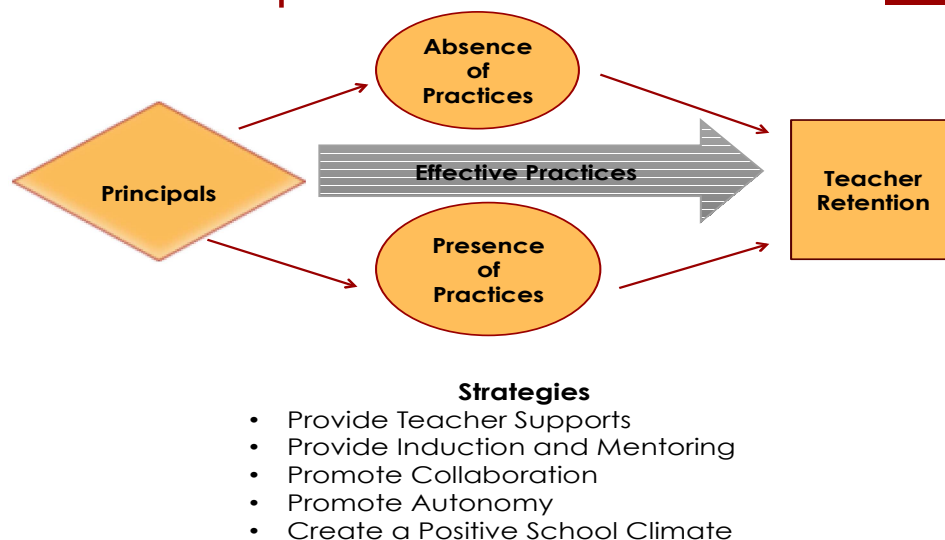
Conceptual Framework

Figure 2. Framework to understand the impact of a principal's practices on teacher retention.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as s foundational guide for the development of this study:

1. How do principals prioritize addressing teacher attrition or retention relative to all of their other responsibilities? How do they allocate their time to this challenge?

2. What do principals in schools with low attrition rates do to promote retention that principals in high attrition schools do not? What specific practices or interventions are principals in these two types of schools utilizing to retain teachers? Is there evidence to support their use of the practices?

Qualitative Methods

During this study, the researcher utilized a qualitative methods approach to gather and analyze data. The researcher obtained data from interviews conducted with elementary school principals and teachers as well as observations of principals.

A qualitative case study design was appropriate for this inquiry because it helped the

researcher to understand individual practices principals used, if any, to retain teachers. When using this approach, the researcher focused on the attempt to achieve a sense of the meaning that others give to their own situations" (Smith, 2005, p. 5). According to Maxwell (2005), qualitative research allows for the understanding of processes, as opposed to outcomes, and focuses on people and situations (Maxwell, 2005). Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) also noted that, "qualitative research seeks to probe deeply in the research setting to obtain in-depth understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them" (p. 14). The researcher of this study relied on Creswell's (1997) eight reasons for conducting a qualitative study approach:

1. The researcher selected a qualitative study because of the nature of the research question. In a qualitative study, the research question often starts with *how* or *what* so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on.

2. The researcher chose a qualitative study because the topic needs to be *explored*.

3. The researcher used a qualitative study because of the need to present a detailed view of the topic.

4. The researcher chose a qualitative approach in order to study individuals in their *natural setting.*

5. The researcher chose a qualitative approach because of interest in *writing* in a literary style; the writer intended to bring himself or herself into the study, to use the personal pronoun "I" and to engage a storytelling form of narration.

6. The researcher employed a qualitative study because of *sufficient time and resources* to spend on extensive data collection in the field and detailed data analysis of "text" information.

7. The researcher selected a qualitative approach because the Carter County School *audiences are receptive* to qualitative research.

8. The researcher employed a qualitative approach to emphasize the researcher's role as an *active learner* who can tell the story from a participants' view rather than an "expert" who passes judgment on participants. (Creswell, 1997, p. 17)

The researcher selected a qualitative approach for the study because of the need to explore the practices principals used to support teacher retention. A qualitative study that allowed for the collection of personal accounts through one-on-one interviews and observations helped the researcher to obtain a detailed picture of what principals do to retain teachers at their respective schools. This approach also helped the researcher to understand how the different approaches impacted the level of success each principal had retaining teachers.

Design

The researcher utilized a qualitative case study method to examine the practices principals used to retain teachers. Merriam (2009) defined a case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). For this inquiry, each school served as a case. Creswell (2007) provided the following description of case study research:

[A] qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case *description* and case-based themes. (p. 73; emphasis in original)

According to Yin (2008), a case study is beneficial when answering how and why questions. The case study format allowed the researcher to analyze various qualitative sources of

information—including interviews, observations, documents, and field notes—to provide an in-depth description of *how* and *why* principals used practices to improve teacher retention. As Merriam (2009) noted, the case study method provides "insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (p. 42). The researcher approached the interviews and discovery with no conclusions or hypotheses to test. Instead, the interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to probe further to discover *what* was happening within the case, and *how* and *why* the phenomenon of study occurred.

The study involved a multisite study of four schools, and included a cross-case analysis of the case studies designed to identify similarities, differences, and generalizations that could inform the future practices of school leaders seeking to improve teacher retention. Kahn and VanWynsberghe (2008) explained, "Cross-case analysis is a research method that facilitates the comparison of commonalities and difference in the events, activities, and processes that are the units of analyses in case studies" (p. 1). The researchers also note "the fundamental power of cross-case analysis emerges from understanding how expertise can be built and shared" (Kahn & VanWynsberghe, 2008, p. 16). Using a cross-case analysis helped this researcher to identify practices principals were using to support teacher retention at their schools in Carter County. The researcher also sought to pinpoint any differences of support provided among the four schools that had higher retention rates and those that had lower retention rates. The use of a cross-case analysis served to "strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29).

The researcher identified four schools, two with high rates of teacher retention, and two with low rates of teacher retention and interviewed principals and teachers at each school and observed principals to identify practices that may affect the rates of retention of both

novice and veteran teachers. The researcher anticipated that some practices would be specific to each principal, while other approaches would likely include practices promoted by Carter County or other sources. The researcher documented these practices and highlighted the approaches that seemed to be the most successful. The researcher developed case studies to highlight the actions (and inactions) that appeared to influence teacher retention based on interview responses, observations, review of documents (TELL Maryland Survey), and field notes.

Potential Limitations of this Study

Creswell (2005) identified limitations as potential problems or weak areas of a study. Because this study relied heavily upon interview data of school personnel, the honesty of the interviewees is a potential limiting factor. Verification or guarantee of honest responses is not possible. While the researcher went to great lengths to account for any potential bias, total elimination of said bias was not possible. The researcher was also limited by the sample size. Because there are only nine respondents from four school sites, the data from this study are not generalizable to every school in Carter County and beyond.

Despite these limitations, the study provides data regarding the practices principals have in place to support teacher retention. By understanding the practices principals use to retain teachers, principals in Carter County will have the opportunity to replicate the practices to continue to improve teacher retention and attrition.

Methods and Procedures

This inquiry explored the practices principals of the four elementary schools in Carter County are using to support teacher retention. The sections that follow will detail the process involved in collecting data for this study.

Participant selection. The participant selection was purposive and focused on the particular characteristics of the population that was of interest. This approach best aided the researcher in answering the established research questions. According to Merriam (2009), purposeful sampling draws from the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight, and therefore must select a sample from which she can learn the most. This form of sampling also ensured that the participants shared the same characteristics or traits.

This study explored the teacher retention practices of four elementary school principals in Carter County in an effort to help improve teacher retention. For the purpose of this study, participants included four elementary school principals and five teachers. Principal participants met the following criteria: (a) a current elementary school principal in the district in a Comprehensive School (excluding special programs, academies, and charter schools), (b) had served as principal in the current school for a minimum of five consecutive years. Additionally, half of the principal respondents (c) have an annual teacher retention rate at their school of at least 80%, not including retirement and involuntary transfers, while the other half (d) had a retention rate lower than 80%. Teacher participants were elementary classroom teachers from each of the four schools in Carter County. All tenured and non-tenured teachers at the four schools were sent emails requesting their participation in the study. Teacher participants were selected based on the promptness of their agreement to participate. Teacher participants consisted of 3 tenured and 2 non-tenured teachers. Each school had at least one teacher participant with the exception of one. According to the district and MSDE Teacher Evaluation Pilot Guidelines, tenured teachers had to have had a hire date prior to July 1, 2010 (The District and MSDE Teacher Evaluation Pilot Guidelines, 2012-

2013). Teacher participant information including their tenure or non-tenure status was obtained from the Carter County Department of Human Resources. The data allowed the researcher to analyze interview responses and observation data to identify the practices principals with high teacher retention rates have adopted that differ from the approaches employed by principals with lower retention rates.

To select teacher and principal participants that met the criteria, the researcher used the 2015 TELL Maryland survey to identify elementary schools where at least 80% of faculty completed the survey. Next, the researcher eliminated special schools, charter schools, academies and dedicated specialty schools. The researcher then identified schools from the selection that have a principal who has been at the current school for at least six consecutive years. From this pool, the researcher identified two schools with a retention rate of 80% or higher and the others with a retention rate below 80%. The researcher worked with the Department of Human Resources and school principals to identify school retention rates and to identify tenured and non-tenured teachers at each school.

Participant demographics. The four elementary principal participants were all African American females. At the time of this study, each of the four principals had been in the field of education and practiced in Carter County for more than 30 years, with a combined total of 125 years in the County. The participants' tenure as principal ranged from 7 to 15 years. The participants had held a variety of positions before they moved into their current roles, with three of the four serving as classroom teachers prior to being selected as principal (see Table 3).

Table 3

Principal Participant Descriptive Data

Participants	School grade level	Years in working in Carter County	Previous positions	Years as principal in Carter County	Tenure as principal at current school	Total years in education
Principal Johnson Goodson Elementary	K-6	27	Classroom teacher, assistant principal, instructional specialist, principal	15	15	40
Principal Beam Omberly Elementary	PreK-5	45	Magnet coordinator, staff developer, school improvement, principal	9	9	45
Principal Sampson Seahawk Elementary	K-5	22	Special education coordinator, assistant principal, principal	12	12	43
Principal Covington Pilgrim Elementary	PreK-5	31	Classroom teacher, school counselor, assistant principal, pupil personnel worker, homeless specialist, regional instructional specialist, principal	7	7	31

The five teacher participants included three tenured, and two non-tenured teachers. Each teacher possessed various levels of educational teaching experience that ranged from 8 to 25 years (see Table 4). There were four females and one male. Of the five teacher participants, four were African American and one was White. The researcher selected the

teachers based on a solicitation of all teachers in the four schools. The five participants were
the first to respond to the invitation to take part in the study.

Table 4

Teacher Participant Descriptive Data

Participants	Tenure status	Current position	Years of teaching in Carter County	Years teaching at current school	Total years of teaching experience
Teacher 1 Goodson Elem	Tenured	Grade 2	7	2	8
Teacher 2 Goodson Elem	Non-tenured	Grade 5	1	5 months	8
Teacher 3 Omberly Elem	Non-tenured	Grade 3	3	1	18
Teacher 4 Seahawk Elem	Tenured	Kindergarten	12	9	19
Teacher 5 Pilgrim Elem	Tenured	Grade 1	8	7	25

School demographics. Goodson Elementary is a small school located in Carter

County that serves approximately 341 students in Grades pre-kindergarten through 6. During

the 2014-2015 school year, 94% of the students qualified for free and reduced-price meals

(FARMS) and approximately 93% of the students were African American. The attendance

rate for the 2014-2015 school year was 94.8%. During that same year, 65% of the teachers

held an Advanced Professional Certificate (APC), 25% held a Standard Professional

Certificate (SPC), and 10% of the classes were taught by someone not qualifying as a highly

qualified teacher (HQT).

Omberly Elementary is a small school located in Carter County that serves

approximately 416 students in Grades pre-kindergarten through 5. Of the 416 students, 225

are African American, 154 are Hispanic/Latino, 21 are White, and 12 are Asian. For the

2014-2015 school year, 32% of the students qualified for FARMS. The attendance rate for the 2014 - 2015 school year was 95%. During that year, 55% of the teachers held an APC, 45% held an SPC, and 5% of the classes were taught by non-HQTs.

Seahawk Elementary is a small school located in Carter County that serves approximately 284 students in Grades pre-kindergarten through 5. Of the 284 students, 134 are African American, 113 are Hispanic/Latino, 17 are White, and 10 are Asian. For the 2014-2015 school year, 30% of the students qualified for FARMS. The attendance rate for the 2014 - 2015 school year was 95%. During the 2014-2015 school year 56% of the teachers held an Advanced Professional Certificate (APC), 37% held a Standard Professional Certificate (SPC), 6% were conditional teachers, and 2% of the classes were not taught by HQT.

Pilgrim Elementary is a small school located in Carter County that serves approximately 414 students in grades kindergarten through grade 5. Of the 414 students, 323 are African American, 72 are Hispanic/Latino, and 14 are white. During the 2014-2015 school year 94% of the students qualified for free and reduced-price meals (FARMS). The attendance rate for the 2014 - 2015 school year was 94.4%. During that year, 77% of the teachers held an APC, and 22% held a SPC. All students were taught by a HQT.

Validity. Validity is important because it provides a way to establish truth in research (Golafshani, 2003). To ensure the validity of the findings, the researcher triangulated the data collected by interviewing principals and teachers as well as observing principals. "Triangulation is the process of using multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information" (Gay et al., 2006, p. 405). The researcher also sought to triangulate the data by

using multiple sources, including interviews, observations, documents (2015 TELL Maryland Survey) and field notes. Gay et al. (2006) suggested the following additional strategies that aid in establishing the validity of qualitative research and the researcher utilized them as she conducted the study and analyzed the results:

- debriefing with peers,

- collecting and reviewing other data items,

- conducting member checks,

- triangulating data amongst school personnel,

- ensuring structural corroboration or coherence, and

- establishing an audit trail.

Instruments. Merriam (1998) explained that in qualitative studies, "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (p. 6). As the primary investigator, the researcher conducted all interviews and observations to gain a first-hand account of how principals supported teachers and how teachers viewed the support. The researcher also collected relevant data through field notes and an analysis of the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey and through the compilation of filed notes. The 2015 TELL Maryland Survey provided important data about teaching and learning conditions that research has shown to be important to student achievement and teacher retention. Section 3 provides details about the data collected from the survey.

Interviews. Interviews constituted a major part of the data collection process. The researcher conducted nine semi-structured, face-to-face recorded interviews with four principals and three tenured and two non-tenured teachers to promote the sharing of personal history, perspectives, supports, and experiences for addressing teacher retention (see Table

4). Patton (2002) described this process in the following way:

> We interview persons to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe…we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how many people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 340-341)

In preparation for the interviews, the researcher used an interview protocol adapted from Fennema, Carpenter, and Loef (1990) that included open-ended and closed questions (see Appendices B and C). The closed questions aided in acquiring information about fixed facts. Open-ended questions encouraged interviewees to elaborate on responses in order to provide detailed information. The researcher categorized the responses to both open-ended and closed questions as the data was collected. The protocol served as a guide for the interview process and ensured the collection of consistent data. The interview protocol followed standard research guidelines that allowed participants to skip questions or end the interview at any time.

Individual principal interviews lasted approximately 50 minutes, and teacher interviews lasted approximately one hour. For both principals and teachers, the interviews included six types of questions: (a) experiences and behavior questions, (b) opinions and value questions, (c) feeling questions, (d) knowledge questions, (e) sensory questions, and (f) background/ demographic questions. The interview questions for principals helped identify

the practices that principals implement to encourage teacher retention, their approaches to allocating their limited time, and the impact these approaches have had on teacher retention. The interview questions for teachers brought to light teachers' opinions about practices implemented by principals and the degree to which these practices have encouraged teachers to remain at their current school. When necessary, the researcher asked follow-up questions to obtain additional information or gain greater clarity about a participant response. The teacher interviews helped the researcher to learn more about:

- How teachers viewed the principals' role,

- Teacher perceptions of effective and ineffective teacher retention practices,

- Why teachers remained in or left their schools, and

- The support systems used by principals to help teachers thrive and stay.

Interviews occurred between November 2015 and December 2015 at times that were convenient for the principals and teachers. Given that, Creswell (1998) suggested that qualitative research should be conducted in "a natural setting" (p. 15). All interviews with principals took place at their respective schools, while interviews with teachers took place off campus at a location of their choice. The teacher interviews occurred prior to the observations of and interviews with principals to provide greater context for the data collected from the principals. The interviews focused on eliciting responses from principals and teachers to identify practices in place to support teachers in an effort to reduce retention and improve attrition. All scheduling and follow-up communication occurred via email and telephone.

All interviews were recorded using a digital voice-recording device and were transcribed using Verbal Ink. Transcripts were then sent to interview participants as a form of

"participant verification" to ensure the accuracy of participant responses (Harper & Cole, 2012). NVivo, a qualitative research software package helped the researcher organize and categorize the interviews. The procedure for the interviews was as follows:

1. The researcher read the prepared interview statement to establish rapport and provide background information of the study.

2. The researcher reviewed the informed consent form, notified participants of confidentiality, obtained their signature for use of quoted material in the final reporting, if necessary, and received consent to move forward with the audio recorded interview.

3. The researcher then proceeded with the interview protocol.

Merriam (1998) explained that interviews are one of many methods designed to collect data in qualitative research (1998). "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate" (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). Merriam also noted, "Interviewing is also the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals" (p. 88). In this study, the researcher identified a selection of principals and teachers that could provide insight into the support provided by principals to support teacher retention. Interviews proved an ideal way to obtain their thoughts and perspectives.

Observations. Observations served as another primary data source in this qualitative study to supplement the interviews. According to Merriam (2009), observations provide valuable context for the data collected via other means, and allow the researcher to witness specific incidents and behaviors firsthand that can serve as reference points for subsequent

interviews. To this end, the researcher conducted one two-hour observation of four principals

between November 2015 and January 2016. During the observations, the researcher

specifically examined how principals spent their instructional day and recorded their actions.

The researcher used a timer as a reminder when recording information about the principals'

activity in 15-minute increments. The observation of principals helped the researcher gather

more in-depth information about the participants' daily activities and to corroborate findings

from the interviews. The observation protocol prompted the researcher to take the following

actions: (a) describe the setting, (b) identify participants, (c) describe the activities/actions of

the principal, (d) document interactions between principals and staff, and (e) include

reflections (see Appendix E).

During observations, the researcher jotted down detailed notes about the principals'

actions and typed up all logs immediately following the observation. The researcher

compiled the observation data and developed a coding system using NVivo 10 to identify

common themes and behavioral patterns among the principals.

The principal observation experiences and interviews helped the researcher learn

more about the following areas:

- How respondents viewed their role as principal,

- How principals spent their time,

- The similarities and differences between principal and teacher perceptions of
  necessary supports for classroom teachers,

- How principals prioritized teacher retention practices, and the practices principals
  used to retain teachers.

All participants signed an informed consent form indicating their awareness of the

purpose of the study (see Appendix A). The consent form included the steps that the researcher took to maintain the confidentiality of the information participants shared and to ensure that the researcher would not use the data collected during the study in any way that would negatively impact the respondents' professional lives. The names and all identifying characteristics of the participants and selected schools were kept anonymous, and each participant and school was assigned aliases to protect their confidentiality.

Document analysis. While semi-structured interviews and observations served as the primary source of data for this inquiry, the 2015 TELL Maryland survey provided additional insight regarding specific supports principals provide teachers to improve retention. The 2015 TELL Maryland survey provided state, county and individual school results regarding teaching and learning conditions that have shown to be important to student achievement and teacher retention. For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused on individual school results.

Field notes. Field notes were recorded to affirm what the researcher observed. According to Gay et al. (2006):

Field notes describe, as accurately as possible and as comprehensively as possible, all relevant aspects of the situation observed. They contain two basic types of information: (1) descriptive information that directly records what the observer has specifically seen or heard on-site through the course of the study and (2) reflective information that captures the researcher's personal reactions to observations, the researcher's experiences, and the researcher's thoughts during an observation session. (p. 414)

The researcher followed this description and gathered the two types of information identified by Gay. Evidence collected from field notes is embedded within responses from interviewees and observations in Section 3.

Confidentiality

During the data analysis process, the researcher assigned an alias to all participants to keep their identities confidential. Additionally, to protect participants' confidentiality, the researcher did not record any names during the interviews and ensured that neither the coded data nor the published research would include any information that would allow the reader to identify study participants.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process occurred in tandem with the data collection. The researcher looked for patterns in the data using central questions to focus the analysis. Following each set of interviews at a school, the researcher had all interview data transcribed using an online transcription service, Verbal Ink, before proceeding to the next school. To begin, the researcher transcribed all data from interviews and observations and read through the documents several times to identify categories of responses, patterns, and themes. The researcher immediately analyzed and reflected upon all reflective notes taken during the interviews. After the interviews and observations were completed, and the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey was analyzed along with field notes, the researcher coded all of the data, which "involved taking text data or pictures, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of the participant" (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). The researcher considered Denzin and Lincoln (2003) admonitioned that, "Coding helps us to gain a new perspective on our

material and to focus further data collection, and may lead us in unforeseen directions" (p.

258). In the coding stage of analysis, the researcher read through interview transcripts and

observation notes paragraph-by-paragraph, and created internal sources and new nodes each

time a new idea or concept was developed. The case study database served to organize the

data and helped the researcher to locate specific information during the data analysis process

(Merriam, 2009, p. 203). The researcher followed the steps suggested by Merriam (2003) for

analyzing qualitative data:

1. Category construction

    a. Open coding: Reviewed transcripts and notate comments, observations, and
       queries based on what was useful.

    b. Axial coding (or analytical coding): Grouped similar notations and comments.

    c. Category creation: Identified patterns and themes to sort data that are
       abstractions taken from the data.

2. Sorting categories and data

    a. Refined and revised categories and create subcategories to develop a
       preliminary list of categories.

    b. Created file folders, electronically or by hand, and placed each set of data
       (with identifying codes from transcript) within the appropriate folder.

    c. Continually checked if categories "held up" based on further data analysis.

3. Naming categories

    a. Named categories based on information from the researcher, the study
       participants, and/or the literature.

4. Verifying that categories meet the criteria below (p. 186, emphasis in original)

a. Was *responsive* to (answer) the research question(s).

b. Was as *sensitive* to the data as possible.

c. Was *exhaustive* (include enough categories to encompass all relevant data).

d. Was *mutually exclusive* (a relevant unit of data can be placed in only one category).

e. Was *conceptually congruent* (all categories are at the same conceptual level).

5. Identifying theories

a. Made connections across data elements and categories to "make inferences, develop models, or generate theory" (p.188).

b. Linked categories together to explain meaning of data.

The researcher identified relevant themes for each school, and then compared the themes across all cases to determine similarities and differences in how principals support teachers that may have affected teacher retention at the schools. Merriam (2009) suggested that the additional analysis is beneficial when identifying categories and themes in qualitative, case study analysis:

The level of analysis can result in a unified description across cases; it can lead to categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases; or it can result in building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases. (p. 204)

This cross-case analysis of the actions/inactions of the four principals in Carter County to support teacher retention at the four elementary schools provided an opportunity to identify themes and processes that might positively impact teacher retention. Conversely,

there was the possibility that the research would not identify common themes amongst the

four schools. Section 3 presents a more detailed discussion of the cross-case analysis.

Section 3: Results

The researcher conducted a cross-case analysis to address the established research questions and identify the practices selected principals use to support teacher retention in their respective schools. Using the Voice Memo iPhone app, the researcher recorded all interviews and then had them transcribed using Verbal Ink, an online transcription service. The researcher shared all transcriptions with interview participants to ensure that the information was captured correctly and used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, to analyze and categorize the data.

The purpose of this study was to examine the practices four elementary school principals used to support teachers and aid in the improvement of teacher retention at their schools. The following research questions informed this study:

1. How do principals prioritize addressing teacher attrition or retention relative to all of their other responsibilities? How do they allocate their time to this challenge?

2. What do principals in schools with low attrition rates do to promote retention that principals in high attrition schools do not? What specific practices or interventions are principals in these two types of schools utilizing to retain teachers? Is there evidence to support their use of the practices?

The researcher conducted a multisite study of four schools and completed a cross-case analysis of the case studies designed to identify similarities, differences, and generalizations that could inform the future practices of school leaders seeking to improve teacher retention.

The sections that follow present the findings from this inquiry within the framework of a cross-case analysis, beginning with an overview of five primary leadership practices implemented in the schools: (a) providing leadership; (b) supporting new teachers; (c)

training and mentoring teachers; (d) creating opportunities for collaboration; (e) creating a positive school climate; and (f) promoting teacher autonomy. The section also includes data for each school regarding results of the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey and its correlation to the principal and teacher interview responses.

Leadership. The participating principals indicated that being a visionary and moving the school in a positive direction, utilizing the teamwork of teachers and staff, were critical components of leadership. Each principal expounded on "teamwork" by discussing her leadership team and the role of the team's participants. Three of the four principals identified titles of key leadership team members that contributed to the forward movement of the school. Principal Covington shared, "I believe in joint leadership, and so I have a leadership team that has quite effective members. Our mantra is, 'Teamwork makes the dream work…'"

Principal Beam described how members of the leadership team worked together and contributed to the improvement of the school, "I encourage teachers and members of the leadership team to attend professional development sessions and come back to share what they are learning." She continued, "It's okay to have a core group for guidance, but the more teachers that are involved, the more they will take ownership." Principal Covington shared the belief that leadership began with the leadership team, "…because one person can't do this work alone…." She explained, "We provide differentiated instruction and we enhance and improve each other's craft." Principal Sampson noted, "As educational leaders, it is our job to make sure that our teachers become professional practitioners." Principal Johnson added, "Respect is also important to leadership. I make sure I give [my leadership team] respect and hold them to the highest expectations. You have to make people feel like they are a part of the school organization."

The teachers seemed to view leadership through a similar lens. Each of the five teachers seemed aware of the leadership team, its purposes, and its importance. Mr. George from Goodson Elementary expressed, "The leadership team helps run the building and the principal is a part of that team." This particular teacher claimed that the leadership structure at Goodson was in sharp contrast to what he had experienced at a previous school, where the principal had attempted to do everything.

Each of the five teachers stated that their leadership teams had provided them with opportunities to work with other classroom teachers and to receive support from resource teachers.

Unlike his counterparts, Ms. George, indicated that the composition of the leadership team in his school was unfair. He stated, "The leadership team is all teachers that are not in the classroom…I wonder why classroom teachers are not a part of the team." She questioned how the principal had selected the teachers assigned to the leadership team, commenting, "No one seems to knows how the team members are selected."

Each teacher also spoke specifically about the leadership characteristics that they believed principals should exemplify. Ms. Lewis from Seahawk Elementary stated, "I think the leader has to be a 'people person' and be able to communicate with staff." Ms. Collins from Pilgrim Elementary noted, "The leader must be positive and motivating…. even if there are challenges, they must supportive and able to help resolve the challenge or problem or need."

The researcher observed evidence of direct principal leadership at work in each school. For instance, at Omberly Elementary, Grade 5 teachers engaged in collaborative planning with a guided reading focus that was facilitated by the professional development

lead teacher (PDLT) and another resource teacher. In this situation, the principal was more of an observer, occasionally contributing to the discussion, but serving as more of a facilitator or moderator. The principal was permitting the lead teachers to facilitate. Likewise, at Pilgrim Elementary, the researcher observed the principal, kindergarten teachers, and the math coach as they took part in a data utilization meeting. At this particular school, the principal facilitated the meeting and consistently asked probing questions about the data and ways of using it to examine student progress. Principal Covington coached teachers about how to use the data to identify next steps for instruction.

The research literature supports the notion that leadership skills are an important aspect of the principal's role and has a significant influence on a school organization (Hallinger 1992; Leithwood & Seashore Louis 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNully 2004). The interview and observations data also allude to the importance of shared leadership. Leadership serves as a critical component of a principal's ability to guide and support teachers. In this study, principals and teachers spoke to the value of leadership as it relates to school leadership teams and the leadership characteristics of effective principals.

Supporting new teachers. All five of the principals noted the importance of providing support for new (particularly beginning) teachers and agreed that these teachers required much more support than more experienced teachers; however, the findings indicated that each principal's method of providing this support differed and was not tailored specifically for new teachers. Principal Beam, for example, described her approach to supporting new teachers at Omberly Elementary by saying, "I try to listen and figure out what their needs are so I can provide what they need." She continued, "They know they can come to me, and I will give them what they need."

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Principal Johnson explained that at Goodson Elementary she provided new teachers with professional development support, but did not provide any further details. A number of the principals supported their new teachers by providing professional development opportunities. Principal Sampson of Seahawk Elementary shared, "I provide professional development training to them based on a generated teacher needs survey." Principal Sampson developed this survey using Google Docs and asked teachers to indicate and rank specific areas of interest for professional development. Principal Covington of Pilgrim Elementary stated, "I believe in letting them go onto Electronic Registrar Online (ERO)." ERO is an electronic program used to manage all professional development. This program allows Carter County employees to register for trainings as well as track the trainings they attend. She added that she also recommended specific workshops for teachers that would address their individual needs.

The teacher interviews revealed that four of the five teacher participants could identify ways that the principal provided support for new teachers in their buildings. Of the two non-tenured teachers, only Mr. George could provide specific details about available support for new teachers, and he did not seem to have had a positive experience. He stated that at Goodson Elementary, "We have an [instructional lead teacher] that I have worked with. She has not been helpful to me in making an adjustment to Carter County." He continued, "All she really does is print articles from Google and read them to us and ask questions." He went on to say, "I have worked closer with grade level colleagues rather than non-classroom-based support teachers. All of our school's professional development is provided together and there is nothing really in place to support new teachers."

The other non-tenured respondent, Ms. Matthew of Omberly Elementary, stated, "I

am the only new hire [at Omberly], and I am not aware of any supports in place for new teachers." She went on to explain her thoughts on the reason for the lack of "new teacher support" that she received, "Although I am new to the county, I was hired with 18 years of experience. I have been given more responsibilities than many in-house teachers with less experience."

When responding to the same question about support for new teachers, the tenured respondents shared a bit more information. Ms. Collins explained, "We usually have a large number of new teachers [at Pilgrim]. A New Teachers Academy (NTA) was started this year in the school to help new teachers." While she was unable to describe the NTA's program or provide specifics about the help it offered, Ms. Lewis of Seahawk Elementary did explain, "The principal, along with the leadership team (reading specialist and PDLT), has been meeting with them (new teachers) to discuss any issues they have." She also shared, "The principal enabled them to be able to go out and observe teachers at other schools and see how they deliver instruction. Ms. Collins explained that despite the NTA, "[there] is not much other differentiation in the support that is provided for new versus veteran teachers. We are usually left to our own devices."

Ms. Dodson of Goodson Elementary, who also had tenure, observed, "I see our principal [at Goodson] sit near us (both new and experienced) and ask us questions to make sure we have what we are supposed to have and will specifically ask what we need. Sometimes she 'pulls us' [tenured and non-tenured] teachers separately to have a meeting with us. Sometimes the instructional lead teacher will pull teachers too." Ms. Lewis explained that Seahawk Elementary had a lot of new staff, and that the principal provided a number of professional development opportunities, "We can enter into each other's

classrooms to watch each other's teaching style and learn from within." She also mentioned that the principal brought in professionals from outside to mentor new teachers; however, she was unable to provide information about how the principal selected or supported the mentors.

During the field observations, the researcher did not witness the provision of any specific support for new teachers. The researcher did observe the principals from Seahawk and Pilgrim Elementary informally observing new teachers. One principal used a notepad and the other principal used a computer to take notes. Neither of the principals used a formal protocol, and the principals did not share next steps regarding how or if the teachers would receive feedback. All other support appeared to be collective in nature.

The literature indicates that new teacher support is a significant factor in the retention of teachers (Hirsch, Freitas, Church, & Villar, 2009; Ingersoll, 2011). Each principal agreed that supporting new teachers was important, but did not clearly describe how they actually supported new teachers. During the interviews and observations, a clear and focused articulation of new teacher support was not evident from either principals or teachers. Further, the non-tenured teacher participants from Omberly and Goodson explicitly discussed the absence of support for new teachers, as evidenced in their responses.

Induction and mentoring. According to the findings, induction and mentoring opportunities for new teachers were absent in two of the schools, while principals in the other two school provided such opportunities. Ms. Collins at Pilgrim Elementary shared that a New Teacher Academy was in place, but she was unable to provide any details. One of the non-tenured teachers, Mr. George did explain that his principal arranged for a mentor outside of Omberly Elementary:

There is no formal mentoring in the building. My principal set up for me to shadow a

teacher at another school. We continue to collaborate and plan together, but it is on

my own time outside of the school day.

Ms. Matthews, the non-tenured teacher from Omberly shared, "I am not aware of anything where teachers are assigned to support teachers." Ms. Lewis, a tenured teacher from Seahawk explained," I mentor some of our new teachers at the beginning of the school year. That's just my style of helping out. We all try to chip in." Ms. Dodson noted that the instructional lead teacher (ILT) provides mentoring at Omberly:

> Because I have taught so many years, the ILT is making sure we have the data for our
>
> Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and that's pretty much the main thing for
>
> mentoring. [The ILT] came into my classroom several months ago, but did not
>
> provide any feedback, so I don't know how I did.

She went on to say, "I do see the principal consulting with one new teacher on a regular." She shared that she happened to overhear one such conversation regarding classroom management and the organization of the teacher's classroom. According to Ms. Dodson, "Principal Johnson told [the new teacher] to 'Buy bins for students to put coats in. You're living at home with your parents, so you should be able to afford it.'" This implies that Principal Johnson may not support teachers by providing them with the resources they need.

Ms. Lewis, the tenured teacher, explained that while there was no longer a formal mentoring process at Seahawk Elementary, the professional development lead teachers (PDLTs) did offer some support to new teachers:

> There used to be one-to-one mentoring in previous years, but I am not sure if
>
> mentoring is provided at this point at this school. We have a lot of new staff this year,
>
> almost a 50-50 split. The PDLTs are working with teachers on lesson planning,

pacing, and have done sample lessons.

During the researcher's observations, there was no evidence of specific or formal teacher mentoring or induction initiatives.

It is important to note that in this study, the researcher did not specifically ask principals if induction and mentoring programs were established in their schools. It was through other indirect questions that the researcher hoped to receive information regarding induction and mentoring. Based on principal responses, teachers have access to professional development opportunities; however, formal mentoring and induction offerings did not appear to be available.

Research supports the notion that principals play a critical role in making sure that new teachers get off to a good start by identifying and assigning a mentor and providing continued support through an induction program. Interview and observations data revealed that neither of the four schools had a clearly defined mentoring program that corresponded to the expectations of Carter County.

Collaboration. According to respondents, the principals at each of the target schools encouraged teacher collaboration. Research emphasizes the importance of collaboration in various forms for successful schools (Angelle, 2006). The literature described teacher-to-teacher interactions, joint planning, cooperative data analysis, professional learning communities, lesson study, professional development activities, and other forms of collaboration as part of healthy and vibrant schools.

Each of the principals shared information about collaborative planning or other cooperative activities that took place within their respective buildings. For example, Principal Beam described the following efforts to foster collaboration at Omberly:

I facilitate and provide an opportunity for learning throughout the building, but believe that our collaborative planning is the vehicle for that instructional and collaborative learning for teachers. The collaborative planning is informal, small group, and differentiated. This is where we enhance our craft.

Principal Covington shared details about her efforts to encourage collaboration at Pilgrim Elementary, "I make sure collaborative planning is embedded in our master schedule. Collaborative planning is an important time designated for our teachers to learn from one another." Principal Johnson noted the following endeavors at Goodson Elementary:

I encourage my teachers to talk to one another, go in and visit each other, and provide them time to do it. I call it colleague chitchat because they can sit down and have chitchat, or see another lesson that's going on. This is also a time when they can discuss what did and did not work well for their groups.

Principal Sampson shared, "I value [the teachers] time, so staff meetings are devoted to professional development, which is another opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively outside of grade level collaborative planning."

When teachers were asked about opportunities at their school to learn from one another, they each noted the availability of collaborative planning. Mr. George (non-tenured) provided the following details about collaboration at Goodson:

We have collaborative planning on Tuesday and Thursday for an hour, and that's the only time we have to collaborate. On Tuesday it's only your grade level, and we discuss data and look at assessments. On Thursday, two grade levels come together to plan and share data. The ILT leads the meeting, but she is not really a big help. She tells us what's coming out. The principal attends sometimes.

Ms. Matthews, a non-tenured teacher also shared her experiences at Omberly:

> We have collaborative planning weekly, but I'm not sure it's the most effective way for teachers to communicate with one another. Our collaborative planning is more professional development. It's not a basis for teacher collaboration. Principal Beam expects us to meet after school to actually plan.

The tenured teachers also stated that collaborative planning was an opportunity to learn from one another. Mr. George, for example, shared the following about collaboration at Goodson Elementary:

> We have mandatory collaborative planning every Tuesday and Thursday. On Tuesday, we meet with the ILT, where we have been showing student work and discussing SLOs. On Thursday, it's just the grade level team, where just me and my co-worker do lesson planning. Other than that, we have an opportunity to collaborate with our peers during staff meetings that occur one time per month.

Ms. Lewis shared a similar schedule for collaboration at Seahawk, but implied that more time would be desirable, "Our schedules are tight. The only time we get to collaborate is Tuesday and Thursday during collaborative planning." She did mention, however, that they received an extra hour of planning on Thursdays. Ms. Collins explained the collaborative process at Pilgrim:

> We all work as a team. We have weekly team meetings, and each grade level is supposed to meet weekly after school in addition to the collaborative planning time. We also receive sub coverage to observe in other classrooms.

The researcher observed collaborative planning and data meetings at Omberly and Pilgrim Elementary Schools during the shadowing experience. The PDLT and resource

teacher facilitated the collaborative planning at Omberly. The principal was in attendance and appeared to be more of an observer, chiming in periodically to confirm or add to the discussion. Principal Covington facilitated the collaborative planning at Pilgrim.

At the core of collaboration is the need to improve instruction and student learning. The literature indicates that collaborative planning is one way for principals to promote the sharing of ideas and instructional practices. A number of researchers have found that collaboration is essential to improving student learning (Chi Keung, 2009; Jacobson & Bezzina, 2008). Principals play an important role in ensuring that effective collaborative structures are in place.

The data revealed that at each of the four target schools, principals created opportunities for collaboration, which provided teachers with an environment to learn from one another, share and exchange ideas regarding lessons, and fine-tune instructional practices. All of the respondents expressed the perception that collaboration was important; yet, the scheduling of these opportunities and the topics discussed during collaborative meetings varied. Most teachers viewed collaborative planning as a valuable and productive use of time.

Autonomy. According to the data, only one of the four principals, Principal Sampson, addressed the issue of autonomy during the interview. Sampson shared, "I don't make any real major decisions without consulting with the leadership team to get another perspective." She felt strongly that the method seemed to work for her and for Seahawk Elementary. She also mentioned that she met monthly with the School Performance and Management Team (SPMT) to present information from the leadership team. The SPMT then communicated the information to the staff. The remaining principals did not discuss

autonomy in any of their responses.

Teacher responses related to autonomy varied among both tenured and non-tenured participants. Both non-tenured teachers stated that they were not aware of very many opportunities or protocols in place for them to provide input and make decisions at Goodson and Omberly. Ms. Dodson, a tenured teacher at Goodson, stated, "We usually voice most of our stuff during staff meetings or collaborative planning. We have given input on the testing schedule, and that was implemented. So testing and schedules are the only things I'm aware of." Ms. Matthews, the other non-tenured, teacher shared that the opportunity to share in the decision making process did not exist at Omberly, "There is nothing formal in place that allows for that dialogue. I hear the principal say yea or nay to ideas." Ms. Collins, a veteran teacher, had a similar experience at Pilgrim Elementary, "There is very little input if any from teachers. We used to have SPMT meetings where information was shared. Now, that time has been taken to discuss the literacy plan." Ms. Dodson also shared that there was a lack of such opportunities at Goodson Elementary, "We are provided with a feedback sheet at the end of each meeting, and that is considered our input."

The researcher observed a grade-level team making decisions and collaborating to determine how they would execute a particular lesson at Omberly. The team discussed the objective, and each teacher orally contributed and physically demonstrated their ideas to the group. As they observed a grade-level team sharing data, teachers identified and explained how they would improve student performance through various learning activities and assessments. Each teacher had an opportunity to be creative through the development of lesson planning. Principal Beam provided a few suggestions.

Although studies have shown that teacher autonomy is a major factor in teacher

retention, only Principal Sampson of Seahawk Elementary alluded to teacher decision-making and input during the interview. Likewise, as noted previously, the researcher observed teachers providing input at two schools (i.e., Omberly and Pilgrim) during the shadowing process. These data indicate that teachers may have more autonomy than they think they have. Principals seemed to encourage teachers to try new things to improve instruction during collaborative planning, which could impact instructional delivery, pacing and materials. Furthermore, the lack or presence of autonomy may vary depending on the lens through which decision-making is viewed.

Climate. The researcher did not directly ask the principals about school climate; however, the participants spoke to the climate of their buildings in their responses to other interview questions. Each principal shared that the quality of instruction, availability of resources, level of safety, and quality of interpersonal relationships could influence the school climate. For example, Principal Johnson discussed the type of environment she sought to foster at Goodson:

> I make sure I give [teachers and students] respect, and I hold them to the highest, because I was a classroom teacher for 18 to 20 years. When it comes to my babies, I don't play. They know they are loved and cared for here. [Teachers and students] know I have high expectations and demand rigor every day. I expect the warm-up to be posted when they leave in the evening to be ready for the next day.

Principal Beam also discussed strategies that she utilized at Omberly to bring the staff together to establish a culture of caring. She explained that they instituted a Payday Friday Breakfast, where each grade level team prepared breakfast. She also she offered incentives in the form of Early Bird Awards for staff members that completed tasks on time or early. In

addition, Principal Sampson shared her efforts to recognize the teaching staff at Seahawk Elementary, "We recognize teachers to let them know they are appreciated…we also have instructional practices that are in place to support student growth."

Principal Covington discussed the importance of fostering a safe and orderly environment and providing instructional resources, and Principal Johnson declared the importance of providing a welcoming environment for parents at Omberly, "There's nothing more important in schools than relationships between students, staff and parents." She also explained that she conducted walkthroughs and used the data to support instruction.

The interviews revealed that the teachers' view of their schools' climate differed from that of the principals. For example, non-tenured Mr. George shared a negative perception of the climate at Goodson, "The school is very 'cliquish.' The older people that know each other are really tight, and then you have the newbies like me. Sometime I feel like it's an 'us or them' situation." He also stated that the Principal Johnson held everyone accountable. The other non-tenured teacher, Ms. Matthews, also had a less than positive perception of the climate at Omberly, "Upon [my] arrival, the school seemed to be a very friendly warm place, but that all changed after a couple of months. Everyone seems to follow the leadership of the principal, even when it's not in alignment with the contract." She went on to share that most of the staff at Omberly were young, first-time teachers.

The veteran teachers also shared perceptions of challenging climates at their respective schools. Ms. Lewis, one of the veteran respondents, said of Seahawk Elementary, "It's not the happiest place. It's not as pleasant as it could be because of all the demands. Some teachers left because they were dissatisfied with the way [Principal Sampson] ran the building." Ms. Collins explained that the staff at Pilgrim tried to encourage one another,

despite the challenging environment:

> For the most part we try to support each other. Our principal tries to be supportive at times. Unfortunately, she often takes a very harsh tone and does not realize the tone she has. Parents have also told her that they do not appreciate her tone.

Ms. Collins also shared that Principal Covington could be vindictive if she thought a staff member was challenging her in front of other people: "[Principal Covington] also has favorites; they can talk back to her and don't seem to get in trouble. If I said some of the things they said, I would be written up for insubordination." Only Ms. Dodson, another veteran teacher, spoke positively about the climate of her school (i.e., Goodson), "Overall the environment is positive. The school is committed to supporting the community."

Greenlee and Brown (2009) found that principals played a large role in establishing a school culture that was conducive to fostering teacher and student satisfaction. Thus, principals determine the climate of their school based upon the patterns of their experiences and interactions. According to Greenlee and Brown (2009), teachers that felt supported usually expressed positive attitudes about their school. As evidenced previously in the findings, while principals may have thought that they were promoting a positive school climate by fostering a safe environment with a focus on teaching, learning, and relationships, teachers actually experienced the environment in a very different way. Despite the principals' positive perceptions of the school climate, most of the teachers did not view their school environment in a positive light. Therefore, it is important for principals to understand the relationship between their behaviors and teachers' perceptions of their behaviors (Kelly, Thornton, & Daughtery, 2005).

2015 TELL Maryland Survey. According to the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey

results, approximately 2,188 (22.78%) Carter County educators completed the survey. The researcher used the data from the survey to compare principal practices to the interview responses teachers believe are important to be in place at their school. The survey included statements that asked teachers to assess factors that influence their decision making process about their professional plans. The response options used a Likert scale and range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. As noted in Table 5, the survey results amongst the four schools varied. Teachers from each school identified several teaching conditions as important influences; however, most teachers indicated that facilities and/or resources, support from administration, empowerment to influence decisions that affected their school and/or classroom, and effectiveness with the students they taught were the most important factors.

Respondents at two of the four schools responded with 100% agreement in each of those areas. Likewise, the areas that had the lowest percentage of agreement were also different for each school. According to the results, Goodson Elementary rated proximity to home as least important, while Omberly Elementary gave the lowest rating to quality of life in the community, and Seahawk and Pilgrim rated cost of living and salary as least important, respectively.

Although the TELL Maryland Survey shared results based on the percentage of teachers that responded, there was some alignment between the survey results and teacher interview responses. For example, interview responses from teachers of Goodson indicated that they would return to the school because of the principal and the students, which supports the survey results. Responses also aligned for participants at Seahawk, who indicated that they would return because of the students. At Omberly and Pilgrim, the teachers' responses did not align with the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey statements relating to the lowest and

highest areas of agreement. The largest difference in rates of agreement between schools occurred on the following statements: quality of life in this community at Omberly, and eligibility for retirement at Goodson. The least variation in rate of agreement occurred in several areas. Cost of living agreement responses ranged from 61% to 75% and focus on testing and accountability agreement responses ranged from 68% to 77%. As noted in Table 5, the results indicated there are differences between the perceptions of educators across schools regarding the factors that influence their decisions about their professional plans.

The researcher also reviewed the results of the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey teacher responses regarding school leadership and compared them to teacher interview responses. Survey items asked teachers to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with identified statements about school leadership at their school. As noted in Table 5, response rates for each of the statements ranged from 70 to 100 percent. Teachers in each of the schools reported similar rates of agreement for several statements. The largest difference in rates of agreement occurred with respondents at Goodson Elementary, where 75% of the teachers were comfortable raising issues and concerns that were important to them and with those at Seahawk Elementary, where 71.4% of the teachers agreed that there was an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. As for the other statements, agreements ranged from 80% to 100%, which demonstrated the overall degree of satisfaction teachers have with the principal and their leadership. Although this data does not fully align with the results of the interviews, it supports the responses of principals.

Table 5

Factors Influencing Decision Making About Professional Plans Results (2015 Tell Maryland Survey)

Survey items	% Agree Goodson Elem.	% Agree Omberly Elem.	% Agree Seahawk Elem.	%Agree Pilgrim Elem.
% Responded	86.96	80	100	89.29
Overall my school is a good place to work	84.2	86.4	78.9	86.4
Facilities and/or resources	95	100	100	81
Support from administration	100	100	89.5	85.7
Collegial atmosphere amongst staff	95	100	89.5	85.7
Teaching assignment	90	94.4	84.2	90.5
Time to do my job during the work day	90	94.1	84.2	77.3
Empowerment to influence decisions that affect my school and/or classroom	90	100	100	81
Effectiveness with the students I teach	100	94.4	100	90
Salary	80	77.8	73.7	66.7
Cost of living	75	61.1	77.8	61.9
Focus on testing and accountability	70	77.8	73.7	68.2
Quality of life in this community	75	83.3	94.4	57.1
Eligibility for retirement	57.9	82.4	68.4	81.8
Personal reasons (health, family, etc.)	85	100	89.5	86.4
Student behavior	75	88.9	89.5	76.2
School's proximity to my home	55	94.4	94.4	73.7

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, *"How do principals prioritize addressing teacher attrition or retention relative to all of their other responsibilities? How do they allocate their time to this challenge?"* The sections that follow provide a summary of how Goodson, Omberly, Seahawk and Pilgrim Elementary School principals address teacher attrition and allocate their time.

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Table 6

School Leadership Results (2015 Tell Maryland Survey)

Survey Items	% Agree Goodson Elem.	% Agree Omberly Elem.	% Agree Seahawk Elem.	% Agree Pilgrim Elem.
% Responded	86.96	89.29	100	80
The faculty and leadership have a shared vision	95	90.9	90	86.4
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school	85	86.4	71.4	86.4
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them	75	90.5	75	86.4
The school leadership consistently supports teachers	90	95.5	86.4	86.4
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction	95	100	100	90.9
The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning	100	100	100	90.9
Teacher performance is assessed objectively	90	100	90.5	86.4
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching	85	100	95	95.2
The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent	83.3	100	90	81.8
The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school	93.7	80	85	86.4
The faculty are recognized for accomplishments	85	100	95.5	81.8
The school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents	89.5	95.2	90.5	86.4

Goodson Elementary. Interviews at Goodson Elementary took place over three days with Principal Johnson, Mr. George, a fifth grade non-tenured teacher, and Ms. Dodson a

second grade tenured teacher. The interviews ran between 30 and 45 minutes. The most in-depth discussion occurred with the teachers. The two-hour principal observation took place over one day. The principal of Goodson Elementary has held her position for fifteen years and had over 35 years of education experience. Mr. George, the fifth grade non-tenured teacher recently relocated to Carter County and had been teaching at Goodson for approximately five months. The grade two tenured teacher had been teaching in Carter County seven years and at Goodson for two years.

Prioritizing retention. Principal Johnson of Goodson Elementary explained the practices she used to address teacher retention, "I visit classrooms, and I make sure I give [the teachers] respect. I also provide emotional support." She also shared an example of a time that she supported a new staff member whose sister fell ill shortly after her mother and another sister had passed away. Principal Johnson believed that visiting classrooms daily and pitching in whenever needed was just as important as providing emotional support. She discussed the importance of reaching out to her staff. Principal Johnson explained that at Goodson Elementary, she addressed retention by simply encouraging teachers and asking, "What can I do to help you?" She believed that having the face-to-face conversations and maintaining open dialogue persuaded teachers to return.

Challenges. Principal Johnson posited that the socioeconomic status of students at Goodson Elementary, and the challenges that sometimes come with that status, could serve as a barrier to retaining teachers. She explained the following:

> Some of our babies are coming from one-parent homes. Some of them come from
>
> where they have to share the bed with five or six other folks. Some of them come
>
> from grandma. Some of them come from where they have seen someone killed.

She went on to share a story about two of her students whose parents were killed, stating that one of the students actually witnessed the incident.

Omberly Elementary. Interviews at Omberly Elementary took place over two days with Principal Beam and Ms. Matthews, a third grade non-tenured educator. The interviews ran between 20 and 45 minutes. The two-hour principal observation took place over the course of one day. Principal Beam had held her position for nine years and had more than 40 years of experience in education. Although Ms. Matthews was non-tenured, she was in her third year of teaching in Carter County at the time of this study. Ms. Matthews came to Omberly with more than 15 years of teaching experience. At the time of the interview, she had been teaching at Omberly for approximately four months.

Prioritizing retention. Principal Beam shared a number of practices that she employed to encourage teacher retention. For example, she stated, "I think it helps that I have an open door policy and make myself available to talk and problem solve." She also noted the availability of materials and resources as another important factor that positively influenced retention. She shared, "If I go in and see that things are not right, I work on getting [the teachers] what they need." Principal Beam indicated that she did not spend a lot of time focusing on teacher retention. She explained her perspective:

> I feel like this; you are working here every day with me, and I am going to be who I
> am; and I expect you to be who you are. If you are not happy here, then obviously
> you need to find another place. I'm not trying to keep anyone here that doesn't want
> to be here.

Challenges. Principal Beam noted that one barrier to retaining teachers at her school was the parents and students. When discussing difficult parent behavior, she explained,

"Some of our parents can be ugly, unfortunately." This behavior sometimes made it difficult for teachers to engage parents in conversations regarding the academic successes and challenges of their child. She also discussed some of the challenges involved with serving low-income students:

> Our school services low income students and some people feel that if you are low income what comes with that is a lot of negativity based on their own prejudices. There were teachers here that referred to the students as "them" and "they," as if they were something horrible.

She went on to say, "Regardless of our demographics, we have a good school and good kids."

Seahawk Elementary. Interviews at Seahawk Elementary took place over the course of two days with Principal Sampson and a Ms. Lewis, tenured first-grade teacher. The interviews ran between 35 and 50 minutes. The principal observation took place over one day. Principal Sampson had held her position for seven years and had more than 30 years of education experience. Ms. Lewis had held her position at Seahawk Elementary for seven years and had been in Carter County for eight years. She had more than 20 years of experience in education at the time of the interview.

Prioritizing retention. Principal Sampson stated that she influenced teacher retention at Seahawk Elementary by building relationships. She provided the following explanation:

> The relationship of the principal and his or her teachers is key in the teacher retention process. Teachers who feel appreciated and valued are happier and produce more. They are willing to participate in after school events and evening programs. I am understanding when teachers need to take off from work and never make them feel

bad about handling their personal situations…

She also noted that she sought to foster teachers' individual aptitudes and aid in their professional development: "I encourage teachers to grow professionally. As they share their talents and area of strength, I find opportunities to use those strengths throughout the school." Principal Sampson stated that she addressed retention by setting clear expectations for teachers:

> I try to be upfront and transparent. I set the expectation from the very beginning. So if teachers follow the lead and the expectations that I have put in place there shouldn't be a problem. I let them know that I am not out to get them.

She also discussed her efforts to address directly teachers' areas for growth, "Whatever weaknesses they have, we talk about it. I try to provide whatever support they need. Despite these endeavors, she noted, "It's not like I target to keep them, it's just my practice. Unless I'm naïve, when you have the right practice, it automatically keeps the teachers."

Challenges. Principal Sampson explained that one barrier to retaining teachers at Seahawk Elementary involved the lack of support. She explained, "A lot of times, the new teachers say they want more support, more support, more support; but from my lens, I'm providing support." She provided an example, "If I allow you to go out of the building to get support, all collaborative planning and staff meetings are geared towards professional development…the only real thing we are lacking is to provide mentors." She shared that a lack of resources often proved to be a barrier, as well:

> It's hard to compete with other counties providing a higher salary. One teacher left us to go to another county, and she was going to have a mentor in her classroom three out of five days. I can't compete with that.

Pilgrim Elementary. Interviews at Pilgrim Elementary took place over the course of two days with Principal Covington and Ms. Collins, a tenured kindergarten teacher. The interviews ran between 30 and 50 minutes. The principal observation took place over one day. Principal Sampson had held her position for 12 years and had more than 40 years of experience in education. Ms. Collins had been teaching at Pilgrim Elementary for more than nine years and had served in Carter County for more than twelve years.

Prioritizing retention. Principal Covington shared that she targeted teacher retention by treating everyone the same and encouraging collaboration. She noted, "[Teachers] really like working in a community where they feel they're needed." She also explained that because of her efforts, attrition was not a serious issue at Pilgrim Elementary:

I have not had any teacher who attempted to leave that was placed on an intervention plan to keep them, because [teachers] don't generally leave Pilgrim Elementary. I have people in this school who were here when I came and have not moved. Teachers have voiced to me that when I leave, they're leaving, because they like my leadership.

Challenges. When asked about the obstacles that lead teachers to leave Pilgrim Elementary, Principal Covington simply stated, "There are no barriers to retaining teachers here."

Principals' use of time. School principals encounter a variety of issues each day as they provide leadership and organizational oversight for their schools. As a part of the interview, the researcher asked principal participants to describe a typical school day.

In examining how the principal used their time, the researcher focused on two areas: administrative and instructional tasks. Figure 3 provides the coding reference counts from the data. The count indicates that the number of references in each area pulled from interview
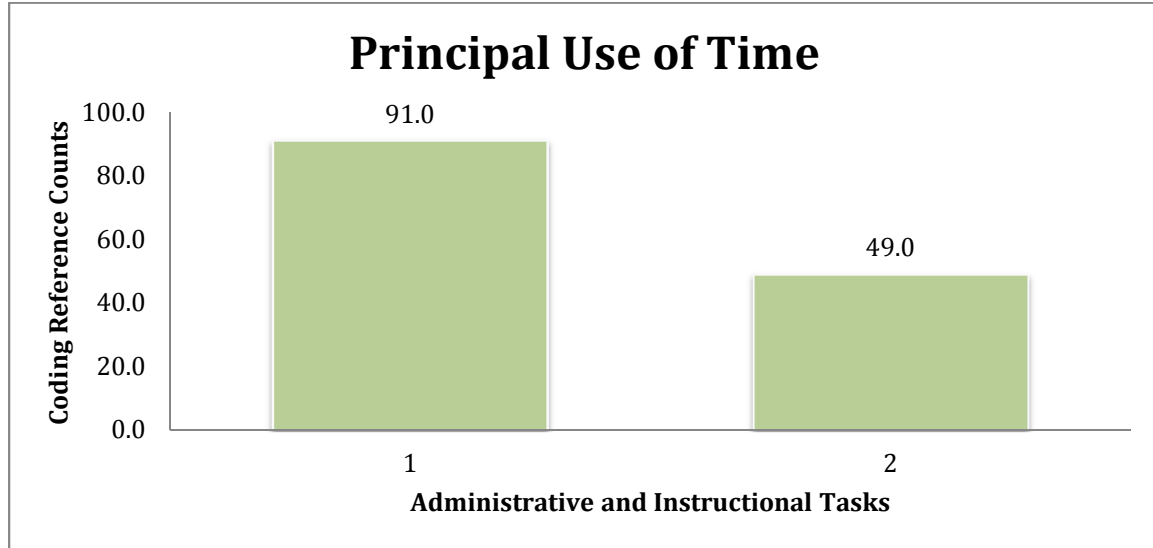
and observation data using NVivo10.

Principal Use of Time

Figure 3. Principals' use of time. Administrative and instructional use of time.

Figure 3 indicates that the respondents made more frequent reference to administrative uses of their time, a coding reference count of 91. As a result, the study provided more data in this area than in the instructional area, which yielded a reference count of 49. Consequently, the researcher concluded that the principals spent almost twice as much time on administrative tasks than they did on instructional tasks. Above are the findings from each of the roles noted above.

While data from the observations included almost all instructional activities; during interviews, principals noted that on a typical day, they spent most of their time on administrative tasks like (a) meeting compliance requirements, (b) checking email, (c) engaging in conversations with custodial and administrative staff, and (d) making announcements. Based on the principal interview responses and observation data, overall, principals spent most of their time on administrative tasks and appeared to devote the least amount of time to instruction-related activities.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, *"What do principals in schools with low attrition rates do to promote retention that principals in high attrition schools do not? What specific practices or interventions are principals in these two types of schools utilizing to retain teachers? Is there evidence to support their use of the practices?* The sections below provide an overview of practices principals at each school employed to retain teachers. Table 7 details the annual retention rates for classroom teachers.

Table 7

Annual Retention Rate – Classroom Teachers

School year	SA % Annual retention	# of Teachers	SB % Annual retention	# of Teachers	SC % Annual retention	# of Teachers	SD % Annual retention	# of Teachers
2012-2013	82	11	58	12	86	14	87	16
2013-2014	84	13	87	15	100		94	15
2014-2015	75	12	94	17	71	14	83	18
Annual avg.	80 High attrition		79 High attrition		85 Low attrition		88 Low attrition	

Data collected during the course of this study indicated that the average classroom teacher attrition rate for the past three years for Goodson Elementary and Omberly Elementary was slightly higher than the attrition rates for Seahawk Elementary and Pilgrim Elementary. The annual attrition average for each school from the 2012 school year to the 2014 school year ranged from 79% to 88%. However, these findings must be interpreted with caution because the study did not account for teachers that transferred to other schools within the district. The data in table 6 include classroom teachers only and does not include

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specialists (e.g., media, art, physical education, music, special education, ESOL), retired teachers, and teachers that transferred voluntarily or involuntarily to other schools in the district.

Annually, each school had at least one teacher with less than five years of experience in Carter County leave at the end of the school year with the exception of Seahawk Elementary that had no teachers leave during the 2013-2014 school year. Likewise, each school had at least one teacher with five or more years of teaching experience in Carter County leave at the end of each year. All teachers that left each school during this time resigned noting one of the following reasons: relocation, dissatisfaction with teaching, accepted a position in another state or county, personal illness or to continue education. One teacher was terminated for failing to meet the Maryland state certification requirements.

The second question that used themes that emerged from the analysis was: What do principals in schools with low attrition rates do to promote retention that principals in high attrition schools do not? Each principal was asked to name and describe five practices they utilize that they believe result in higher teacher retention. The researcher discovered that all four principals reported that they provide teacher support to retain teachers; however, teacher support for each school differed. For example, the Principal Johnson of Goodson Elementary (high attrition) explained, "Support is through professional development. If they need to visit a colleague's class or just need to sit and have a discussion with me…all of that is part of my support." Principal Beam of Omberly Elementary (high attrition) shared:

> I provide opportunities for professional growth and learning and one way I do that is through collaborative planning. It is during collaborative planning that the principal informed the researcher that she builds teacher capacity by encouraging teachers to

think outside the box and providing leadership opportunities. Principal Sampson of

Seahawk Elementary (low attrition) explained, I support teachers with parents. She

continued, I support them and when they make a mistake, I am careful not to throw

them under the bus. I express where we are wrong, but I will do it in a way that is not

going to degrade them. She also indicated that she supports teachers by providing

professional development. She further explained, I value their (teachers) time, so

staff meetings are devoted to professional development. She went on to share that

professional development during staff meetings is important because, teachers don't

have to hide if they don't know something. I believe in supporting teachers where

they are weak. She encourages teachers to tell her where they lack understanding and

when necessary she sends them to other schools to observe great teaching.

Principal Covington of Pilgrim Elementary (low attrition) shared, "I support teachers by

building their capacity, listening to their needs, and providing them an opportunity to observe

their peers. The findings concerning this issue are consistent with earlier research findings.

Davis and Bloom (1998) explained that one aspect of principal support should be to "help

teachers to focus on his/her professional growth activities. In-service is best when it is

relevant to day-to-day practices. They also suggest that principals should "be clear about

expectations and perceptions. Teachers need to know what is expected of them and what

kinds of support they can expect from the principal" (p. 18).

Seahawk and Pilgrim Elementary Schools (Low attrition). According to the

findings, and as noted in Table 6, Seahawk Elementary, led by Principal Sampson, and

Pilgrim Elementary, led by Principal Covington both had slightly lower attrition when

compared to Goodson and Omberly Elementary Schools.

Principal Sampson – Seabrook Elementary. When Principal Sampson was asked "to name and describe five practices she implements that result in higher teacher retention," she identified the following: (1) data analysis, (2) teacher recognition, (3) parent conference support, and (4) professional development. Principal Sampson shared that she believed analyzing data and making sure strong instructional practices are in place is important, "who wants to be on a losing team?" She continued, "When you have strong instructional practices in place, the result is student growth." The practice of analyzing data aligned with findings from the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey where 100% of the staff agreed that Principal Sampson facilitates using data to improve student learning. She also elaborated on the importance of teacher recognition. She explained that she sent thank you notes and emails to let teachers know how much she appreciated anything extra they were doing.

She continued, "Most people switch jobs when they do not feel appreciated." This strategy also validated and aligned with data from the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey and Mrs. Lewis' interview response. According to the survey, 95.5% of the staff agreed that they were recognized for their accomplishments, and Ms. Lewis shared how the principal provided special luncheons for staff throughout the school year. Principal Sampson also noted supporting teachers during parent conferences, providing in-house professional development, and ensuring there were opportunities to observe teaching at other schools as important strategies. Ms. Lewis confirmed these strategies were confirmed during the interview, as did the data from the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey. According to the survey, under the area of school leadership, 86.4% of the staff agreed that Principal Sampson consistently supports teachers; however, only 63.6% of the staff agreed that an appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.

Principal Covington – Pilgrim Elementary. When Principal Covington was asked the same question during the interview, she identified the following strategies: (1) building teacher capacity, (2) holding regularly scheduled meetings with teachers, (3) providing opportunities to observe peers, (4) offering consistent collaborative planning, and (5) establishing an open door policy. Principal Covington focus on building teacher capacity aligned with the results of the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey, where 86.4% of the staff agreed that professional development in the school deepened teachers' content knowledge. Covington noted that meeting with teachers consistently allowed her to listen and help identify the teachers' needs.

There was no evidence to support or contradict her use of the practice. Another important practice Principal Covington implemented was embedding collaborative planning time into the master schedule. This strategy aligned with the response from Ms. Collins, who indicated that the school held collaborative planning and grade-level team meetings each week. Finally, Covington discussed the importance of her open door policy, which she believed provided opportunities for teachers to communicate with her, as needed. During the interview, Ms. Collins did not discuss the quality of the principal's communication with staff, but according to the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey, 86.4% of the teachers agreed that they felt comfortable raising issues and concerns that were important to them.

Both Principal Sampson's and Principal Covington's responses demonstrated that they identified different practices that they believed helped them retain teachers. Field observations, teacher interview responses, and 2015 TELL Maryland Survey data confirmed most of the practices that the principals shared, teacher interview responses. According to the data, Seahawk Elementary and Pilgrim Elementary both had six teachers who left between

2013 and 2015, and all but two resigned. Of the six teachers that left Seahawk Elementary between 2013 and 2015, five taught in Carter County for less than two years. Likewise, of the six teachers that left Pilgrim Elementary between 2013 and 2015, four taught in Carter County for less than three years.

Goodson and Omberly Elementary Schools (High attrition). According to the findings, Goodson Elementary, led by Principal Johnson, and Omberly Elementary, led by Principal Beam, had the highest average attrition rate when compared to Seabrook Elementary and Pilgrim Elementary (see Table 6).

Principal Johnson – Goodson Elementary. Principal Goodson stated that she employed the following practices to retain teachers: (1) knowledge of the teaching role, (2) expectations of the Area Office, (3) teacher support, (4) professional development, and (5) team effort. Principal Johnson discussed the importance of informing teachers that she was once a teacher. She shared, "I let them know that besides being a principal, I was first a teacher and therefore, I know what the teaching role is about." She went on to explain the importance of ensuring that the staff understood the high expectations set by the Area Office and district. She also noted the value of providing teacher support through peer observations and professional development. According to the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey, 75% of the teachers agreed that Principal Johnson provided an appropriate amount of time for professional development. Further, in teacher interviews, Ms. Dodson and Mr. George shared opportunities they experienced to observe colleagues. Finally, Principal Johnson described the importance of shared ownership for student success. She explained, "This is not a pointing or blaming game, but a team effort from the time students enter the building in kindergarten until the time they walk out the door." Ms. Dodson shared, "She tries to create a

school environment of family where everyone is working together to make students more successful, including the parents." Ms. Dodson also discussed the many ways that Principal Johnson supported the community, and Mr. George shared the heartfelt dedication Principal Johnson had for the school, students, and staff.

Principal Beam – Omberly Elementary. Principal Beam identified the following as practices that she used to retain teachers: (1) availability of resources, (2) climate, (3) opportunities for growth, (4) empathy, and (5) respect. She shared the importance of teachers having the proper resources needed to perform their job, as well as the importance of providing a caring climate. This strategy supported teacher responses from the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey, where 77.3% of the teachers agreed that they had sufficient access to instructional materials. While Beam discussed the importance of the school climate, in the teacher interviews, Ms. Matthews shared, "The school used to be a warm friendly place." The statement from Ms. Matthews suggested that the school climate had changed. She continued to explain that there was a negative undertone at the school.

When Principal Beam explained the significance of providing opportunities for professional growth she shared, "I have selected in-house classroom teachers to fill non-classroom based positions." This finding confirmed Ms. Matthews' statement about the leadership responsibilities that she acquired as a new teacher to the school. Similarly, the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey supported this strategy, with 100% of the staff indicating that teachers were encouraged to participate in school leadership roles. Principal Beam also noted the importance of using empathy when helping teachers think through problems. She explained, "I talk to my teachers both professionally and personally." The 2015 TELL Maryland Survey confirmed Beam's use of this practice and indicated that 90.5% of the staff

agreed that teachers felt comfortable raising issues and concerns that were important to them.

Finally, Principal Beam shared that she showed the teachers respect. She explained, "It is tough being a leader. It is almost like being a teacher with 30 kids, and you want to meet all of their needs without showing favoritism." Again, the survey confirmed this strategy, as 86.4% of the teachers agreed that there was an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the school.

As noted, Principal Johnson and Principal Beam identified different practices they believe help them retain teachers. Most of the practices for Principal Beam were supported by teacher interview responses or TELL Maryland Survey results. Unlike Principal Beam, several of the strategies shared by Principal Johnson were not confirmed during teacher interviews or TELL Maryland results.

Between 2013 and 2015, six teachers left Goodson Elementary School. One of the six teachers moved to teach in another state, one failed to meet the certification requirements, and the other four resigned. Three of the six teachers were new to Carter County, having taught for less than three years in the district. During that same time, eight teachers left Omberly Elementary. Of the eight teachers that left, six resigned, one failed to meet the certification requirements, and one went to teach in a non-public school. Two of the eight teachers taught in Carter County for less than three years.

The research literature suggests that principals employ several practices to retain teachers. These practices include the appropriate assignment of teachers to grades and subjects, scheduling time for planning, strong social and relational trust building and encouraging collaboration among teachers, involving teachers in hiring decisions and inducting new teachers, involving teachers in budget, discipline and curriculum decisions,

supporting teachers in disciplinary matters, and feed and praise (Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Ingersoll, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005). If a principal did not mention a specific practice, it could be because she did not think about it and the researcher did not ask directly or because the principal did not use the practice. Thus, the results tell us about the practices that principals discussed in the interviews, not ones that the researcher probed for directly through the interview questions.

Summary

Analysis of the data for this study revealed that each of the four principals utilize a variety of practices they believe support and retain teachers with very few commonalities among the schools. The findings suggest that each principal provided time for planning, commonly known as collaborative planning, as well as opportunities for professional development. Principal Sampson and Principal Covington both discussed providing opportunities to motivate and reward teachers, while Principal Johnson and Principal Beam shared no common practices. Several of the practices the four principals reported using were relatively low-cost while others are higher cost. Low-cost practices involved teacher recognition and showing respect; meanwhile, providing opportunities for teachers to observe their peers could be considered high-cost when one factors in the cost of substitutes. Despite the differences in practices implemented in each of the schools, they were each able to maintain an average three-year retention rate of at least 79%.

Future Research

Teacher attrition is and has been a significant topic in education over the past several

years. Much of the extant research on teacher attrition focused on job satisfaction and not on the principal's role. Future research should focus on those in leadership positions and the practices they use to support teachers. It is this researcher's belief that the findings of this study will help address the need for further exploration of the role of the principal in teacher retention and the strategies they employ. The following are presented as suggestions for future research:

1. Repeat the current study on a larger scale, incorporating more schools and more participants within Carter County.

2. Compare and contrast practices to promote retention and reduce attrition between Carter County and other counties in Maryland.

3. Study ways that districts promote principal efforts to retain good teachers; including principal evaluation protocols, position announcements/job expectations, principal professional development on this topic, etc.

4. Conduct time and effort studies of principals in Carter County to identify the amount of time and effort they devote to retaining teachers.

Any study regarding teacher retention and attrition must acknowledge the fact that there will always be factors that influence a teacher's decision to return to their current school or district, leave the district, or leave the profession. Such studies must also acknowledge that some attrition may be both necessary and beneficial given the unsatisfactory performance of a few teachers each year and the lack of teacher response to the interventions and remedies provided. School and district leaders must continue to work to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the principal, the state, the local board of education, and the district in reducing attrition and improving retention.

Recommendations for Carter County Public Schools

     Teacher attrition is inevitable and will continue to take place in the teaching profession. Teachers will move to accommodate their own needs and in response to opportunities within their district or across district lines regardless of the support provided by principals. Teachers will also earn promotions to positions at the district, regional, or state level and leave classroom teaching. A significant number of teachers will also find opportunities outside of school teaching and in other fields and occupations that prove to be better match for their needs and interests. A few teachers will simply fail to meet the expectations and needs of the school or the district. Somehow, managing this dynamic is the responsibility of the school principal—in part, because they are closest to the teacher. Carter County must continue to address the expectations it holds for school principals relative to teacher retention and attrition. They must continue to define those expectations and help principals manage their time, and implement strategies to retain quality teachers. While Carter County has addressed teacher retention and attrition in a variety of ways, the researcher did not find any differences between the practices implemented among principals in this study.

Conclusion

     The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies four elementary school principals used to support teachers to aid in the improvement of teacher retention. The study identified strategies in place in two elementary schools with lower attrition and compared them to those in two elementary schools with relatively higher attrition in Carter County. Based upon a review of related literature regarding teacher retention and attrition, teachers leave the profession for various reasons, including low salaries, increased paperwork,

accountability, the low status of the profession, unsupportive administration, a lack of teacher autonomy, a lack of parental support, family issues, personal factors, burnout, a lack of recognition, inadequate resources, and large class sizes.

An analysis of the teacher and principal responses collected during this study revealed a variety of strategies used by principals to address these issues that lead to teacher attrition. Despite the strategies principals implemented at each school, the most significant reason that teachers returned to their current assignment was convenience/school location. Each of the teacher participants, with the exception of one, indicated that the main reason they were returning to their current school was the school's proximity to their home. This finding suggests that distance is substantially more influential in a teacher's decision to return to their school than other contextual factors, such as salary and working conditions and principal practices. While principal leadership is important, the location of the school in the district and the access to the school for the teacher are more important. As the researcher compared the two schools with high attrition to the two schools with relatively low attrition, it became apparent that principals in schools with relatively low attrition were not implementing practices that were different from the principals in schools with relatively high attrition.

A consistent message from the teachers was that there were insufficient supports in place for new teachers, which contradicted the reports from the principals. Both tenured and non-tenured teacher participants were unable to identify and provide detail regarding both the supports provided and those not available to beginning teachers. Both principal and teacher responses, as well as observations by the researcher, indicated that collaborative planning was the one consistent practice in each school. While this may have a beneficial impact on teacher collaboration and therefore, create a more receptive school climate, it was never

described as a way to "hold" teachers or to reduce their leaving the school.

Findings of this study also demonstrated that principals and teachers had different perceptions of support. Based on the interview responses, principals' perceived their support for teachers to be greater than the support teachers indicated they received. However, teacher responses to the 2015 TELL Maryland Survey aligned more with principal perceptions of the strategies they used to retain teachers. The differences in these views of support could potentially have a negative impact on teacher retention.

Follow-up studies are necessary to investigate the role of the principal in teacher retention; particularly what strategies principals use to retain teachers. Future research will contribute to a better understanding of the practices principals use to influence teacher retention. This study is clearly just a small step in understanding the practices principals use to retain teachers to improve retention..

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Dear Potential Participant,

You are invited to participate in the qualitative research study titled *The Role of the Principal and Teacher Retention*. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of teacher retention and attrition among elementary school teachers in Prince George's County Public Schools. In this study, I will attempt to understand the factors that result in better rates of teacher retention – specifically, what practices are principals in particular schools implementing that seem to lead to higher rates of teacher retention. You have been invited to participate in this study because your experiences and the school's demographics are the fundamental building blocks of this study. Participation in this study will entail taking part in interviews and observations. The data collected from you will be analyzed qualitatively and, hopefully, provide insight into current use patterns and effectiveness. The findings will support the knowledge base for future research on teacher retention. Your participation in and contribution to this study is highly appreciated.

There is no risk and, hopefully, no discomfort associated with your participation. The information you provide is confidential, and all the names of the participants in the data will be coded in pseudonyms. All the written and recorded data will be destroyed at the end of this research.

Your participation in this study is essential and voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time during the study by notifying the researcher. Your signature on this form will confirm that you, having read and understood the information presented, decide to participate in and contribute to this study.

Thank you very much.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

Researcher Contact:
Shawna Holden
Phone: 301-431-5660
Email: Shawna.holden@pgcps.org

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (PRINCIPAL)

Instructions for Interviewer

1. Be sure that you and the principal are alone in a quiet room/location where responses can be recorded. Be sure the interviewee states their name and date of the interview.
2. Remember to follow the protocol. You should always probe once if you think that the principal has not answered the question asked. In most cases, probes are given. In other cases, you may use the following:
   a. Anything else?
   b. Can you tell me more about…..?
   c. Rephrase the question
3. In responding to some questions, the principal may describe one aspect of the question in depth while not addressing the breadth of the question. Probes are provided to assist you in eliciting a broad response to each question. As you listen to the person's responses, glance a the list of probes and use the probe(s) that will give a more complete answer to the question. You might say , for example, "What about (probe)?" or "How important is (probe)?"
4. If the principal has already answered a question you are about to ask, you should say: "The next question is ….. I think you have already answered it. Do you think you have answered it? Is there anything else you want to add?
5. Your responses to the principal's statements should be non-committal and non-judgmental. Use responses such as "Thanks," "That's fine," "Alright," and "Okay."
6. If you forget to ask a question, make sure that you go back and ask it even if it is out of order.
7. Thank the principal for his/her time.

Instructions adapted from:
Fennema, E., Carpenter, T., & Loef, M. (1990). Belief Interview: CGI-2. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the role of the principal in teacher retention at elementary schools in Prince George's County. In this study, I will attempt to understand what factors result in better rates of teacher retention – specifically, what, if anything are principals in those schools are doing that seem to lead to higher rates of retention. I am so grateful for your time.

Thank you again for allowing me to record this interview. As a reminder, everything that is said today will remain completely confidential. No one will hear the recording or see the notes with the exception of the professional transcriptionist. I will never identify you or use your name or the name of your school in any of my reports. So, now that we are clear about the confidential nature of this interview, I am going to turn on the recorder and ask you to state your name and the name of your school, and confirm that you agree to be recorded.

1. How long have you been in the field of education? (Background)
2. How long have you been working in PGCPS? (Background)
3. How many years have you been a principal? (Background)
4. How many years have you been the principal of this school? (Background)
5. What do you see as the primary role of the principal? (Background)

   _____

6. Please describe a typical school day. Was today a typical school day for you?
7. How does what you do influence teacher retention? (Can you give me specific examples of how you support teachers? What do you do?)
8. What does instructional leadership look like in your school? How do you contribute?
9. Name and describe 5 practices you do to that you believe result in higher teacher retention/support teachers?
10. Of all the tasks you take on in a day, how do you prioritize your responsibilities? (Be specific and provide examples)
11. Is teacher retention a problem in your school? Is the problem worse in particular grade levels or content areas? (Share specifics regarding retention over the last 3-4 years)
12. Do you target your retention efforts with certain teachers? (Which teachers? In which way do you target these efforts?)
13. What, if any are the barriers to retaining teachers at your school?
14. Please identify, if any district initiatives, supports, or resources that you believe help retain teachers in the district and specifically your school.
15. What advice would you give other principals trying to improve teacher retention?
16. Is there anything else you would like to share that I have not asked?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (TEACHER)

Instructions for Interviewer

1. Be sure you and the teacher are alone in a quiet room/location where responses can be recorded. Be sure the interviewee states their name and date of the interview.
2. Remember to follow the protocol. You should always probe once if you think that the principal has not answered the question asked. In most cases, probes are given. In other cases, you may use the following:
   a. Anything else?
   b. Can you tell me more about…..?
   c. Rephrase the question
3. In responding to some questions, the principal may describe one aspect of the question in depth while not addressing the breadth of the question. Probes are provided to assist you in eliciting a broad response to each question. As you listen to the person's responses, glance a the list of probes and use the probe(s) that will give a more complete answer to the question. You might say , for example, "What about (probe)?" or "How important is (probe)?"
4. If the principal has already answered a question you are about to ask, you should say: "The next question is ….. I think you have already answered it. Do you think you have answered it? Is there anything else you want to add?
5. Your responses to the principal's statements should be non-committal and non-judgmental. Use responses such as "Thanks," "That's fine," "Alright," and "Okay."
6. If you forget to ask a question, make sure that you go back and ask it even if it is out of order.
7. Thank the principal for his/her time.

Instructions adapted from:
Fennema, E., Carpenter, T., & Loef, M. (1990). Belief Interview: CGI-2. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the role of the principal in teacher retention and attrition at elementary schools in Prince George's County. In this study, I will attempt to understand what factors are "in play" that result in better rates of teacher retention – specifically, what, if anything are principals in those schools are doing that seem to lead to higher rates of retention. I am so grateful for your time.

Thank you again for allowing me to record this interview. As a reminder, everything that is said today will remain completely confidential. No one will hear the recording or see the notes with the exception of the professional transcriptionist. I will never identify you or use your name or the name of your school in any of my reports. So, now that we are clear about the confidential nature of this interview, I am going to turn on the recorder and ask you to state your name and the name of your school, and confirm that you agree to be recorded.

1. How long have you been in the field of education? (Background)
2. How long have you been working in PGCPS? (Background)
3. How many schools have you worked at in PGCPS as a classroom teacher? (Background)
4. How long have you been working in this school? (Background)
5. What is your current position? (Background)
6. What do you see as the primary role of the principal?
7. What were your reasons for accepting your current position in this school?
8. What leadership characteristics are important for a principal to possess? Why? (Leadership)
9. What activities does your principal provide specifically for new teachers? (New Teacher Support)
10. How does your principal differentiate activities for new teachers versus experienced teachers? (New Teacher Support)
11. What mentoring activities are in place at your school? (Induction and Mentoring)
12. How do mentors help new teachers? (Induction and Mentoring)
13. What opportunities are available at your school for teachers to learn from one another? (Collaboration)
14. What opportunities/protocols are in place for you to provide input and make decisions? (i.e., classroom, school policy, instruction, professional development) (Autonomy)
15. Describe the climate of your school. (Climate)
16. In your opinion, what are 3-5 things your principal does that you believe is effective in reducing teacher attrition?
17. What are the most important factors (3-5), if any that encourage you to remain at this school?
18. What are your current plans in regards to teaching?
19. What influences your decision, if anything to remain at this school?
20. What advice would you give principals that want to keep teachers at their school?
21. Is there anything else you would like to share that I did not ask?

PRINCIPAL LETTER

Dear Principal,

My name is Shawna Holden, the Principal of Carole Highlands Elementary School and a Doctoral Candidate at University of Maryland College Park. I am currently in the process of working on my dissertation, which examines the role of the principal in teacher retention. In an attempt to understand the practices used at your school to retain teachers, I am inviting you to participate in a one-on-one interview and observation to aid me in understanding your approach to leadership at your school. The interview and observation are solely for research purposes.

I know your time is valuable, and I thank you in advance for your willingness to participate. Your identity will remain anonymous, and all resulting data will be reported in a confidential manner to ensure your privacy. Your contribution to this important research may have an impact on understanding the role of the principal in teacher attrition.

If you are willing to serve as a participant in the study, please reply to this email with a convenient time for us to schedule the interview and observation. With your agreement, you will receive a consent form. If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 431-5660 or Shawna.Holden@pgcps.org. I am grateful for your time and support as I examine the role of the principal in teacher attrition.

APPENDIX E

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Indicators of Observation	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Date		
Time		
Place		
Participants Present		
Setting		
Activities		
Interactions between principal and teacher		

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