ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

HOUSTON, FANTARA J. B.A. CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, 2000

M.A. CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, 2004

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE TEACHER ATTRITION IN THREE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN A METROPOLITAN ATLANTA SCHOOL SYSTEM

Advisor: Dr. Noran Moffett

Dissertation date December 2009

This study examined teacher perceptions of the factors which influence teacher attrition in a Metropolitan Atlanta school system. The nine factors examined in the study were: principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues.

The study was based on the premise that teacher perceptions would provide a comprehensive understanding of how the factors attribute to teachers' decisions to leave or move within the school system. A mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) design was utilized to explore the perceptions of teachers on the nine factors. The participants provided information that which the researcher was able to gain an in-depth understanding of how the factors influence teacher attrition. The researcher analyzed the perceptions shared by the participants and identified the emergent themes.

The researcher used the findings of the study to identify implications and recommendations for policy, leadership practice and future research. The findings from this study will provide beneficial data for the Metropolitan Atlanta school system being studied to guide the development of strategies in the effort to decrease the high attrition rate.

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE TEACHER ATTRITION IN THREE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN A METROPOLITAN ATLANTA SCHOOL SYSTEM

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

FANTARA J. HOUSTON

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

DECEMBER 2009

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me. This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Eugene and Alfreda Johnson, Jr., the "Rocks" that have always encouraged me to go further and never let go of my goals.

I give thanks to the Lord that gave me the strength and knowledge to make it through the doctoral program. Special thanks to my husband for being so supportive, understanding, and loving throughout this process. I am so grateful for having parents, Eugene and Alfreda O. Johnson, Jr. that have always loved me unconditionally. My mother has always encouraged me to stay focused and continue to stay on course and being there providing positive words when I needed them. I thank you Daddy for giving me the gift of perseverance and always expressing how proud you are of me.

Everyone needs that person that takes them under their wing and helps them through challenging times. Garrick White, you were that person for me. Mrs. Betty Cooke, I thank you for the insight and guidance you shared with me throughout this process. I thank my advisor, Dr. Noran Moffet and my committee members, Dr. Moses Norman and Dr. Ganaga Persaud. Last but not least, I want to thank my four sons, Cecil, Christian, Cahron, and Colin, the underlining factors that pushed me to go further in my education and for being patient and understanding while I pursued my doctoral degree. I love you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The educational system has been in a state of constant change. The effort to globally compete has been a continuous challenge for the United States. In the nation's effort to be a dominant force in education, the educational system continues to change strategies and practices to adjust with the demand to increase academic achievement. Due to the demand of educational production, teacher attrition has increased in the past years making educators unable to withstand the pressures. This study examines teacher perceptions on teacher attrition in an urban school setting by examining principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues.

Urban school leaders are struggling to meet the demands from higher administration to produce scores the nation needs to show superiority in education. Furthermore, it is the chosen leadership behaviors that permeate through the school system to the teachers and students that are having a negative affect on urban school systems in Metropolitan Atlanta.

An effective leader encourages autonomy within the organizational environment and assists in creating an organizational culture which results in both leader and follower being elevated to a higher level of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). A leader possesses the ability to improve an organization through leadership exhibited to the

members of the organization. The behavior and interpersonal skills used by leaders build relationships in the organization that promotes a positive work environment. School climate is a factor that is influenced by leadership and has an effect on teacher attrition.

Blackburn (1991) conducted a study that found work conditions were a major factor that influenced teacher decisions to leave. It was reported that the most academically talented teachers leave the education arena in the largest numbers (Schlechty & Vance, 1983). The National Education Association [NEA] (2003) reported that over 20% of first-year teachers leave the classroom within the first three years. In urban schools, the association reports up to 50% of new teachers leaving within three years.

The statistics on teacher attrition confirms the severity of this problem. School leadership has a profound impact on the members of an organization that can determine and influence the success of all. In order to improve administrator and teacher relationships, a critical study has to be conducted to unearth the determining factors influencing teacher attrition to equip school leaders with the knowledge and effective strategies to make educational organizations effective.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions on attrition with a concentrating on nine factors: principal behaviors, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues. The findings of this study will enable urban school administration to implement strategies to effectively reduce the number of teachers

leaving and identify the factors that will influence teachers to stay in the school system. Teacher attrition, especially in inner city and rural schools, has been further challenged by No Child Left Behind Act requirements to staff all classrooms in schools with "highly qualified teachers" (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002, p.15). It is a demanding task for public school district administrators to retain highly qualified teachers without losing them to other schools, other school districts, or other professions due to dissatisfaction with their experience in their current school district. As more teachers elect to leave the profession of teaching, our nation as a whole is experiencing a teacher shortage.

Background of the Problem

One major Metropolitan (Metro) Atlanta school system has had a high teacher attrition rate for the passed five years. This problem is detrimental to the system. More importantly, deteriorates the instruction for the students that are served by the system. As a result, schools throughout the system are forced to continuously hire almost a new staff in the span of two years. Each year the need for more teachers increases. In 2004-2005, 297 new teachers were hired; in 2005-2006, 441 new teachers were hired; and in 2006-2007, 373 new teachers were hired. These numbers do not account for the attrition that occurs within the system. The school system has approximately 3, 800 teachers and 7,500 staff members. The school system is comprised of 95 schools with a total student body of about 59,000 students. The majority of the schools, 68 elementary, 16 middle, and 11 high, are located inside the I-285 perimeter that surrounds the city. The system's attrition problem is not impacting a specific area. Every school reform team, the clusters the system is divided into, is impacted by this problem. The need for qualified teachers

to stay and an effective plan to retain teachers is extremely needed. The school system is located in an area that attracts young professionals that can be influential in the classrooms.

Another major school system in Metro Atlanta consists of 94 schools: 55 elementary schools, 19 middle schools, 13 high schools, 2 open-campus high schools, and 5 charter schools. This Metro Atlanta school system is almost double the size of the first schools system researched. Over 88,000 students are enrolled in this school system. Like the other school system, the resources are available and the students are given the exposure and opportunities needed to be successful. However, the system does have a problem with teacher attrition in the southern part of the school system. This area is a more concentrated urban area unlike the northern part of the school system. Based on the data provided by the Georgia Department of Education (2008), this school systems need to higher new teachers has increased for the past since 2004. In the 2006-2007 school years, 603 new teachers were hired to fill vacancies.

The city of Atlanta is a dynamic city comprised of all types of cultural groups. Numerous groups host conferences and sporting activities there. The opportunity for growth and partnerships for businesses and individuals is innumerable. This creates an outstanding atmosphere for a public school system to thrive and create numerous opportunities to the students and staff. The selected school system is the main school system in the city of Atlanta and the main beneficiary from the resources available in the city. There are other school systems within the county; however, the selected school system receives the financial support from the city of Atlanta. The system's budget

allows for teacher recruitment and better service for the types of students that are served in the system. It is one of the highest paying school systems in Metro Atlanta, which makes it attracted to new teachers that come from all over the country and internationally. The city receives large numbers of new residents every year due to the opportunity of jobs provided by big corporations and from the universities and colleges located in the city. There are over six colleges and universities within the city limits. With all of the accessible resources, one would think a school system would not have difficulty with teacher retention.

Research conducted on this topic has noted influences that affect teacher retention. Researchers have accounted teacher attrition to administrator support, finances, job satisfaction, morale, and student discipline. There is a new factor that has become prevalent in every school district, the large number of new teachers throughout the system. The new teachers are not only new to the system; they are new to the teaching profession. Research has noted the factors that affect teachers to leave the system. However, it does not target the group of alternative preparation teachers that have entered the system. Researchers are beginning investigate the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on teacher attrition. Since these two factors have impacted the school systems, there has been a significant increase in teacher attrition. It is important that educators and educational administrators identify this problem. When there is a high rate of teacher turnover, eventually it affects other aspects of the educational institution. It will eventually effect student academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

The educational system has become plagued with a high rate of teacher attrition. Teacher attrition continues to be an increasing problem for school systems across the nation. This study investigated how the nine variables: principal behaviors, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals and relationships with colleagues enhances the spread of teacher attrition in an urban elementary school. Based on the Georgia Professional Standards Commission's (2007) study on teacher attrition, the selected Metro Atlanta school system has had one of the two highest teacher attrition rates in the state of Georgia. The study examined the attrition rates of all the school systems in the state of Georgia over a five-year time period (Appendix A). The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GPSC) reported that the selected school system has had an average attrition rate over 17%. This rate doubles the statewide attrition rate of 8.8%.

The high rate of teacher attrition creates a serious problem throughout the selected school district causing systemic problems that ultimately cripples every dynamic of the organization. This problem does not only make it difficult to find "highly qualified" teachers to fill the vacancies, but affects the instructional programs in the schools. The students are the main priority in any educational organization. It is detrimental to the academic success of the students when well trained and experienced educators are not available to provide rewarding educational experience to students. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2002) contributes the low high-school graduation rate as a clear effect of teacher attrition in high poverty school districts. The Arizona Education

Association (AEA) (2004) reports one out of every two African Americans earns a high school diploma. Haberman's (2005) study shows that high poverty high and middle schools have an extreme number of students dropping out. He contributes these findings to teacher attrition in these schools.

Teacher attrition creates a continuous cycle of enormous financial lost for the school district; however, it has not been researched in great detail using the variables of this study. Retention of high quality faculty members contributes to the organization by reducing costs of personnel search and orientation. In order to fill vacant positions, the district is faced with hiring daily or long-term substitutes to provide immediate relief for classroom assistance. This assistance is provided throughout the school year due to inability to fill opened positions, teachers resign, or retire. In each case, there are certain factors that lead teachers to take this step.

In Horn-Turpin's (2009) study on transformational leadership behaviors, findings showed transformational leadership behavior has an influence on job satisfaction which indirectly affects teacher attrition. Once the teacher is not satisfied on the job, they begin to seek a way to fulfill their needs; thus, changing their careers or place of work. The findings in this study also supported that teachers' commitment to the organization is contributed to the leadership behaviors exhibited.

Leadership behaviors also have an indirect influence on school climate. In Cotton's (2005) study on elementary school teacher attrition and school climate, it was reported that leadership does have an effect on the school climate. If the school climate is unconstructive, teachers will not stay in that environment. The school climate will

have major effects on everyone in the school building. When the climate influences teachers to leave, it will increase the amount of new teachers needed to fill vacancies. Novelty teachers do not have the experience and the commitment experience develops to the organization. Consequently, the new teachers eventually leave continuing the cycle of teacher attrition.

In 2004, the RAND Corporation (as cited in Brewer, Dailey, Guarino, & Santibanez, 2004) conducted a review of research on teacher attrition and retention and reported that low salaries contributed to low job satisfaction Districts with higher salaries had lower attrition rates. Increasing salaries may enhance teacher retention; however, it would be a costly plan for school districts that may not have the finances to support this type of plan. The report also suggested that lower the teacher responsibilities by reducing class size would have a significant effect on attrition also. Class size reduction has been used in the state of Georgia, and is more financially accommodating for the school districts.

A key concern for any organization is the financial effects of a problem. Finances are allotted for recruitment and personnel support for each school year. In preparation for the next school year, the system hires and aligns support staff for the incoming new teachers. New teachers are a fraction of the personnel leaving the school district. The resignation of veteran teachers impacts the school districts planning for staff development, which money is given to the staff for attendance. The loss of teachers that have been given training and the support to make them effective educators in the classroom is the greatest loss to the school district. Payton (as cited in Donovan, 2000)

said, "The district wouldn't have to spend so much time and money on recruiting if district officials paid a little more attention to how the teachers they have are treated" (p. 3).

Significance of the Study

Teacher attrition has had an immense negative impact on the selected school district. The effects of teacher attrition impact the entire organization. The group that suffers the most from this problem is the student body. School systems are forced to hire emergency personnel to fill the vacant position to provide instruction to students

Substitutes are placed in these positions and lack the proper training to appropriately deliver the instructional program in the school thereby creating the instructional program implementation ineffective due to the lack of knowledge. The number of vacant positions in the school system and each individual school throughout the school year has increased (Figure 1). This problem can be seen in other Metro Atlanta school systems.

School districts have resorted to employing teachers who cannot acquire traditional certification. During the 2007-2008 school year, over 7, 900 new teachers were hired at the beginning of the school year (Georgia Department of Education, 2008). A number of new teachers entering school districts hired are only eligible for emergency or provisional certification (Futternick, 2007). These teachers do lack experience and require greater support from leadership. Their lack of experience creates ineffective instruction in the classroom.

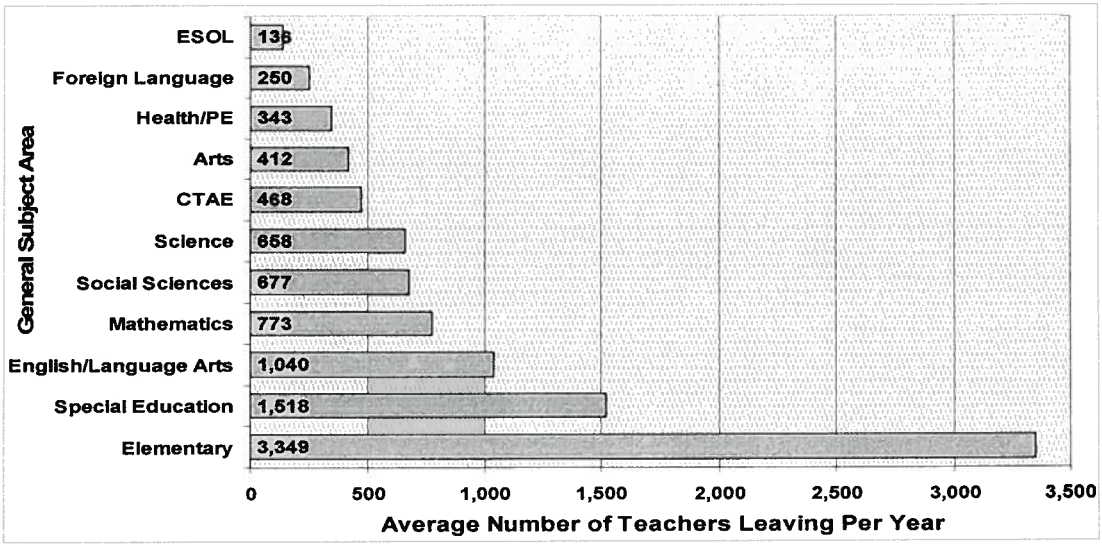

Figure 1. Average Number of Teachers Leaving Per Year, 2005 – 2007

The yearly attrition has changed the dynamics in school buildings. Due to retirement, experienced teachers are leaving, increasing the number of inexperienced teachers in the classroom. They are not able to receive adequate mentorship from veteran teachers.

When proper support is not given to new teachers, they are unable to successfully adjust and resign. The selected school system has teachers resigning throughout the school year placing leaders in critical situations. School districts rarely examine why teachers are leaving. If more attention was placed on the "why" teacher attrition is occurring, more progress would be made to reduce teacher attrition and increase teacher retention.

Lowering teacher attrition will increase the effectiveness of the instructional program. It will allow teachers to gain more experience and the ability to implement

strategies that meet their students' needs. It gives the teacher the opportunity to receive more staff development to enhance their skills and knowledge. Students will benefit because their teacher is more experienced and has adapted to the student body being served.

The selected school district has implemented a number of programs for recruitment in order to fill positions that steadily become available due to teacher attrition. The urban school system has the difficult task of recruiting qualified teachers and retaining them. It is important to implement strategies for recruitment; however, it is even more important to examine why teachers are leaving. The National Commission of Teaching and America's Future (2003) reported the supply of new teachers meets the demands every year. By increasing recruitment, it does not solve the problem of teacher attrition. Instead of looking for new teachers every school year, research needs to be conducted to find out why teachers are leaving every year.

This study gives insight into the "why" of teacher attrition. The findings of this study will provide education leadership the lens to identify variables that have a significant impact on teacher attrition to make changes in the needed areas. According to Grissmer and Kirby (1991):

> Accurate measures of teacher attrition are needed to serve several important planning and policy objectives. First, attrition rates largely determine how many teachers need to be hired each year; they thus play a significant role in assessing future teacher shortages. Because of this, it is crucial to measure and predict attrition accurately. Predicting attrition is the most important

and the most difficult of the components of supply and demand. Without credible predictions of attrition, teacher shortages cannot be addressed. (p. 9)

Through the findings and recommendations of this study, educational leaders will be able to make effective decisions and program modifications to enhance teacher retention and reduce the teacher attrition rate. The study also provides the leaders with insight, providing them an opportunity to implement early intervention strategies for teachers considering leaving the school district.

Research Questions

The selected school district is faced with high teacher attrition. This study examines the phenomenon of teacher perceptions of attrition and the independent variables by addressing the following questions:

RQ1: What factors do teachers perceive are more influential in the high teacher attrition rate in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive principal behaviors as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive school climate as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive teacher responsibility as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ5: How do teachers perceive teacher preparation as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ6: How do teachers perceive gender as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ7: How do teachers perceive salary as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ8: How do teachers perceive number of years teaching as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ9: How do teachers perceive discipline referrals as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ10: How do teachers perceive relationships with colleagues as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

Summary

Teacher attrition is a serious problem for the education system nationwide. Systems have not found a solution to this epidemic that has had a negative effect on student performance (Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien, & Ravin, 2004). School districts have resorted to hiring teachers on alternative certification routes due to the low numbers of "highly qualified" teachers available.

The selected school district is faced with resignations from all levels of teachers throughout the entire school year; making continuous instability for leadership, parents, and importantly, students. Resignations force school leaders to hire unqualified emergency staff to fill vacant positions to provide service to students; avoiding a lapse in instruction.

This study is necessary to inform the selected school system in determining the factors that cause teachers to leave. The findings and recommendations from this study will aid the selected and other school systems in their implementation of initiatives to reduce teacher attrition and improve retention.

Chapter II provides literature on research based views of the teacher attrition and characteristics of school administrators. Chapter III contains the research design and methodology, providing an outline and format used by the researcher to conduct a survey of teacher perception on school administration and interview questions given to teachers who have resigned from the selected school district. It describes the research design, research questions, participants, the instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures used in the study.

In conclusion, this research focused on the perceptions of teachers as it relates to teacher attrition. Administrators in the selected school system will benefit from the findings of this study by applying the information to improve teacher retention, reduce teacher attrition, and ultimately, increase student academic achievement.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine teacher perceptions on teacher attrition. This study was based on a selected urban school district that is faced with a yearly high teacher turnover. The study provides school districts with data that will provide information to improve initiatives for reducing teacher attrition.

In order to gain a profound understanding of the study, this chapter presents researched and theoretical literature on teacher attrition and retention, principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, student discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues. The literature presents a national and a statewide view of the problem. Research was conducted throughout the United States to examine the factors that effect teacher attrition and to determine the characteristics of teachers that are able to remain in the teaching profession while others resign.

Literature on the nine factors provides an enhanced understanding of their influence on teacher attrition and an educational organization. School leaders are given the privilege to lead a group of professional to become an effective and successful organization. It is the behavior that is displayed and the manner in which they lead that determines if the organizations' goals are met. School climate is critical for an

organization to be productive. It is also challenging because it is defined by the perceptions of individuals and their personal views of the working environment.

Teacher Attrition

Under each presidential term, there has been educational reform that does not last long enough to examine the effectiveness of the reform. The government develops strategies and policies to make America lead the education world. The reforms do not work due to lack of collaboration with the people who make the greatest impact on educational success, teachers. Additionally, the reforms have made the teaching profession more undesirable, causing a high teacher attrition rate.

Teachers are not leaving because they cannot handle the obstacles that come along with interacting and teaching children. They are leaving due to the overload and displeasure shown towards the faculty and staff from the leadership on all levels in the system. Another side of this issue is the influx of new teachers in the classroom every year. Many times, they are new to the city, teaching and do not have any knowledge on the population their school serves. It is not surprising that nearly half of all teachers electing to leave the profession within the first five years of teaching are from inner city schools (Ingersoll, 2002). This is overwhelming for all parties in the school. Principals have to provide more staff development and mentorship for new teachers. The Georgia and Metro Atlanta Educator Workforce (2008) noted that the average experience has decreased with some minor fluctuation from 12.5 years in fiscal year (FY) 1999 to 12.3 years in FY 2007. Students are constantly adjusting to new teachers. They are unable to build bonds and create a coherent environment and culture conducive for learning in the

school because the membership always changes; thus creating underachieving schools which add more pressure on faculty and staff to improve.

Teacher attrition has been a major issue for the United States for the past years during the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. It is a systemic problem that is increasing as more mandates are employed by the U. S. Department of Education. Since the No Child Left Behind Act put into practice the "highly qualified" criteria for teachers, teacher attrition, especially in inner city and rural schools, has been further challenged to staff all classrooms in schools with "highly qualified teachers" (Darling-Hammond, 2003). A study by Henke, Chen, and Geis (2000) reports that almost half of all new teachers eventually leave the profession within five years of service. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) conducted a study and reported in "low-poverty" schools the yearly rate of teachers moving/leaving was 12.9% and the yearly rate in "high-poverty" schools was 20%. There is a 50% difference in the teacher attrition rate of the poor and wealthy schools. There is a significant difference in the numbers based on demographics; however, all schools are impacted by teacher attrition.

Teacher attrition is expected due to promotions, retirement, job performance, and personal reasons. This has to be factored into the number of teachers leaving. Longevity in education is shortening and is becoming obsolete. The number of teachers retiring is increasing every year. In an analysis of teacher turnover, teachers reported retirement as a reason for leaving less often than because of job satisfaction (Ingersoll, 2003). More teachers are choosing to retire because of the dissatisfaction of their job. There are other

variables that take precedence in teachers deciding to leave. The United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1999) conducted the teacher follow-up survey, *Questionnaire for Current Teachers.* Findings show teachers who transferred schools rated lack of planning time 65%, workload 60%, students' discipline problems 53%, and lack of influence over school policy 52%.

There is a breakdown in the education system that has to be examined before issues have a devastating effect on the future of the nation. The solution to a high teacher attrition rate is not recruiting new teachers. Instead, the solution is looking at the source of the problem and implementing strategies to correct the problem. If the teacher attrition rate continues increasing year after year, administrators must understand how to solve the problem. Teacher attrition has been a consistent problem for the past decades. Education systems are beginning to place more attention on the teachers in recent years.

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2007) stated that school systems need to recruit teachers that will remain with the system after the initial five years and retain teachers who are already in the system. Research can assist educational administration and policy makers to develop strategies and programs that will assist identify the factors that contribute to teacher attrition.

National statistics report that 25% to 30% of new teachers leave within the first five years of their career. Urban area schools suffer the most from this epidemic. About 50% of new teachers leave urban schools (Bobek, 2002). In the effort to increase student achievement, class size is decreased, which increases the number of teachers needed.

Within the next decade, 2.7 million teachers will be needed and more than 7,000 new teachers will be needed in extreme urban area schools (Bobek, 2002).

The National Center of Education Statistics (1999) reported that enrollment in public school increased with the biggest growth in elementary grade levels from 27 million to 33.8 million students. It is projected every year in the United States there will be a 2% increase student enrollment. In order to meet these demands, research has to be conducted to strategically reduce the attrition rate. Olson (2000) estimated at the beginning of the century that 2 million new public school teachers would be needed in the next decade. His predictions were made based on the attrition rate trends during that time. If the attrition rates continue to rise, the number of teachers needed to meet the needs of school systems will increase.

Ingersoll's (2002) study, *The Teacher Shortage: A Case of Wrong Diagnosis and Wrong Prescription*, produced determining factors on teacher shortage. The findings showed the shortage is not due to retirement, a shortage of teachers, an increase in student enrollment, or school staffing cuts. It is the result of the educational system's inability to create initiatives to retain teachers and reduce teacher attrition. Colleges and universities cannot be blamed for the high number of teachers needed in the teaching field. According to a study by Meier, Kohn, Darling-Hammond, Sizer, and Wood (2004), there are more than enough credentialed teachers as high as three to four times greater than the available teaching positions. The schools systems have to develop strategies to keep the staff that is already in the workforce.

More school systems emphasize their recruiting and put little emphasis on retention initiatives. In support of Ingersoll, Meier et al. (2004) report that a teacher shortage does not exist. There are enough credentialed teachers three to four times greater than the number of teaching positions vacant across the nation. The Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) is a data source that studies and records the number of postsecondary degree completions by field. IPEDS reported that in the 1998-99 academic year 220,000 individuals graduated with degrees in education. However, this number does not reflect the amount that pursued careers in education. Only 86,000 positions filled for the next school year were taken from that pool of candidates (Ingersoll, 2003).

Teaching is a profession that has impact on this nation. Teachers make up 4% of the workforce in the United States. Teacher attrition has existed for decades and has been neglected, and its effects have become more evident in the past two decades. Boyd, Lankford, Grossman, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2007) found that teacher attrition has a negative effect on the school's learning environment by forcing constant change a creating the impossible task of implementing policies and standards. Their data showed low student achievement because of these factors.

Claycomb and Hawley (2000) developed a strategic plan of action for recruiting and retaining effective teachers for urban schools. The plan consisted of four major components:

1. Increasing the quantity and quality of people entering and returning to teaching in urban districts (pre-collegiate recruitment, higher education recruitment, and recruitment from alternative candidate pools);
2. Shaping the content of preparation programs to encourage teacher candidates to pursue and succeed where they are most needed (ensuring that programs have a clear vision and provide in-depth knowledge, extensive experiences, consistency, and meaningful evaluation);
3. Improving the recruitment and hiring process (improving the recruitment and hiring process, providing financial incentives, improving teaching conditions, and offering differential pay); and
4. Supporting teachers' professional growth once working in a district (teacher placement and high quality induction programs).

This plan is relevant to this study because it examines the components that influence teachers to remain in urban schools. This plan can be effective if school leaders examined the plan and incorporated it into their leadership techniques.

Breaden (2008) reported on a study that was conducted by the Alliance for Excellent Education, a Washington-based nonprofit organization that works to improve secondary education and college access. The report showed that there are about 150,000 teachers leaving and 230,000 switch schools every year. The study examined the demographics of the teachers and noted that the teachers that had higher education and obtained their education from "selective" colleges and with high academic skills were more likely to leave to find the profession before retirement for various reasons of

advancement. The concept of attrition contributes to losing academically talented teachers is supported by this study. The study also found that poor performing teachers were 13% more likely to leave the profession.

The study continued reporting that urban schools annual turnover rate of 20% in high-poverty school and 13% in low-poverty schools. There is a significant difference on attrition rate based on the quality of the schools. In order to retain teachers in all school, educational administration has to examine the factors that create high turnover in urban schools. The report suggests that improvement in the instructional program through support will increase student achievement and reduce teacher attrition. By the current trends of attrition rate, the number of teachers needed is going to triple if qualified and non-qualified teachers continue to leave by great numbers.

The constant changes and demands of the education system has become a daunting task for educators. It has a significant affect on teacher attrition because it pressures the school leaders to develop strategies that force teachers to produce; ultimately, causing a stressful environment for the administrators, teachers, and students.

Principal Behaviors

> We are born out of and live in relationships…The educational leader needs to recognize that relationships are a fundamental and intrinsic part of being; we cannot separate our existence from our relationships. Hence, leadership activities that focus unduly on the technical and bureaucratic elements of an organization are devoid of meaning. Educational leaders who acknowledge that human interactions are basic to our lives, to the creation of meaning, and

to the development of understanding are more likely to take full account of the *why, who, what, where,* and *when* of schooling. (Shields, 2006, p. 76)

Interpersonal skills are important assets of a school administrator. It is imperative that school administration is competent in working with various types and groups of people. Effective leaders build relationships with their staff members. They understand the importance in building a bond with their subordinates. The best leaders build environments of trust, respect, professionalism, caring, compassion, collaboration, teaming, advising, caring, and nurturing (Connors, 2000). Forming and maintaining relationship with employees, customers and suppliers is essential to safe guard the interests of the organization (Venkatesh, 2008).

The democratic behaviors of public school principal are more of considerate and relation oriented who believe in binding long-term relationship with the organization employee. The leader that displays democratic behavior tries to understand their employees as a person, not just an employee in the school building. The way a principal interacts and behaves has an effect on the entire organization that can have an affect on teacher job satisfaction (Fuller, 1969; Johnson, 1967; Jones, 2004; Peck, 2002). Increasing awareness of how leadership behaviors influence organizational cultures will enable the leader to enhance the participation of personnel in decisions that affect work and environment (Marquis & Huston, 2000).

Barnard (1979) reported that effective principals are generally assertive and at the same time as willing to listen to the problems and ides of stakeholders. These researchers found that there is a relationship between teachers perception's of leadership behavior

and teacher morale. The school leadership in South Carolina was "identified by more than one-quarter of teachers as the most crucial working condition in making their decisions about whether to stay in a school, was significantly predictive of teacher retention" (Hirsch, 2005, p. 12).

A major factor that teachers complain about is the lack of support from school principals. Dinham (2007) agreed that effective principals place a great amount of effort into professional learning or themselves and their teachers. He suggested that principals provide support for teacher learning inside and outside the school. Dinham also emphasized that principals need to recognize that all teachers can be leaders.

There are various ways principals can build relationships amongst school faculty. Building relationships between the principal and faculty can happen if the principal occasionally offers to lend a hand (Kellison, 2007). Principals can model a lesson to give aid to the teacher or provide extra needed time for the teacher. Principals have to remember that they supervise and work with human beings. School principals have to e capable of providing moral support to the students and teachers.

Spinella (2003) conducted a quantitative descriptive study entitled, *The Principal's Role in New Teacher Retention.* The descriptive variables examined were: (a) personal characteristics, (b) educational experiences, (c) quality of first employment experiences, (d) external factors, and (e) teaching efficacy. Spinella use a survey that consisted of a scale of 1 to 6 to show the subjects level of agreement, 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. The population used in this study was first and second year teacher in the state of Louisiana. The study results showed that teacher support,

respect, concerns, and "protection from bureaucracy" (p. 100) were predictors for teacher retention. The respect variable was defined by principal actions such as: "(a) gives sincere praise, (b) gives non-verbal feedback, (c) has clear expectations, and (d) uses effective modeling" (p.100-101). This study showed the significant influence principal behaviors have on teacher attrition.

Turner (2003) conducted a study on teacher attrition and the relationship between the following variables: teaching experience, discipline, administrative duties, administrative support, parental support, salary, class size, age, level taught, students' socioeconomic standings, and compensation. Turner collected data using a cross-sectional questionnaire that determined the relationship between teacher dissatisfaction and high turnover. The study showed, "The major results of the study were that (a) the number of students [was] influential in teacher satisfaction, and (b) support from administrators and parents was important as a predictor of satisfaction" (p. 68). Turner also suggested that principals should consider involving teachers in decision making.

In Brown, Gonzalez, and Slate's (2008) qualitative study on teacher attrition in Texas, findings showed that teachers attribute part of their decision to leave on administration behaviors. The researchers conducted semistructured interviews with eight teachers that had left the school system. They were selected through criterion sampling. The participants gave descript examples on the behaviors displayed that supported their decisions. The following behaviors were seen by the participants: (a) excessive pressure, (b) corrupt administration practices, (c) disrespect to teachers, and (d) reduction of teacher moral.

The principal behaviors that were seen by the participants in this study can be seen in other school buildings throughout different school districts. This study investigates the perceptions of teachers of the impact principal behavior has on the teacher attrition.

School Climate

There are different definitions for school climate. The structural approach regards climate as an essential characteristic of an organization which is free of individuals' perceptions. This definition can be challenged by evidence from studies showing different work climates within a single organization. The perceptual approach views climate as people responding to situation from a psychological approach. It is the interactions they participate in that create the climate. Based on this approach, climate guides behavior and results in the general behavior of groups. This approach may not be effective because it is based on individual perspectives; instead of a collaborative understanding. The interactionist perspective has individuals developing a collective understanding of the environment. This creates a shared perspective that the entire organization agrees upon through interaction.

Black (2001) indicated that worldwide, teachers feel burdened by time constraints, excessive workloads, and low salaries. "At the heart of the teacher shortage crisis is the fact that teachers often are badly treated, burn out quickly, and leave the profession" (p. 2).

Urban schools are faced with a greater task in creating a school environment by trying to balancing what the students are exposed to in their home environments and

creating a learning environment in the school building. Blazer (2006) reported that teachers leave "high poverty" school and schools with a large number of minority students because of the poor working conditions. It was not reported that the students were the cause, it was the school environment forced upon the students and teachers.

Buckley, Schneider, and Shang (2005) conducted a survey in a Washington, D.C. school system to examine how the quality of school facilities impacts teacher attrition. The subjects in the survey taught grades k-12. This sample allowed them to examine every level in the system. The researchers concluded that the quality does have an impact on teacher attrition. The schools in this study are in a highly populated urban school district, and continue to show that school climate is important and relevant to this study.

Earthman (2002) stated, "The condition of a school building not only influences student achievement, but can also influence the work and effectiveness of a teacher" (p. 8). Several researchers have indicated the importance of analyzing the impact of building conditions on the morale and attitudes of staff members. Accountability has placed incredible emphasis on high standards for student achievement and the number of highly qualified teachers. If building conditions have an impact on student achievement and teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction, it is important to investigate how building conditions may impact teacher attrition.

Tye and O'Brien (2002) also reported work conditions as a cause for teacher attrition. Based on their survey of a number of teachers who had already left the profession, these authors concluded that the causes of teacher disaffection were systemic

rather than personal. They found that teachers blamed themselves for not being prepared for the demands of the teaching profession.

It is important for leaders to view their employees as teammates that have opportunity to collaborate to achieve the organizations goals and vision. One of the important tasks for a leader is to create a better organizational climate for motivating employees and promoting their willingness to work hard, and to promote school autonomy.

There are several issues that have been discussed in the literature regarding environmental assessment measures. First, the use of culture surveys has been criticized as not being valid, that is, not reflecting the phenomenon of interest. The use of perceptual measures to reflect organizational processes has also been criticized as being biased, therefore inadequately measuring organizational variables. This study utilizes a quantitative method to measure school climate in this study to give a concrete understanding of this independent variable.

The review of literature supports that school climate is influential in teacher attrition. The research shows "teachers with positive perceptions about their working conditions are much more likely to stay at their current school than educators who are more negative about their conditions of work, particularly in the areas of leadership and empowerment" (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007, p. 14).

Teacher Responsibilities

A mixed methodology study was conducted by Sanchez (2007) to examine what influences teachers to stay in the teaching profession in urban and inadequate resourced

schools. The study consisted of 28 participants in focus groups that were originally a part of the 309 survey samples. Sanchez examined factors that influence academic achievement standards, record-keeping demands, and increase accountability. The findings of this study showed that there was little difference between schools that had high or low attrition rates. The data showed three major areas that were identified as needing support: more time, additional personnel, and support from parents and the community.

One of the main findings in the study showed that the demands of No Child Left Behind Act (2001) had negative effects on their job satisfaction and heavily contributed to teacher "burnout" and dissatisfaction. The accountability, mandated testing, and additional record-keeping implemented by No Child Left Behind Act were some of the main factors of the increasing teacher attrition rate. Based on the findings of this study, teacher attrition rates across the nation will continue due to the implementation and mandates of No Child Left Behind.

Marshall (2002) conducted a mixed methods study entitled, *A Study of Factors Contributing to the Attrition Rate of Public School Teachers in Texas.* The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence the attrition rate of teachers. The study reported that the item, "Teaching is a stressful profession," was the main factor contributing to teachers leaving the profession. Other factors with high significance were: "Discipline is the biggest problem faced by a teacher," "Teachers' salaries are inadequate," and "My education did not prepare me."

In Williams' (2005) study on characteristics of teacher attrition, he conducted his research in the Midwest on a small suburban school district. The subjects involved in the study were educators that had decided to leave the school district. They were asked to fill out surveys reflecting on their experiences in the district. He had begun collecting the data since the 2000-2001 school years. The data analysis determined that there were six main factors that contributed to teachers deciding to leave the school district. Two main factors that contributed to teachers leaving were increased paperwork caused in some cases by a need for documenting instructional efforts that reference state instructional standards and accountability brought on by the advent of more high-stakes testing.

Teacher responsibilities have changed over the past years due to educational reforms and mandates. Johnson (2006) reported that insufficient time for planning, teach and perform assessments creates stress and an environment not conducive for learning. In Hirsch and Emerick's (2005) study conducted in South Carolina, teachers reported having to work more than five hours pass after school hours to perform task like grading papers and parent conferences.

Naylor (2001) conducted an international study on teacher workload and noted that it is causing high levels of stress for teachers. The study linked the stress to the change in site-based management, forced and centralized system accountability, lack of professional autonomy, relentlessly imposed change, constant media criticism, reduced resources, and inadequate salaries. These factors are contributing to increased absenteeism and teachers leaving the teaching profession and this problem can be seen throughout various countries.

Teacher Preparation

> New teachers are not finished products. Expecting them to perform all the duties that we expect of seasoned professionals is unrealistic. We should not be surprised that new teachers often end up "demoralized and dispirited, anxious about their efficacy and their capacity to cope. (Allen, 2000, p. 63)

A career in education requires proper training. Choosing education as a career field requires a person that has special qualities in order to be successful. The type and amount of teaching preparation does have an effect on the effectiveness of a teacher. Like any profession, training is needed to effectively perform the duties of that career. The same is needed in the education field. Through the literature evidence shows that teachers with more qualifications have a higher attrition than teachers who are less-qualified. This is seen more in low-achieving schools (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005).

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) required every state to only have "highly qualified" teachers in the classroom by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. The definition of "highly qualified" was clarified through Public Law 107-110, Section 9101 [23] which states that "the teacher has obtained full certification as a teacher (including certification obtained through alternative routes to certification) or passed the state licensing examination, and holds a license to teach in the state." This change was made to guarantee that every teacher in the classroom had received proper training for the content they were teaching (Reeves, 2004).

Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) conducted a national study to determine if the amount teacher preparation had an affect on attrition of teachers that are within their first five years of teaching. In the study 1, 973 beginning teachers were surveyed. They reported showed that 13.7% of the teachers hired with some to no teacher preparation left the profession compared to the 8.6% of teachers that participated in a significant amount of teacher preparation. Their findings show that the amount of teacher preparation does have an effect on the success and attrition of new teachers.

Boe, Cook, and Sunderland's study on teacher qualification and turnover of special and general education teachers in first time teachers examined five independent variables: teacher preparation, induction, mentoring, workload, support, and professional development, and three types of turnover: exit attrition, teacher area transfer, and school migration. Data used in this study were provided through the 1990-2000, 2000-2001, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 of the Teacher Follow-Up Surveys that were conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education. The study showed that teacher preparation has a significant effect on the attrition of teachers. There were a larger number of teachers willing to leave the career that to transfer to another school or system. The other variables also had a significant influence on the attrition rate of first time teachers.

There are a number of alternative teacher preparation programs in the state of Georgia and throughout the United States to aid in the recruitment of new teachers. One of the main programs that feed into to Atlanta Metro School Systems is Teach for America. This program allows college graduates from any educational background enter

into the teaching field after intensive summer training. They are taught the responsibilities and duties of teachers during this on the job training experience. The members are assigned a mentor that guides them through the summer providing critical advice.

Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) conducted research on data provided through former studies. This study researched data from various school districts across the state of California and discovered that new teachers from alternative routes (AR) had attrition rates from 10% up to 45% by the end of the first year of teaching. The data did show there was some variance between the types of alternative route programs. The programs that provided thorough supervision and support had a lower attrition rate than the alternative route programs that provided a shorter time period of preparation for the new teachers.

Henke, Chen, Geis, and Knepper (2000) conducted a national study and found that teachers that completed a four year teacher preparation program had a much lower attrition rate than any other group. The traditional teacher preparation group had an attrition rate of 15.3% compared to the 29.3% attrition rate of the other teacher preparation groups. The data were provided through the use of the 1992 Baccalaureate and Beyond Survey (B&B) by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

Gender

Warren (2008) conducted a mixed methodology study to examine the factors that influence job satisfaction of male teachers. These factors were compared to the factors that influence female teachers' job satisfaction to determine if there is a difference

between the two groups. The sample used in the study consisted of 99 males and 420 female teachers, giving the study a total of 519 samples. Job satisfaction was measured by using a 40 item survey developed by Rhodes, Nevill, and Allan (2004). The qualitative portion of the study involved four interviews of the male teachers that were surveyed. The subjects were randomly chosen from the survey pool. The findings of this study showed that 35 out of the 40 indicators on the survey were the similar between the men and women. The findings from the interviews showed that men were initially attracted to the career due to the opportunity to coach. The men with fewer years of experience reported the least amount of job satisfaction. Out of the four men interviewed, two did not think they would be teaching more than five years.

Jones (2005) conducted a study to determine the areas of dissatisfaction with demographic variables of age, gender, and race. The main purpose of the study was to identify why teachers left secondary education. The data used in this study were gathered from 1987 to 1995. The National Center of Education Statistics provided data in the 1997 version of SASS, data showed that there was not a significant difference between male and female teachers. Both groups were leaving the profession because of similar reasons. Demographic variables did not have an affect on teacher attrition in secondary education.

Krieg's (2006) conducted a study applying a two-stage regression technique showed how a teacher's impact on students and student achievement predicts teacher attrition. The findings showed that higher quality female teachers are least likely to leave the teaching profession than their colleagues. In opposition, teacher quality had little

influence on male teacher attrition. Krieg's study shows there is a difference in attrition based on gender. The goal is to determine what extrinsic factors convince the two genders to leave.

Salary

Teaching is a career that is sought not for pay, but for the rewarding outcomes of student achievement. Teacher salary has become a major factor in teacher attrition rates. In Kelly's (2004) event history analysis, the findings showed that salary has been a factor in high attrition rates over the history in education. The higher the teacher salary, evidence showed teacher attrition was lower.

Consistent with Kelly's history analysis, Onrich, Pas, and Yinger (2008) conducted a study to investigate teacher attrition in poor, urban schools. They conducted their study in five metropolitan areas in New York. They used the Prentice & Gloeckler (1978) technique to collect data. Their findings showed that salaries do affect teachers' decisions in leaving or staying in the classroom. They reported that teachers that worked in the higher paying system would less likely leave. The study did report that in order to compete with other factors such student factors that influence attrition, a large salary increase would be needed to keep female teachers in those areas.

The National Education Association (2002) reports that teachers are still being underpaid compared to other professions. This comparison is based on the education requirements of the professions. The report goes on to state that teachers are not respected or valued based on the contributions given by this profession to society. The views from the NEA have been shared by numerous educators for years. This has

become such a problem that it is impacting the decisions o entering into the teaching profession.

Flowers' (2003) study, *Why Do Public School Teachers Leave Their Profession*?" explored the variables that cause teacher attrition. The population for this study consisted of 21% male participation and 79% female participation. The data were collected through a survey instrument applying the Likert scales, ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The major finding of the study showed money to be the most significant variable in teacher attrition. Other findings in the study were too much paperwork, overwhelming focus on student performance on standardized tests, number of students in a class, lack of parental support, little opportunities for higher salaries, not enough planning time, stress, student discipline problems, and lack of respect from students. Former teachers in the study also identified three variables that would promote them to return to teaching: "72%, increase salary," "66% change retirement program so teachers can draw retirement without penalties," and "62%, tuition reimbursement for professional development" (p. 80). Based on the findings of his study, Flowers stated:

> Salary impacts teachers who decide to remain in teaching and those who decide to leave. As a nation, we value education; however, the salary we pay teachers indicates otherwise. Action should be taken to rectify the inadequate salary issue, as well as issues related to the other variables identified that influence teachers to leave. (p. 88)

Brown, Gonzalez, and Slate's (2008) study reported that salary was a major concern for teachers. The amount of money earned and the insurmountable time and

service given was not equivalent. The participants in this study are employed in Texas' school districts and earn about $3,000 below the national average salary of $41,000. Due to this type of management, the state of Texas has a high teacher shortage; this evidence shows that salary is a major factor in understanding why teachers are leaving the classroom.

Imazeki (2005) conducted research examining the effects of salary on teacher attrition. The researcher had two types of attrition to study. Attrition was defined as the teachers that move within the school system and teachers that left the school system. The study found that teacher attrition within the system could be reduced through district salary increases. There as evidence that showed a large increase would be need to reduce teacher attrition for the state studied. The benefits of a great teacher are immeasurable; however, the compensation earned by a great teacher does not meet the level of expertise and commitment given by this professional.

Years of Experience

The Arizona Education Association (2004) has reported that younger teachers are more likely to leave than teachers with more experience. The study showed that younger teachers would leave and pursue different careers. In 2004, the United States Department of Education reported that teachers between the ages of 25 to 29 in the school year of 2000-2001 had an attrition rate of 10.8% above the average of all public school teachers.

Hanushek et al. (2004) conducted a study in Texas and found that teachers with two or less years of experience were twice as likely to leave as experienced teachers, and four times more likely to switch to another Texas school system. Experienced teachers

were defined as having eleven to thirty years of teaching experience. The same results were found in Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) report. The study produced evidence that young and inexperienced teachers have a higher attrition rate than the older, experienced teachers.

In experience is not the only factor that produces teacher attrition. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) found that there was another group contributing to teacher attrition rate. Older teachers and approaching retirement produce a significant portion of teachers leaving the classroom.

Years of experience have been an important factor in previous studies. Literature shows that teachers with the least amount of experience and those close to retirement produce the highest number of attrition. The information found in the literature analysis is consistent. The "revolving door" will continue to turn if strategies are not implemented to reduce attrition in the two main groups of teachers leaving the teaching profession.

Discipline Referrals

Brown, Gonzalez, and Slate (2008) conducted a qualitative study and reported that student discipline was a major factor for all participants in the study for deciding to leave their school system. Student discipline problems were identified as behavior, teenage pregnancy, and their inability to cope with unstable home life. These influences made it difficult for teachers to be effective and create a structured learning environment for the type of students they serve. In addition to student behavior, participants reported the lack of administration support with student discipline. Without administrative

support and students refusing to behave, the participants decided to leave instead of continue teaching.

Correspondingly, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2002) reported that teachers in high poverty-schools left due to student discipline and lack of administrator support. Student discipline and socioeconomic status can be linked. When students are unable to perform well in class, they display inappropriate behavior to camouflage their deficiency. This is why high-poverty schools tend to have a higher number of students discipline referrals.

Coggshall (2006) conducted a study and the findings from the survey conducted reported student behavior is a key reason for teacher to leave or consider laving the classroom. It is not solely the student behavior, but the lack of administrative support that influences their decision. In a 2002 study conducted by Tye and O'Brien (2002), student discipline problems were amongst the most frequent reasons why teachers leave the teaching profession.

Marshall (2002) conducted the study, *A Study of Factors Contributing to the Attrition Rate of Public School Teachers in Texas* that examined factors that contributed to teacher attrition. The two groups used in this study were formerly employed teachers from the school system and school personnel directors. The former teachers answered surveys and the administrators were interviewed. The survey results indicated that "discipline is the biggest problem faced by a teacher" (p. 102) was one of the strong responses from teachers. "Teachers' salaries are inadequate" and "My education did not prepare me" were the other strong responses given by teachers.

In recent years, student discipline problems have increased along with teacher attrition. The literature supports that student discipline is a major factor in teacher attrition. In this study, the perspectives allow the researcher to analyze student discipline to create a plan to strategically reduce teacher attrition.

Relationships with Colleagues

An organization cannot be effective if all members are not working in one accord. The teaching profession is different from corporate organization. It is based on trust. respect, and creating nurturing relationships. Jarzabowsi (2002) deems that true collegiality creates "community" and "community achievement." Teamwork creates a more efficient organization that promotes unitary success. Leonard and Leonard (2003) report that separate planning times, classroom and breaks detour relationship building amongst teachers. More schools are moving to common planning time and team-teaching to create interdependence.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2002) reported 52% of teachers leaving stated lack of involvement in policy was one of the factors that contributed to their decision to leave. In order for a school to function as a team or organization, everyone has to be included in the functioning and decision making. It enables individuals to feel like a contributor an influential to the success of the group. "Schools that provided mentoring and induction progress particularly those related to collegial support, had lower rates of turnover among beginning teachers" (Guarino, Santibanez, Daley, & Brewer, 2004, p. 6).

In a study conducted in California's public schools, teachers that were leaving the system cited individuality, lack of teamwork, and low moral as determining factors to leave the profession. This study was contradicted by a study conducted by Futernick (2007). His study found that teachers returning the following school year spoke of positive peer relationships. These studies enforce the understanding how teachers perspectives and the meanings individuals create based on interactions determine the factors that truly determine decisions to leave the teaching profession.

Summary

This chapter focused on historical to present data on teacher attrition and the seven factors: principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, student discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues. Through examining these factors, school system will be able to identify how these factors are influential in teacher attrition and can aid in policy and administrative practice and developing strategies and programs to increase teacher retention (Brown, 2004; Flowers, 2003; Lind, 2003; Luczak, 2004; Shelton-Harris, 2004; Spinella, 2003; Turner, 2003).

Based on an extensive literature review, there has been little achievement in reducing teacher attrition. As more reforms are implemented, the number of teachers leaving the teaching profession stays steady. There was little research on the effects of teacher responsibility on teacher attrition, but research did show that it does have an effect on teacher perceptions of other factors that can lead to teacher attrition, such as school climate. After reviewing related literature, the need for conducting a qualitative

study to determine if principal behaviors, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals and relationships with colleagues have an influence on teacher attrition is imperative. This method will give a greater insight into the reason of why these factors influence teacher attrition

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions on attrition with a concentrating on five factors: principal behaviors, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals and relationships with colleagues. The findings of this study will enable urban school administration to implement strategies to effectively reduce the number of teachers leaving and identify the factors that will influence teachers to stay in the school system. The Chapter III provides the conceptual/theoretical framework of this study.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examined teacher perceptions of how principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, student discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues have an affect on teacher attrition.

Maslow (1954) stated that a person's needs are forever altered in order to meet a range of goals. He developed five levels of needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow stated, "The most basic consequence of satiation of any need is that this need is submerged and a new and 'higher' need emerges" (p. 403). Once the first need is met, a person continues to move up the hierarchy until all needs are met. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs applies to this study, by examining how the needs of teachers are and not being met in the selected school, and the effects it has on the teachers' perceptions of attrition.

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) completed the motivation to work study in 1957 determined that there were 13 factors that predicted job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in society: the work itself, supervision, achievement, policy and administration, recognition, working conditions, interpersonal relations, status, responsibility, personal life, advancement, job security, and salary. An employee's

satisfaction or dissatisfied with any of the 13 factors could influence the employee's decision to leave or stay on that job.

Based on the motivational theories of Maslow and Herzberg, this study was conducted applying a post-positivism theoretical framework. The post-positivism paradigm enables the researcher to take part in dialogue with the participants, allowing the participant to share experiences and perceptions on teacher attrition. Through this interaction, the researcher is able to collect, interpret and analyze on variables that have been qualitatively researched more in-depth, providing a more meaningful understanding to the phenomena of why teachers from the selected school system are leaving at a high rate.

According to Blumer (1969), Symbolic Interactionism explains that human interaction is based on the meaning a person places on the interaction with others. An individuals' meaning of experiences determines the action and reaction that is displayed. These social interactions develop teachers' perceptions of their own reality and how they respond to experiences in the work place.

The theoretical framework of this study merges these theories to examine teacher attrition in the selected elementary school. The researcher endeavored to identify what motivates teachers to stay or leave the selected school through interaction and dialogue with the participants to understand the meaning they place on their experiences, thus developing their perceptions of the factors that influence teacher attrition. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship among variables.

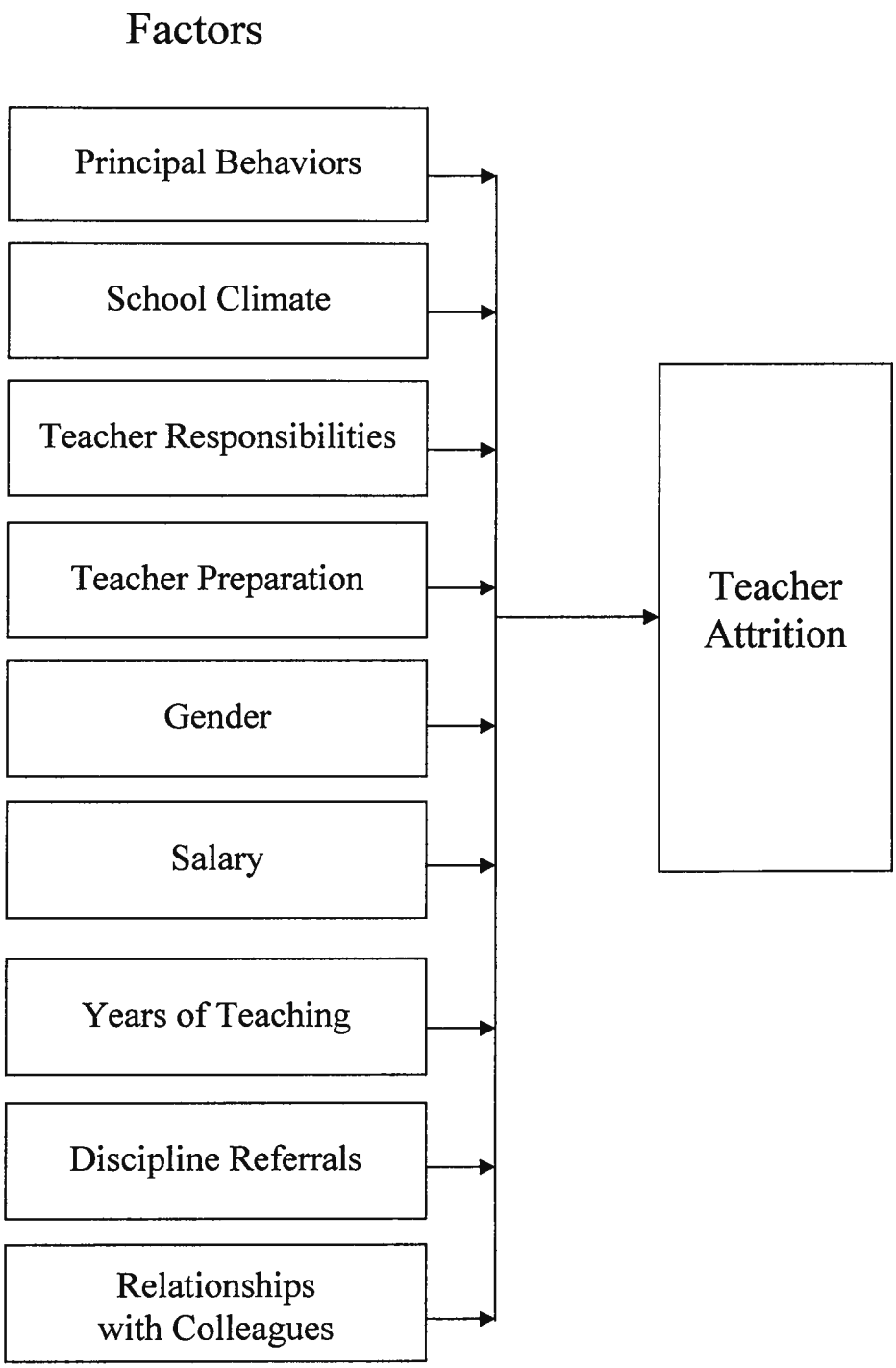

Figure 2. Relationship among the Variables

Definition of Variables and Significant Terms

The following are terms that are significant to this study.

Educational Leadership: School administrators that possess the ability to make decisions and influence members in the organization.

Extrinsic Factors: Factors associated with teacher satisfaction, including salary, perceived support from administration, school safety, and availability of school resources, are extrinsic conditions that can influence a teacher's satisfaction in a position and his or her desire to remain in teaching.

Gender: The sex of the teacher (Male/Female).

Intrinsic Factors: Intrinsic factors are associated with having a desire to each, such as the joy of teaching and working with young people.

Job Satisfaction: The teachers' feelings or state of being content about their job.

New Teacher: An individual that has been teaching for three or less years.

Perspective: A teacher's point of view derived from experiences and knowledge.

Principal Behaviors: Actions or attitudes displayed by the school principal during interaction with teachers, students, and other members of the school body.

Recruitment of Personnel: Enlistment of highly qualified personnel vital to the process of effective education of all students.

Relationships with Colleagues: The interactions and associations between teachers in the school building.

Retention: Remaining in the profession. The term can also refer to returning to the same position in a different school or district (McPherson, 2006).

School Climate: The environment created by the organization and influenced by internal and external factors.

Teacher Attrition: Attrition rate is defined as the number of teachers who leave the profession or transfer to another system from the beginning of the school year to the beginning of the next school year, excluding retirement (GPSC, 2007).

Teacher Preparation: The education and training received by the teacher to enable success in the classroom prior to entering the teaching profession.

Teacher Responsibilities: The duties that have been assigned to a teacher to perform as requirements of the job.

Salary: The monetary amount a teacher earns for performing the duties of the job.

Years of Teaching: The amount of time an educator has spent in the teaching field.

Discipline Referrals: A written documentation by an educator, reporting inappropriate student behavior.

Summary

The development of theory allows people to understand phenomena. Maslow's (154) Hierarchy of Needs and Frederick Herzberg's (1959) Theory of Motivation assist in identifying why teachers are leaving the teaching profession. Through applying Symbolic Interactionism, a more in-depth understanding of how teachers perceive their experiences to develop their perceptions of the influences on teacher attrition. The theories give reasons why teachers can become dissatisfied with different situations and

conditions that can impact their needs and behaviors. Individuals respond differently to certain situations. There is a reason why some teachers leave the school system and others remain.

In transactional leadership, leaders lead through social exchange (Bass & Riggo, 2006). It is the behaviors that are displayed during the interactions that teachers interpret and develop their own understanding of their school principals. These perceptions then create the school climate based on the teachers' understandings. Transformational leadership tries to inspire the members in the organization to reach a common goal and work as a community. The literature review shows that when school principals practice strategies that promote teamwork and "community" the organization is more successful.

Effective school research across the United States supports that there are practices controlled by educators that will assist in eliminating the factors that influence teacher attrition. Edmonds (1979) created seven correlates that contribute to creating an effective school: clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunity to learn and student time on task, safe and orderly environment, and home-school relations. It does not matter if a school is located in the suburbs or a high poverty, urban school district. All schools can achieve organizational success, when educators work together and understand the common goal of the organization. These correlates are based on human interaction and interpretation of these interactions. Research shows that when a school has evidence of all seven correlates the school is more effective and does not have high teacher attrition due to the absence of the factors that cause attrition.

The theoretical framework chosen for this study, post-positivism, bases evidence on human experience and perceptions. It presents a deeper understanding of the problem, not just giving evidence of the significance of the problem. It permits the researcher to determine the exact actions and situations that have occurred to attribute to teacher attrition in the selected Metro Atlanta school.

Chapter IV presents the methodology and procedures used in conducting the case study including: the setting, data collection procedures and the testing instruments.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the perceptions of teachers in a metropolitan Atlanta school system regarding factors that influence teacher attrition. More specifically, the study sought to determine if the behaviors of principals, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues were perceived as having a significant influence on teacher attrition. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research method that was used in the study and the appropriateness of the mixed-methods design. The chapter also discusses the study population, the sampling technique, data collection procedures and rationale. The chapter also discusses internal and external validity and the utilization of descriptive analysis as the appropriate procedure for analysis. Chapter V ends with a summary of the overall information presented in the chapter.

Research Design and Appropriateness

This study used a mixed method design (qualitative and quantitative methods) because it is appropriate to answer the research question (Creswell, 2007). The mixed methods approach was the best method for this study because it provided

statistical data providing concrete data to show the correlation between the factors that influence teacher attrition and provided the researcher the opportunity to gather in-depth information on how these factors influence teacher attrition. The quantitative method was gathered through a survey consisting of 52 items based on the factors being examined in the study. The demographic data in the survey was used to select the 15 participants for the focus group and individual interviews. The qualitative method enabled the researcher to conduct a focus group and semistructured interviews. Goldman (1962) states that focus groups can promote thoughts in other respondents and influence other participants in the group to view different perceptions. He also states that it encourages a greater depth of discussion and helps participants to remember information they may have forgotten. Goldman also indicated that the focus group also affords participants an opportunity to listen to responses from other participants, which helps them to better articulate their thoughts

The focus group allowed the participants to expound on their views, which motivated the participants to share detailed personal accounts and experiences. This study was intended to gain a deeper understanding of why and how the factors influence teacher attrition through the perceptions of teachers in the selected school system. The qualitative method allowed the researcher to utilize semistructured questions that lead to deeper discussions providing more insight into the participants' perceptions. The focus group created a non-threatening environment for free and comfortable discussion.

Three elementary schools, Houston Elementary School, Donovan Elementary School, and Holcomb Elementary School (pseudonyms for the schools) were selected for

the study from the selected Metropolitan Atlanta school system. The schools were chosen based on convenience. The researcher was approved to conduct research in the schools in July 2009 by the Research, Planning, and Accountability Department (Appendix B) after a letter from the Clark Atlanta University Educational Leadership Department and application packet required by the school system were submitted. After permission was granted, the researcher contacted school administrators through email, explaining the purpose of the study and what was needed from the participants under their administration (Appendix C). The school system's approval letter, participant permission letter (Appendix D), survey cover letter (Appendix E), and the survey (Appendix F) were attached in the email, allowing the administration to forward the surveys to teachers, providing convenience and the ability to have expedient responses. Hard copies of the survey were also given to the administrators and contact persons for each school.

At each school, 15 surveys were randomly passed out to teachers teaching kindergarten to fifth grade and PEC. The participants were given seven days to complete and return the surveys through email. The researcher planned to collect the hard copies from the schools on the seventh day. Due to the small number of surveys collected on the seventh day, the due date was extended for two more weeks. Once the surveys were collected, they were coded and analyzed using descriptive analysis and measures of central tendency (averages). The demographic data guided the researcher in purposively selecting the participants for the focus group, which created a pool that included teachers of different experiences and backgrounds. The American Statistical Association (1997)

indicated that having a focus group of participants that have different views and experiences. The association indicates that this is effective in qualitative data collection. The participants were given three dates that were most convenient for the group and the date chosen by the majority was the day the focus group was scheduled. The participants selected for the focus group participated in semistructured interviews to provide personalized perceptions not influenced by other participants in the study. The semistructured interview guide consisted of 36 questions enabling the researcher to be flexible and encourage the participants to give more of their own experience. The semistructured interviews consisted of the researcher and participant having dialogue through conversation allowing the questions and the participant to guide the interview. Participants were not coerced to answer in a certain way. It also provided opportunity for new information to develop about the topic. The interview questions were centered on the independent variables and more questions were added as the researcher gained more insight into the perspectives of the participant. Interview questions were developed for the purpose of collecting data from the participants that gave in-depth descriptions that delineate the perceptions of their experiences. The focus group and interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and coded for analysis.

In analyzing the perceptions of teachers, the data presented in this study will provide knowledge of the extent that principal behaviors, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues influence teacher attrition. This study provides school

leaders with the information needed to strengthen and correct the deficient areas in their educational organizations to obtain an effective and efficient body.

The researcher included as many variables to provide greater insight into the different influences on teacher attrition. This study used is a mixed method design (qualitative and quantitative) that provided descriptive data and statistical data that gave more in-depth information into the perceptions of teachers of the factors that influence the teacher attrition rate.

Participants

The population for the study included formerly employed teachers and current employed teachers from the selected school system. The teachers participating in this study are or were certified by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Through this certification, the participants have completed some type of teacher preparation program, and have at least a bachelor's degree at an accredited institution. The process for selecting the teachers to participate was through contact with the school administration at the three selected schools. Thirty (N = 30) teachers from three elementary schools participated in the teacher attrition survey portion of the study. A letter was attached to the survey explaining the purpose of the study and what their participation involved. At the bottom of the letter the participants gave their name, e-mail address, and telephone numbers so they could be reached, if selected for the focus group and individual interviews. The focus group consisted of 15 participants from the three schools in the study. The same participants selected for the focus group were individually interviewed. Participants were signed a letter of confidentiality and a role

upon entering the session so the researcher would have documentation of the actual number of participants that were present during the focus group.

Description of the Setting

The study was conducted in an Atlanta metropolitan school system. The school system in the study was purposively selected based on the high attrition rate of teachers reported by the Georgia Department of Education. Elementary school attrition rates were the focus to provide data for this study. An appropriate number of participants employed by the school system were selected to collect a significant and in-depth amount of information. Three elementary schools, Houston Elementary, Donovan Elementary, and Holcomb Elementary Schools (pseudonyms for the schools) were chosen based on observation and the number of newly hired teachers and transferring teachers every year. The schools were also chosen based on the Georgia Department of Education report on the information on individual school's demographics of new teachers. This information was researched and provided through the Georgia Department of Education school report cards. The researcher examined the number of new teacher hires during the school years of 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007 and selected three schools that had a consistently high number of new teachers hired over the three year time span.

The interviews were conducted in a classroom in Houston Elementary School. It provided an adequate amount of space and was small enough for the participants to feel comfortable to participate in discussion. This setting was chosen to make it more accommodating for teachers to attend the focus group and interviews. The focus group and individual interviews were conducted after school hours. There was not enough time

during the day to provide an adequate amount of time to collect enough data during the school day.

Sampling

Two sampling methods were used in this study, random sampling and purposive sampling. Random sampling was used to acquire the subjects for the survey. This technique allowed the researcher to select participants without bias influences and created a larger pool for the quantitative design. Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants in the focus group and interview portion. Participants were chosen based on their involvement in the selected school system, gender and the number of years they have been teaching. This technique was chosen to provide a selection of participants that were willing to provide in-depth and beneficial information to the study.

Description of Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher conducting this study. It consists of 43 questions using a Likert scale for each question categorized under the following headings: relationship with colleagues, school facilities/school climate, faculty-student interaction, student discipline, teacher-school administration interaction, teacher responsibilities, teacher experience, salary, and teacher preparation. The Likert scale ranges for 1 representing very dissatisfied, 2 representing dissatisfied, 3 representing satisfied, and 4 representing strongly satisfied. The Likert scale used levels of satisfaction because the study's theoretical framework is based on Abraham Maslow's (1954) and Frederick Herzberg's (1959) motivational theories. The survey items 44-52 collect demographic data. Survey items 44-52 provided the

researcher with information to apply purposive sampling technique to select the participants for the qualitative section of the study.

The focus group questions (Appendix G) were developed by the researcher and consisted of 18 semistructured questions. The 36 interview questions (Appendix H) were developed based on the dependent variables being examined in this study. The questions are semistructured allowing the researcher to participate in constant dialogue with the participant, creating a more accommodating atmosphere.

Validity and Reliability

The instrument was viewed by a professor in the Education Leadership Department at Clark Atlanta University for its reliability. Face validity was conducted by administering surveys to 31 participants for Cronbach's Alpha of the school climate survey. The Cronbach Alpha indicated a strong reliability (alpha = .8993). The results were coded and analyzed in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to insure the instrument measured the purpose of this study. Data were collected as stated and not altered. Member checking was used to allow the participants to clarify the data that was provided in the study. Triangulation through the methods of survey, focus group and semistructured individual interviews were used to ensure the validity of the data. Collecting data from different participants and developing themes from the data provided from the participants conveys the credibility of the data. Teachers are current and former employees in the school system that is being studied. The data collected were provided by volunteer participants and identities will be kept anonymous. The researcher refrained from imposing any views on the participant to insure valid data collection.

Working with Human Subjects

The participants and school system were granted anonymity and confidentiality so the participants cannot be identified. Prior to participating in any part of this study, participants were given a letter explaining the purpose of the study. To ensure the safety and confidentiality of all parties, letters of confidentiality and agreement to participate, knowing the purpose of the study, were signed. The participants are asked to contribute their experiences on a voluntary basis and were allowed to view the study's findings.

Data Collection

Through the identification of nine factors: principal behaviors, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, relationships with colleagues, this mixed method study examined their impact on teacher attrition in Metro Atlanta school systems. Quantitative data supplemented this study from 30 teachers employed in Metro Atlanta schools. The quantitative section of this study investigated the perceptions of teachers during their employment in Metro Atlanta schools on the independent variable, school climate. Qualitative data were collected from the 15 teachers selected from survey participants to participate in the focus group and interviews. Teachers were chosen using the demographics from the school climate survey.

The focus group was audio recorded to ensure all responses were on record. The researcher also took notes during the focus group to add observations. The individual interviews were audio taped to record all dialogue during the sessions. The audio tapes were transcribed by a hired source.

Data Analysis

The survey instrument was analyzed utilizing descriptive analysis and measures of central tendency (averages) to determine if there more influential to teacher attrition (Appendix I). The analysis method for the focus group and interviews that was used in this study is the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The tallying was used to analyze the raw data and in identifying the codes that frequently appear in the participants responses. The codes were compared to identify how they are different and similar and to create general ideas. Once the codes were tallied, they were placed into categories. These categories were then analyzed to create the themes and findings for this study.

Representation of Data

The quantitative data are presented through tables, descriptions, and explanations. The qualitative data collected are presented in a narrative format that gives each participant a voice. Actual quotes are provided to give a true account of the interviews. This study provides information for all educators and school systems to adapt for improvements in their system strategies. School leaders will be given an insight on how their behavior and leadership style affects their faculty and staff. Through this information, they can practice reflection and correct characteristics that may be harmful to their staff.

Delimitations

This study focuses on the teachers' perceptions on the effects of principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary,

years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues on teacher attrition. The limitation of this study is that participants were selected from three elementary schools in a selected school district to participate in the study. The schools were selected by examining the state report cards and identifying a school that employed a high number of teachers on a yearly basis for the past three years. Thirty teachers were randomly selected to participate in a school climate survey. From these participants, 10 teachers were purposefully selected to participate in a focus group. The teachers were selected based on information provided from the survey to provide diversity in the focus group. Lastly, each participant was individually interviewed. This limitation controlled the pool of participants eligible to play a part in the study and may not provide perceptions of teachers in higher grade level school or employed in other school districts. The study does not address variables such as age, race, and other variables that would define the subgroups of the participants that might provide more data on the type of teachers leaving the school system.

Limitations

The study involves a group of teachers from three elementary schools. The perspectives of the participants may not reflect the perspectives of all teachers in the system or who have left the system. The participants were a subgroup of teachers employed and formerly employed by the school system. The participants may not have provided full disclosure of their experiences in the school system. The focus group consisted of all three schools and may not provide data to show specific teacher perceptions on each of the selected schools. A participant may have elected not to

participate in the focus group and individual interviews after being selected. All surveys may not have been filled out and returned by participating subjects; causing a smaller sample and a narrower perspective to be analyzed in the study. These limitations have to be acknowledged during the time of data analysis and recommendations.

Summary

This study examines nine factors: principal behaviors, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals and relationships with colleagues, which have an influence on the independent variable, teacher attrition. This chapter presented the methods and procedures that were used in the study. A survey, focus group, and interviews were the three data collection methods used in this mixed method study. Trustworthiness was practiced to keep the anonymity and validity of the study.

CHAPTER V

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher perceptions of the factors that influence teacher attrition in three elementary schools from one school system. The study also determined the correlations among the dependent variable, teacher attrition and the independent variables: principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues.

A mixed method research design (qualitative and quantitative) was used for this study to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. The data presented in this chapter were collected through surveys, a focus group, and individual interviews.

Quantitative Data Analysis and Procedure

The data for this study were collected through survey developed by the researcher and analyzed through SPSS. The researcher randomly passed out 15 surveys to each school site totaling 45 surveys. All surveys were inserted in manila envelopes and attached with a letter. The letter explained the purpose of the study and the involvement of the participants. A designated contact person for each school served as the facilitator for collecting the surveys from the teachers. Teachers were given a week to complete

and return the surveys back to the school contact person for collection by the researcher. The time frame had to be extended two more weeks due to the lack of surveys collected on the original due date. Out of the 45 surveys passed out, a total of 32 surveys were collected. However, 2 were not invalid due to incomplete survey items, bringing the total number of surveys to 30.

Research Questions

RQ1: What factors do teachers perceive are more influential in the high teacher attrition rate in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive principal behaviors as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ3: How do teachers perceive school climate as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive teacher responsibility as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ5: How do teachers perceive teacher preparation as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ6: How do teachers perceive gender as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ7: How do teachers perceive salary as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ8: How do teachers perceive number of years teaching as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ9: How do teachers perceive discipline referrals as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

RQ10: How do teachers perceive relationships with colleagues as influencing teacher attrition in selected schools of an urban school district?

This chapter presents the findings of the study in two sections. The first section presents the quantitative data analysis and procedures. The second section discusses the qualitative data analysis and procedures.

Quantitative Data Analysis and Procedures

The data for this study were collected through the administration of a survey developed by the researcher and analyzed using frequency distributions and the Pearson's *r* correlation coefficient among other inferential statistical procedures calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was developed to answer the research questions. The survey consisted of 52 items that were divided based in the independent variables: principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues. The first 43 items used the Likert type scale with 1 to 4 ratings (1 = very dissatisfied to 4 = very satisfied). The Likert scale type was chosen to measure the degree concurrence of the perceptions of the teachers on the factors influencing teacher attrition. Items 44 to 52 gathered demographic data from the respondents.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The demographic variables analyzed were: years worked in school system, current school assignment, number of years in current assignment, teacher preparation program, degree level held, age, gender, career plans in teaching, teaching plans for next school year. Table 1 shows the demographics of the survey respondents.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	Teachers (N = 30)	
Variable	N	%
Years of Work Experience		
1 - 5	8	26.7
6 - 10	7	23.3
11 - 15	5	16.7
16 - 20	1	3.3
21 - 25	6	20.0
25 - 30	1	3.3
31 – 40	2	6.7
Current School Assignment		
Kindergarten	6	20.0
First Grade	9	30.0
Second Grade	0	0.0

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	Teachers (N = 30) N	%
Third Grade	6	20.0
Fourth Grade	2	6.7
Fifth Grade	5	16.7
Special Education Class	2	6.7
Number of Years in Current Assignment		
1 – 5	15	50
6 – 10	11	36.7
11 – 15	1	3.3
16 – 20	0	0.0
21 – 25	1	3.3
26 – 30	2	6.7
Teacher Preparation Program		
Traditional- 4 year Institution	16	53.3
Post-Baccalaureate Program	8	26.7
Internship/Alternative Program	6	20.0
Degree Level Held		
Bachelors	10	33.3
Masters	13	43.3

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	Teachers (N = 30) N	%
Specialist	4	13.3
Doctoral	3	10.0
Age		
25 & Below	1	3.3
26 – 30	3	10.0
31 – 40	11	36.7
41 – 50	9	30.0
51 and Over	6	20.0
Gender		
Male	4	13.3
Female	26	86.7
Career Plans In Teaching		
Plan to leave as soon as I can	1	3.3
Teach until a better opportunity becomes available	8	26.7
Teach until I am eligible for Retirement	7	23.3

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	Teachers (N = 30) N	%
Teach until regular retirement Eligibility	14	46.7
Remain until forced to retire	0.0	0.0
Plans for Teaching Next School Year		
I plan to stay.	24	80.0
I plan to transfer within the school System	2	6.7
I plan to leave the school system	4	13.3

There were 30 respondents for the survey. The majority of the population (26.7%), have been teaching in the school system for 1-5 years and the smallest percentage was (3.3%), teachers that have been in the school system for 16-20 years and 25-30 years. The random sampling was effective in providing a diverse pool of teachers to answer the survey. Out of the sample, 20% were kindergarten teachers, 30% first grade, 20% third grade, 6.7% fourth grade, 16.7% fifth grade, and 6.7% special education teachers. The majority of the respondents (50%) have been teaching in their current assignment for 1-5 years, showing a greater number of newly hired teachers in the three elementary schools participating in this study. The smallest percentage (3.3%)

represented teachers that have been teaching in their current assignment for 11-15 years and 21-25 years.

The survey listed three types of preparation programs that a teacher may have attended to obtain teacher training. The survey did not list specific programs in order to encompass all the teacher training programs attended by teachers. The majority of the participants (16%) attended a traditional four-year institution for teacher preparation. The prominent degree held by the respondents was a master's degree (43%). The average age range of the respondents was 31 to 40 years and for the lower percentage (3.3%) was for the age range 25 and below.

The sample consisted of 4 (13.3%) males and 26 (86.7%) females. The respondents' survey resulted in a majority (46.7%) planning to continue teaching until regular retirement eligibility, while 26.7% reported that they will teach until a better opportunity becomes available. Twenty-three percent reported they would teach until they are eligible for retirement. These teachers are waiting for their age to qualify them for retirement, while 3.3% indicated that they plan to leave the teaching as soon as they could. The last demographic survey item reported teacher career plans for the next school year. The respondents' surveys indicated 80% planned to stay, 13.3% planned to leave the school system; and 6.7% planned transfer within the school system.

Analysis of Perceptions on School Climate Influencing Teacher Attrition

Items were placed in categories based on the factors that influence teacher attrition: principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation,

gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues. The 43 items were placed in a Likert type scale ranging from 1-very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = satisfied, and 4 = strongly satisfied. Tables 2 shows the data on survey items 1 through 43 and presents the standard deviation and mean scores.

Table 2

Survey Analysis Mean Scores

Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean Scores
Teacher Relationships with Colleagues		
1. The adults in the school support and respect each other.	.714	3.20
2. Teachers do not feel threatened by voicing opinions.	.877	2.70
3. Teachers maintain close professional relationships with one another.	.730	3.13
4. Faculty and staff take responsibility to improve the school.	.507	3.13
5. Teachers are given the opportunity for professional development.		
6. Teachers feel comfortable addressing concerns about the school.	.814	2.60
School Facilities/School Climate		
7. The school is safe and secure for entire school body.	.587	3.00
8. The school is kept clean and repairs are done in a timely manner.	.699	2.83
Faculty/Students Interaction		
9. Teachers treat students fairly.	.648	3.17
10. Students have pride in their school.	.548	2.90
11. Teachers agree with school discipline procedures.	.765	2.63

Table 2 (continued)

Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean Scores
Student Discipline		
12. Teachers are able to build trusting relationships with students.	.535	3.30
13. Students treat each other and teachers with respect.	.679	2.57
14. Students are well behaved during classroom instruction.	.669	2.63
15. Students obey the school rules.	.758	2.67
16. Students are referred to administration for discipline rarely.	.626	2.77
17. Administration provides adequate support to discipline in the school building.	.858	2.77
Teacher/School Administration Interaction		
18. Administrator is intimidating during observations and evaluations.	.994	2.67
19. Administrator provides guidance for teachers.	.743	3.00
20. Administrator treats teachers equally and with respect.	.759	3.10
21. Administration is very supportive and encouraging when conducting observations.	.730	3.13
22. Administration is very supportive and encouraging when conducting observations.	.730	3.13
23. Teacher evaluations are conducted fairly and honestly.	.664	3.20
24. Administrators involve teachers indecision-making.	.847	2.80
25. Administrators are receptive to suggestions.	.747	2.83
26. Administrators promote a friendly work environment.	.759	3.10

Table 2 (continued)

Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean Scores
Teacher Responsibilities		
27. You feel successful and competent working at your school.	.640	3.07
28. To your knowledge, teachers in the building think that you are a good teacher.	.592	3.17
29. You are provided with enough planning time to be an effective teacher.	.817	2.43
30. Your teacher load is reasonable.	.858	2.57
31. The number of hours you work is reasonable.	.819	2.47
32. The school schedule allows enough time for effective instructional day.	.814	2.60
33. You are treated like a professional.	.714	3.20
34. Teachers are given adequate supplies to perform the duties of their job.	.968	2.60
35. Paperwork does not overshadow instructional planning.	.681	2.13
36. Teachers are given fair notice of staff meetings.	.640	3.07
37. Staff meetings occur too frequently and are too long.	.860	2.47
Teacher Experience		
38. Years of experience have an affect on teacher attrition.	.712	2.90
39. My experience has helped me as a classroom teacher.	.556	3.37

Table 2 (continued)

Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean Scores
Salary		
40. Teacher salary scale is fair.	.728	2.77
41. Teacher salary has an affect on job satisfaction.	.730	2.87
42. Teacher salary is adequate for job duties performed.	.730	2.53
Teacher Preparation		
43. My education prepared me to be successful in the classroom.	.718	3.37

Survey Analysis Mean Scores

In the first category, on average, the respondents' results indicated that they are generally satisfied (3.20) with the respect amongst teachers in the school building. However, teachers were generally dissatisfied (2.70) with feeling threatened to voice their opinions. The teachers were generally satisfied (3.13) with being able to maintain close relationships with one another. On average, the respondents were generally satisfied (3.13) with taking responsibility of teachers improving the school. The surveys also indicated the generally satisfaction (3.43) of teachers given the opportunity for professional development. The respondents were generally dissatisfied (2.60) with being comfortable addressing concerns about the school.

On average, the respondents were generally satisfied (3.00) with the safety and security of the school body, but were generally dissatisfied (2.83) with cleanliness and repairs performed in the school building. On average, the respondents were generally satisfied (3.17) with the fair treatment of students by school faculty. However, generally

dissatisfied (2.90) with student display of school pride. The respondents generally were dissatisfied (2.63) with the school discipline procedures, but were satisfied (3.30) with the ability to build trusting relationships with students. The analysis indicated dissatisfaction (2.57) with students showing respect for peers and teachers. Dissatisfaction (2.63) was also indicated for student behavior during classroom instruction. The respondents were dissatisfied (2.67) with students obeying school rules. On average the respondents were generally dissatisfied (2.77) with number of student referral and administration support with student discipline (2.77).

On average, Table 2 indicated that the respondents were satisfied (3.17) with administration respect to teachers' teaching methods. However, dissatisfaction (2.67) was indicated for administration being intimidating during evaluations. On average, the respondents were generally satisfied with administrator guidance (3.00), administrator treating teachers equally with the same respect (3.10), and supportive and encouraging during observations (3.13). Administrators conducting evaluations fairly was indicated as generally satisfied (3.20) by the respondents. Table 2 indicates on average, the respondents were generally dissatisfied (2.80) with teacher involvement in decision-making.

On average, the respondents were generally dissatisfied (2.83) with the receptiveness of administrators, but were generally satisfied (3.10) with administrators promoting a friendly work environment. The respondents were generally satisfied (3.07) with feeling success in working at the selected school, and having positive relations amongst colleagues (3.17). However, respondents were generally dissatisfied with

amount of planning time (2.43) and teacher workload (2.57). On average, the respondents were generally dissatisfied with number of work hours (2.47) and planning scheduling (2.60). However, the respondents were generally satisfied (3.20) with being treated like a professional.

On average, the respondents were generally dissatisfied (2.60) with lack of adequate supplies, and paperwork overshadowing instructional planning (2.13). The fair notice of faculty meetings was generally rated as satisfied (3.07) by the respondents. However, the respondents were generally dissatisfied (2.47) with meetings occurring too frequently and lasting too long. The respondents generally did not agree (2.90) with years of experience having an affect on teacher attrition. On average, the respondents were generally satisfied (3.37) with the type of teacher preparation aiding in their success in the teaching profession. However, the respondents were generally dissatisfied with the salary scale (2.77), the affects of salary on job satisfaction (2.87), and compensation for the duties performed (2.53).

In Table 3, data from the survey and presents the percentage of dissatisfied and satisfied teacher perceptions. These items were placed in categories based on the factors that influence teacher attrition: principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues. The 43 items were placed in a Likert type scale ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = satisfied, and 4 = strongly satisfied.

Table 3

Analysis of Dissatisfaction and Satisfaction of Teacher Perceptions

Variables	Dissatisfied %	Satisfied %
Teacher Relationships with Colleagues		
1. The adults in the school support and respect each other.	10.0	90.0
2. Teachers do not feel threatened by voicing opinions.	43.40	56.7
3. Teachers maintain close professional relationships with one. Another	13.3	86.7
4. Faculty and staff take responsibility to improve the school.	6.7	93.3
5. Teachers are given the opportunity for professional development.	3.3	96.7
6. Teachers feel comfortable addressing concerns about the school.	40.0	60.0
School Facilities/School Climate		
7. The school is safe and secure for entire school body.	16.7	83.40
8. The school is kept clean and repairs are done in a timely manner.	26.6	73.3
Faculty/Students Interaction		
9. Teachers treat students fairly.	6.6	93.40
10. Students have pride in their school.	20.0	80.0
11. Teachers agree with school discipline procedures.	40.0	60.0
12. Teachers are able to build trusting relationships with students.	3.3	96.6

Table 3 (continued)

Variables	Dissatisfied %	Satisfied %
Student Discipline		
13. Students treat each other and teachers with respect.	53.3	46.7
14. Students are well behaved during classroom instruction.	40.0	60.0
15. Students obey the school rules.	43.3	56.6
16. Students are referred to administration for discipline rarely.	26.6	73.40
17. Administration provides adequate support to discipline in the. school building.	36.7	63.3
Teacher/School Administration Interaction		
19. Administrator is intimidating during observations and evaluations.	36.7	63.3
20. Administrator provides guidance for teachers.	20.0	80.0
Teacher Responsibilities		
21. Administrator treats teachers equally and with respect.	23.3	76.6
22. Administration is very supportive and encouraging when conducting observations.	20	80.0
23. Teacher evaluations are conducted fairly and honestly.	13.3	86.6
24. Administrators involve teachers indecision-making.	40.0	60.0
25. Administrators are receptive to suggestions.	30.0	70.20
26. Administrators promote a friendly work environment.	26.6	83.3
27. You feel successful and competent working at my school.	16.7	83.3

Table 3 (continued)

Variables	Dissatisfied %	Satisfied %
28. To your knowledge, teachers in the building think that I am a good teacher.	10.0	90.0
29. You are provided with enough planning time to be an effective teacher.	50.0	50.0
30. Your workload is reasonable.	46.7	53.3
31. The number of hours you work is reasonable.	46.6	53.4
32. The school schedule allows enough time for an effective instructional day.	40.0	60.0
33. You are treated like a professional.	16.7	83.40
34. Teachers are given adequate supplies to perform the duties of their job.	40.0	60.0
35. Paperwork does not overshadow instructional planning.	76.6	23.3
36. Teachers are given fair notice of staff meetings.	16.7	83.3
37. Staff meetings occur too frequently and are too long.	43.3	56.7
38. Years of experience have an effect on teacher attrition.	23.3	76.7
Teacher Experience		
39. My experience has helped me as a classroom teacher.	3.3	96.7
Salary		
40. Teacher salary scale is fair.	26.7	73.3
41. Teacher salary has an affect on job satisfaction	20.0	80.0
42. Teacher salary is adequate for job duties performed.	40.0	60.0

Table 3 (continued)

Variables	Dissatisfied %	Satisfied %
Teacher Preparation		
43. My education prepared me to be successful in the classroom.	13.3	86.7

The very dissatisfied and dissatisfied percentages were combined to present a total for dissatisfaction. The satisfied and very satisfied percentages were combined to present a total for satisfaction.

In the first category, teacher relationships with colleagues, 10 % of the teachers were dissatisfied and 90% were satisfied. Survey item number 2 indicated 43.40% of the teachers were dissatisfied and 56.7% were satisfied. Thirteen point three percent of the teachers were dissatisfied with maintaining relationships and 86.7% were satisfied. Six point seven percent of the teachers were dissatisfied and 93.3% with faculty and staff improving the school. Three point three were dissatisfied and 96.7% were satisfied with teachers given the opportunity for staff development. Forty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 60% satisfied with feeling comfortable addressing concerns about the school.

In the second category, 16.7% of teachers were dissatisfied and 83.4% were satisfied with safety and security for their school body. Twenty-six point six percent of the teachers were dissatisfied and 73.3% were satisfied with school cleanliness and repairs being done in a timely manner. In the third category, 6.6% of the teachers were dissatisfied and 93.4% were satisfied with teachers treating students fairly. Twenty

percent of the teachers were dissatisfied and 80 % were satisfied with students having pride in their school. Forty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 60% were satisfied with school discipline procedures. Three point three percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 96.6% were satisfied with teachers' ability to build trusting relationships with students.

In the fourth category, 53.3% of teachers were dissatisfied and 46.7% were satisfied with students treating each other and teacher with respect. Forty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 60% were satisfied with students' behavior in the classroom. Forty-three point three percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 56.6% were satisfied with students obeying school rules. Twenty six point six percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 73.4% were satisfied with the amount of students being referred to administrators for discipline referrals. Thirty-six point seven percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 63.3% were satisfied with administrative support for student discipline.

In the fifth category, 36.7% were dissatisfied and 63.3% were satisfied with administrative observations and evaluations. Twenty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 80% were satisfied with administration guidance for teachers. Twenty three point three percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 76.6% were satisfied with administrators treating teachers equally with respect. Twenty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 80% were satisfied with administrators being supportive and giving encouragement during observations. Thirteen point three percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 86.6% were satisfied with the conducting of teacher evaluations fairly and honestly. Forty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 60% were satisfied with

administrators involving teachers in decision-making. Thirty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 70.2% were satisfied with administrators' receptiveness to suggestions. Twenty six point six percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 83.3% were satisfied with administrators promoting a friendly work environment. Sixteen point seven percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 83.3% were satisfied with feeling success and competent on their job. Ten percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 90% were satisfied with colleagues' images of them. Fifty percent of the teachers were dissatisfied and 50% were satisfied with the amount of planning time. Forty six point seven percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 53.3% were satisfied with teacher workload. Forty six point six percent were dissatisfied and 53.4% were satisfied with the number of hours worked. Forty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 60% were satisfied the amount time given for effective instruction in a day. Sixteen point seven percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 83.3% were satisfied with the professional treatment of teachers. Forty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 60% were satisfied with the amount of supplies provided to perform job duties. In survey item 35, 76.6% of teachers were dissatisfied and 23.3% were satisfied with paperwork overshadowing instructional planning. Sixteen point seven percent of teachers and 83.3% were satisfied with teachers given fair notice of staff meetings. Forty-three percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 56.7% were satisfied with the frequency of staff meeting and length of the meetings.

In the sixth category examined in the survey, 23.3% of teachers were dissatisfied and 76.7% were satisfied with experience having an effect on teacher attrition. Three point three percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 96.7% were satisfied with experience

helping the success of the teacher's performance. In seventh category, twenty-six point seven percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 73.3% were satisfied with teacher salary being fair. Twenty percent of the teachers were dissatisfied and 80% were satisfied with teacher salary affecting job satisfaction. Forty percent of teachers were dissatisfied and 60% were satisfied with the salary being adequate for the job duties performed by teachers. In the eighth category, 13.3% of teachers were dissatisfied and 86.7% were satisfied with their education preparing to be successful in the classroom.

Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's (1959) motivation to work study provided a framework to understand the perceptions of teachers on the factors that influence teacher attrition. The Hierarchy of Needs theory is used to understand how the perceptions of teachers, based of their experiences and needs, contribute to the decision of leaving or staying in a career. The findings in the study indicated that the highest amount of respondent dissatisfaction was toward student discipline and teacher responsibilities.

Literature indicates that student discipline is a major factor in teacher attrition. In both Coggshall (2006) and Tye and O'Brien's (2002) studies, the findings indicted that one of the min reasons for teacher attrition was due to student discipline problems. Gonzalez study indicated that one of the main reasons for teachers leaving urban school was due student discipline. When Herzberg's 13 factors of job satisfaction begin to decrease, this will have an influence on a teacher's decision to stay committed to the career field.

Brown (2004), in his study, *Improving the First Year: How Opportunities for Faculty Collaboration, Support From Administrators, Reduced Workloads and Formal Induction Experiences Impact First-Year Teachers*, examined collaboration time, administrative support, and teacher workload for first-year teachers. Brown states, "The findings from my study indicate the workplace experiences for first-year teachers are enhanced when time is regularly set aside for collaboration with colleagues. It is during these times, when teachers learn from one another, solve problems, and make group decisions" (p. 109). The study also indicated that there exists a greater chance of retention when adequate planning time is provided. The needs of the teacher can be met to effectively perform the job duties because of time scheduled to plan.

The findings from the quantitative data analysis presented the respondents general perceptions of the factors based on their satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The findings indicated that student discipline and teacher workload received the most dissatisfied responses. The next section presents the qualitative data analysis collected through a focus group and individual interviews.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Procedure

The qualitative data were collected through a 78 minute focus group and 20-30 minute individual interviews. Fifteen teachers were selected, five from each school site, based on the demographic data provided by the participants in the last nine survey items. All 15 were contacted through the contact information given on the letter that explained the study that was attached to the survey. The researcher met with the principal of Houston Elementary School to gain access of the school building to conduct the focus

group in a large classroom. Teachers were given two dates to choose from for the scheduling of the focus group session based on the dates that were available by the principal. The date was chosen based on the majority decision. Of the 15 selected participants, 12 of the participants were present for the focus group. The purpose for conducting the focus group was to stimulate open dialogue amongst the participants, creating a more relaxed setting for sharing perceptions and experiences. The researcher provided refreshments for the participants before the focus group session. During the focus group, the researcher wrote notes to aid in the transcription and coding of the qualitative data analysis.

After the focus group was conducted, the 12 participants were contacted to schedule individual semistructured interviews. The times and dates were based on the availability and convenience of the participants. Six of the participants preferred to write their responses to the interview questions to allow more thought into their responses. Rescheduling did occur during this process. The researcher was able to interview the other 6 participants and audio tape their responses. The focus group and interview questions were divided up into the factors based on answering the research questions. The focus group and individual interviews were audio taped recorded and professionally transcribed.

Demographics of Focus Group Participants

The demographics of the participants consisted of 10 female teachers and 2 male teachers. The participants' current assignments included kindergarten, first grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, and special education teachers. All of the participants are

teachers within the same Metropolitan Atlanta school system. It is significant that all participants were from the selected Metropolitan Atlanta school system because it is identified as one of the two school systems with the highest attrition rates in the state of Georgia (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2007). The ages of the 12 participants ranged from 22 to 51 years. Nine teachers received teacher preparation from a traditional 4 year institution. Out of the 12 participants, 9 received teacher training from a 4-year institution, 2 from post-baccalaureate programs, and 1 from an alternative program.

Analysis of Teacher Perceptions of the Factors that Influence Teacher Attrition

The qualitative analysis was conducted utilizing Blumer's (1969) Symbolic Interactionism perspective, which studies the meanings created by a person based on social interaction and experiences. Individuals create their own meanings that develop into their own interpretation that form perspectives. Elementary school teachers were chosen based on demographics creating a diverse focus group to provide rich and in-depth perspectives significant to the factors that influence teacher attrition.

The data collected from the focus group and interviews were combined to determine the emergent themes utilizing a matrix to analyze and organize the data. Coding was used to identify key words and phrases to find a pattern that indicated an emergent theme. This process was repeated to eliminate codes that were not relevant to the study. The findings are presented in narrative form. The narrative format was chosen to give the participants a voice through the use of raw data. The focus group and

interview questions were semistructured and developed to focus on the factors identified to influence teacher attrition. The factors are: principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues. The focus group and individual interview questions can be found in Appendix G and Appendix H, respectively.

Principal Behaviors

Principal behaviors were the first factor discussed in the focus group and individual interviews. The participants immediately began sharing responses for this factor. The following are emerging themes that developed as they related to teacher attrition: (a) poor communication due to pressure to meet standards and b) principal unable to implement effective management skills. Participant #2 stated:

> I have a friend who teaches at a school in our district and it's bad. His principal is way, I think communication sucks. It's almost embarrassing for a professional like that level hierarchy within the school to have such poor communication skills and it makes the job that much harder . . . But I could definitely see that if you don't have a principal who is, you know, really communicative, be more outgoing and understanding, and with all this egotistical wanting things their way, you can find yourself going to be like, this is not the job for me because I can totally do something else. So that can definitely contribute to high attrition rates all over the board if the principal within your school is not, you know.

According to the statement by participant #2, it is difficult for an organization to be effective if the leadership is not posses the good communication skills. Teachers are unable to meet the expectations of the organization, creating stress for the entire organization.

Participant #9 stated:

> I have five principals—5 different personalities, and I've had a passive one that didn't work. I've had the dictatorship that it's gonna be my way or the highway. You know, you gonna do it this way. I've had the one that went with this group and made a distinction, you know, a multi-staff, that didn't work. And then I've had just pure, like you know, you're supposed to have this degree. You're supposed to be in the role of leadership and I'm wondering where did they come from? So that is just negative. You know, again, it just depends on how you feel and what you're willing to take and not take. The thing too as teachers, we have to have a rapport with our principals just like we have a rapport with our parents. You know, I'm an adult. This is what I'm going to take. This is what I'm not going to take. You know, we can take it in the office and we can say whatever. You've got to talk to me the same like you want me to deal with my parents and my students. And you've got some principals like you said, it's just not there.

The statement by Participant #9 emphasizes that every individual teacher has a level frustration and tolerance. Once that level has been reached, the teacher is faced with

making a decision on how to deal with this issue keeping in mind this is their career. Participant #6 stated:

> I've been at some schools that would have a good principal, because not only do you have to be personable, but you have to be a manager. And if you are a good manager and run the building well but have no personal skills and not know how to talk to people. Like she said, the blanket statement, even though you can't, you can make blanket statements but why make blanket statements when you can just email and address that person directly? And like she said, I've worked in a dictatorship. You have some principals, if they don't like you, they're gonna run you out of your building instead of supporting you or giving you help. And if you're a new teacher and you've been coming into the field, you may need that support. You may not need someone to be constantly in there observing you all the time, 24/7 as opposed to, you can knock in there and say, well let me be your mentor. Let me see how this fits in the professional development. So as a principal, you do have a lot to do with the turnover rate because I've seen it happen where, I don't want you in my building and I'm gonna get you out of here. Or, I just don't, I have good management skills but I don't have any personal skills. Or vice versa, I'm really good with helping you if you got a family issue but I can't run the building. You have to be able to find a balance. And we have to understand that they're people to and if they're having a bad day at home, they raise their kids like we do…

The majority of the focus group agreed with participant #6's statement. This behavior can be seen throughout the school system. Principals are humans and adapt techniques to handle stress and pressure like normal human beings.

Participant #7 stated:

> I've only worked in one place but in any school system, in any district, the leader of that building. I don't care what bad day you have, if you have real bad manners then that one person can make the whole school just crash. And not here, but other places do and now that they're experiencing the pressure of these targets and they're being cut first, you know, a lot of principals are getting fired. Everything rolls downhill and some principals can absorb that and manage that. But I think that is bad and when they get a good one leaves and they get a bad one, they try to get her to move. It is very (inaudible). And that's in any business. When I was a manager in another sector and the people either loved me or they hated me. There was no in between. Those who didn't like me were gone. And those who liked me stayed and I can say the largest turn over that I have seen was when the principal has been the chief factor. Had nothing to do with behavior problems of the children. Had nothing to do with the paperwork. It had everything to do with the leadership.

The mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) has changed the design of public education. Educators are pressured to get their students to perform well on state mandated tests. Participant #6 expresses this idea by saying,

> I think they can be equipped with the skills, but I think like #7 said, there is so much pressure for them to hit the target and for them to get AYP that it's like anything is necessary. So therefore I really don't have time to try to be personal or to try to deal with that. I am on a mission and it comes from, like she said, from the top down. It comes from superintendents when they go to their meetings and saying that they need deliverables and they get it. My friend is a principal and some of the things that she tells me is that's just the (inaudible) road, either you making it or you're gonna be demoted or you're gonna be fired.

Participant #9 adds:

> I have one principal that came in wonderful, behavior wonderful, worked with her, helped her, didn't mind doing whatever, whatever, whatever. But like #7, once when everything came down on them, instead of working with us to keep our morale up and come in and foster the group with us, we just got slapped and clipped and chopped off at the knees. And all of us that was meant to be here, they stayed in the system and everybody else was like, wait a minute, this is not right. I'm gonna go and get my, like #6 said, I don't want you to . . . good teachers that were put out because I don't want you in my building because (inaudible) or you know, instead of helping, I just want to get rid of you so I can get somebody else in here that's gonna help me meet those targets.

The added pressure from top school system administration has affected how school principals manage their schools. The pressure has taken the focus off the

development of the whole child and placed it on test scores. Because of the added stress, principals have neglected the leadership and interpersonal skills that provided them the opportunity to be placed in an administrative position. Hirsch's (2005) study indicated that leadership behavior had an affect on teacher retention. The next section discusses the shared perspectives of the participants on school climate as an influence on teacher attrition expressed in the focus group and individual interviews.

School Climate

School climate has been found to have an affect on teacher attrition. In Herzberg's (1959) motivation to work study, he indicated that working conditions was an influence on job satisfaction. The participants shared their experiences to show school climate can influence teacher attrition. The emergent theme from this factor was: nepotism displayed by school principal hinders teacher collaboration. Participant #4 gave an experience where she was confronted by an issue was also related to other teacher. However, she was the only teacher confronted. Participant #6 emphasizes how the work environment influences teacher attrition through the following statement:

> Yes, I do think that environment plays a large part because you spend so much time there and if you're unhappy, that's a lot of hours that you're unhappy. So I do think that environment plays a part of it. If you're overworked or stressed out and exhausted, you are going to try to find an exit. Depends how friendly the teachers are because you can laugh with the other teachers or you can have another breakdown and then what?

Participant #4 added:

> I would just say for the school environment, I would think that people would stay more if everything was fair. And I think sometimes things aren't fair. Someone else might be able to get away with something or somebody else may not....

The majority of the participants agreed that the principal has a major role in school climate. Participant #9 expressed this matter in her own words by stating:

> In this system, because you know our system is divided into SRT and I think if you look at SRT and then you look at the school, because even thought in our SRT everybody has the same leader who's impacting the principals and coming up with all these necessary and unnecessary things, well necessary and unnecessary, it depends on, like you said, the leader and how it's presented to the staff and the support that the staff gets. And that makes a climate for the better or for the worse. The school down the street, same things that we're going through but they sit as a team. The administrator is there. They will fight you for their principal. Then you will go across the street to the next school and their principal's like doggie, doggie, doggie, get it down, dada, dada. Same information, same time schedule but it is their attitude is so hateful and so nasty that their climate over at their school, when you walk in the building, you can tell. When you come into the school that I'm at, you know, we're laughing, we're talking, we're having a good time. It takes a staff to keep (inaudible) I'm not gonna say the administration is

> always positive because it's not. I'm not gonna say it's always negative, but my coworkers keep me going whereas in another school the administration and the coworkers work together so that affects the climate as well.

Participant #9 identified how school climate is created through interactions with everyone in the organization. The leader has a greater influence. Participant #8 pointed out that the moral of teachers has changed by saying, "Usually the teachers in this school are friendly but the teachers don't look happy anymore because there is so much stress because of the amount of paperwork, CRCT."

The pressures of top school officials may create difficulties, but the way the leader presents and manages can create a more conducive working environment for everyone. It is important to keep condition fair for the entire organization. Participant #4 stated:

> I think there's too much nepotism comparing this district to other districts. And too much of who you know. But compared to other districts, I just think there's way too much nepotism. Someone that may not even have the correct credentials might be positioned up where someone else that has more of the credentials may not get it because they don't know X Y and Z.

Participant #12 added, "I think the climate in my school is clinkish." It is important to understand how the dynamics of school climate influences teacher attrition. The participants identified the school administrator showing nepotism amongst the faculty as major reason climate influences teacher attrition.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation has been found to have a major influence on teacher attrition. (Fowlkes, 2004; Luczak, 2004; Spinella, 2003). The participants shared their perspectives giving providing more in-depth understanding of how teacher preparation influences teacher attrition. The following were emergent themes: (a) alternative route teachers have difficulty adjusting to the education field, (b) teacher preparation programs providing insufficient training, and (c) inexperienced teachers are not given enough support. Participant #9 stated:

> I think you have to want to teach. I can come out the traditional, I can come out the alternative and say, I'm gonna be a teacher. I want my summers off. I want my vacations off. But when you come into a real-life situation, if this is not what you want to do, the money is gonna turn you off, the behaviors are gonna turn you off, the paperwork is gonna turn you off. Leaving all the regular jobs, the alternative nine to five, you pick up your purse, you pick up your briefcase and you go home. Within the school system, at 3, 4, 5 o'clock you go home, you still got stuff to do. So I think no matter what preparation school you go to, it's not real until you're actually in the classroom. So, just get in the mind set if this is what you want to do. Because I hear people all the time, oh girl you're a teacher, you make money, you got money. And I'm thinking, OK but 80% of my paycheck is almost left back at Wal-Mart, at Dollar Tree, at School Box. You know, you gotta do that and if you got kids, small kids, hell you have to deal with, is that for your children? Is that for your class? And then you feel guilty because

> I'm taking away from my child to give back to other kids. So, programs help but it's still, like she said, enter the classroom before you get your own classroom and then they can see for themselves. And a lot of times, you may go to schools that don't really go into the urban areas so when we get into a school system, when we get our job, the first place they put new teachers most of the time, unless you know somebody, is in an urban setting.

There is a dramatic change from leaving corporate world and entering into the field of education. Participant #9 explained how the differences have to be considered. The teacher schedule attracts people from other career backgrounds. However, it is a major adjustment. Participants #1 and #2 express this matter in their own words. Participant #1 stated:

> I'm on the middle of the road only because I was an alternative teacher. I was the one that was not trained for four years of college. But I have the experience of working with kids during summer camp. I was teaching that for six years so I don't think it's a matter of us leaving more than the traditional teachers. I just really think that it depends on the school. As far as what I can see between my school and a few of the other schools around town, I think they do tend to move around a little bit more because they want to get somewhere that they're comfortable. So if they gotta stay with teaching, they don't want to be in an environment and I think that's everybody. You don't want to be in an environment where you're frustrated when you come to work

everyday. You want to be somewhere that's conducive to your teaching and conducive to the children's learning. Participant #2 stated:

> As an alternative teacher, yeah, I went through Teach for America. This is my whole take on it. I think that whole program Teach for America is good but I don't think that everything they establish, you really can't put into or teach in an academic classroom that experience. The summer institute that we did, it was all good, but that, kinda told myself this is not really going to prepare you until I have my kids . . . I have seen, oftentimes, most alternative teachers, they do leave a little bit more. We actually stay because that's all that we wanted. However, here are some instances, like myself, where being in the classroom has made me think about where I want to be long-term so I think the experience is invaluable. Doesn't matter which route, traditional or alternative.

Participant #4 explains how inexperienced teacher come in with high expectation but are not given the support needed to be effective in the classroom through this statement:

> I would say that I would see the alternative teachers leaving a little bit quicker than the traditional route teachers. And I consider myself, I guess an alternative teacher. I have a bachelor's degree in social work and after social work I said I wanted to be a teacher. So I took the traditional route to get my master's but I didn't start out teaching. But I would just say that I think that the alternative teachers come in, they're younger than the traditional teachers. I think they come in with more energy . . . and they come in very energetic,

very pumped up. And because they think out of the box, other people assume they're doing it wrong. And I would say that we can't push them. I don't think that they're like, oh I've got my two years, I'm gone. I've seen, I've been at my school five years and when I started, most of the teachers that I liked or followed were alternative teachers. That happened maybe because they were more so in my age group but they seemed more outgoing, more welcoming. And I always say, I'm going to be as friendly to them as possible and all of the people that I really enjoyed working with were the alternative teachers. And unfortunately, they've all left me. They stayed for two years and they leave me. But the people that I started with are still there so I think that kinda keeps, in a way, keeps you growing. But I would say that they come in energetic but I don't think they're leaving on their own. I think they realize how political the school system can be right away and they are younger and so it's like they've got more time. They've got more energy to go back to school. And I'm like, I want to go back to school, but I'm like, for what? I don't know what else I would do. So it's like they see a way out and they take it. But they come in ready to change the world so I give them credit for that. The majority of the participants agreed that alternative route teachers are the largest group contributing to teacher attrition. The participants shared that teachers that do not have a traditional educational background have more options for other careers.

Participant #1 stated that principals are seeking alternative route teachers by stating:

I really that they're looking for alternative teachers, people who are teachers that have gone through an alternative program because they have a broader skill set, so to speak. If, for example, if you hire a teacher that worked at a bank, and after they worked at a bank, they went and worked in a courthouse and so now they want to teach. Well, now you have this excellent resource for the child who's a genius in math maybe because they worked at the bank, depending on what they were doing. And then the social studies skills and the interpersonal skills and how you can relate to different people in different settings could make them almost a better teacher than the person that trained four years at a traditional college or university because they have the experience outside of the box of the school system. So I really think that now a lot of principals are looking for those teachers that can multi-task or that can function in different settings and can teach outside of the box, that can bring in more experiences to really have a chance to connect with their learning to real-life experiences because it's difficult to do that if you've never been there. And it's difficult for me to sit up and tell you about Canada and I have no clue where Canada is, never been there, you know. You get what I'm saying? The experience that comes attached to a teacher that has not been trained to teach, per se, is irreplaceable in my opinion. It's absolutely

irreplaceable because they have such a world view of things and they're not restricted to a textbook.

Participant #2 added:

I agree with what you're saying but that also contributes to teachers leaving. They might come in from the financial sector because they need the paycheck. Once another opportunity presents itself, now they have teaching under their belt, on their resume, they move on to something else. So yes that's true, they're bringing in all these experiences but how long do they stay? Not very long.

Participant #6 said:

I've been faculty advisor for TFA two years and so the preparation that they did is nothing like what we did as educators because they come in the classroom, there's four of them and they all teach for 45 minutes and that's it. And that's 45 minutes a day for five days for five weeks and that can't compare to you being an intern for a whole semester plus your class when you go in and you observe classes. It's two complete and totally different preparations. So therefore, I don't think that they have the preparation because they always have the (inaudible) to fall on or behavior management and they also have the core members, so it's a little different. And I think that they probably need a little more support because when they are in the classroom, there is no support. And I also think that the school that you go to, your first year support, if you have a beginning teacher support system and if

> you have a mentor teacher and if you have all the supplies and all the things that you need and maybe (inaudible) because they are, being that they are alternative, they are a lot more rigid when things need to be a little bit more, they're not as flexible as the normal teachers that come and go and bend a little bit more. But, in my opinion, I don't think that they're as prepared as the traditional teachers.

The National Center for Education Statistics (1999) reported that teacher preparation programs are not providing adequate training for classroom teachers. Participant #6 shared her observation of a summer teacher training program and deemed it insufficient for the teachers to perform the duties required of a public school teacher. Participant #7 stated:

> I would say that I have been working locations, I would say that mostly the traditional types teachers had, they tended to move from school to school. If I had to guess, I would say that I would think alternative probably leave quicker because one, they young kids (inaudible) because they believe in (inaudible) they really think they can make the change (inaudible) they just want to save them all and they figure out they can't save them all, they move on. If one of them had the real-world experiences and come in at a later age, they probably leave quicker because they have experienced something else and they can compare it to something else and they may know what it's like to (inaudible) so if they young coming in straight out of school, the alternative like Teach for America, they become disillusioned and frustrated from the lack of support

> and because they realize that they can't save little Johnny and Jane, all of them . . . they really try to help people cause they see how they're prepared from the other people are coming into the workforce and they think they gonna make a difference to glory, realize that they just realize that there is life other than teaching cause some teachers, if that's all they've done, they really can't see themselves doing something else therefore you bounce from school to school to school hoping for a good principal, all the supplies (laughs) their life is their career where if you've done two or three other things, you say, you know what, I've tried this. I've learned from this and I'm gonna go on back to the corporate world. So I guess it depends on where you are in your life cycle. If I had to say, I would say that alternative teachers probably leave much quickly. They know there's something else.

Alternative route teachers come into the field with a "change agent" mindset and when they realize the bureaucracy of the system, the career field is not as appealing. By alternative route teachers having a different background they are more susceptible to leave due to inability to adjust to the education field. Participant #9 said:

> I agree with everyone in this focus group. I totally agree, but I think the difference is, alternative settings, you have a degree in something else. You have had, experienced something else. You have something else to fall back on. With the traditional setting, you went to school for four years. Most of us went straight out of high school. This is what I planned to do. This is what I'm going to do. You know, when I first started, I was 20 years old still living

at home with my parents and my mind said, well ok this work out, I'm young enough. I can go back to school. And I think that's the alternative setting. You know, I've got a degree so if this gets on my nerves, I may try another school. If this doesn't work, I can still go back and do X, Y, and Z because I have this degree. But in a traditional setting, after you invested those four years, you've invested those two more years on your master's working on that, you're gonna stick it out. And then, by the time you really get disillusioned and you're down and you're tired, you've started a family, you have a mortgage, or your have a house note. Not saying you're stuck here, but (laughs). You're grounded now. So I can get upset but I'm gonna stick it out because at this point now, this is my career versus being a job. And I think alternatives when they come in, this is my job, you know, because I already had a career and I decided to leave that career and try to. That to me, that's what it is. And I'm not taking away from that because I've had a para that didn't go through the traditional setting or the teaching and (inaudible) and a lot of teachers I seen went through the school. I was pulled out a lot and I would come back and my class was full. You know, I stole a lot of ideas from her but she didn't have that degree. I went to the hospital and I came back, and I'm like, my babies are falling apart. I gotta get back to work and the sub wasn't even there for two weeks. So it just depends, again, your mind set. But I think traditional, we feel strongly on certain things. You know, 4, 5, 2, 3, 4 years in, this is it. And depending on age, I think age plays a factor

> because at 20, 21 years old, I'm still living at home, I can go. You know, my mom gonna put me back to school for four more years. But when I'm coming in at 29, 30, 31, this becomes a career versus a job.

Participant #7 stated, "It is important to participate in some type of preparation program that includes hands on classroom experiences." Participant #12 explained that the desire to teach is needed to e effective, but it is important to know how to teach. She stated:

> I do feel it is important to participate in a teacher preparation program because it is one thing to have the desire to teach and being able to teach. There are so many different learning styles now, that a person without training will find it difficult to meet the needs of their students, especially, if they have special needs.

The perspectives of the participants in the focus groups and individual interviews revealed that alternative teacher preparation programs may not be as effective to fulfill the needs of teachers entering the education field due to the high attrition rate. The participants also indicated that inexperienced teachers are not receiving support needed by new teachers. These factors increase the influence of school climate on teacher attrition.

Teacher Responsibilities

The quantitative data analysis of this research indicated teacher responsibility to be the respondents' second most dissatisfying factor in influencing teacher attrition. Inadequate time to complete job duties was the emergent theme that formed from the perspectives shared by the participants. The participant continuously referred the

overwhelming amount of paperwork that has to be completed on a daily basis and the short notice of requests. Participant #2 stated:

> . . . You gotta do what you gotta get done (inaudible); some of the stuff that you're required to do and in a limited time frame that you have to do it in or the schedule. Oh you have this due in the next thirty minutes while we're having instruction and you want to try to get stuff done and it gets overwhelming. I can see where the people get overwhelming, but like I said, in my class I can see why you can be so overwhelmed.

Participant #6 stated:

> Being a single parent is overwhelming, over the top, barbaric (laughs), too much to handle. And it will cause you . . . I can see why some people have nervous breakdowns. At some of my other schools, people have had nervous breakdowns and I could never understand when I first came to the class cause I was working in another county and I never felt any pressure. And when I came here, I'm like, why are they going crazy? Why is the ambulance coming to get them? And now that I've been here for 4 years, I am that person. I'm the one that's about to lose it because the workload is so overwhelming! And some people may not say it. Some people may roll with the punches and I am the one that will get it done. But at some point if you're a mom and you're a coach and you have to run people around and be the carpool person and then when you come in and it's like, oh by the way, in 5 minutes I'm gonna need some paper from you. It's too much. It's overwhelming and I guess they get

> it like that and that's how they give it to us. I'm not sure if that's just a part of the school. But it's a lot. It is a lot especially when you have so much other things going on.

Participant #11 agreed with participant #6 by saying:

> I agree with her ideas. I'm a single parent also. It has become, it is very overwhelming. But with, I guess, with the years that I've been here and with age I realized that I just can't do it all and I'm not gonna break my neck to try to do it all. I'm gonna do what I can do and then whatever. So, I'm just really laid back with this.

Participant #4 stated that the area of the school plays a part in the work load. The type of students served in a school may require special accommodations. She said:

> I would say the workload is okay but the part that makes the workload harder is pretty much what you, especially if you're working in an urban area, I think the workload, I believe my workload is harder and more difficult than some of the workload of other schools. Somebody who teaches kindergarten in Buckhead, the kids already come in knowing how to read versus me where my kids, I'm teaching them letters. I'm teaching them numbers. I'm explaining, this is the number 7. This is the letter R; like they have to learn the difference between the letter and the number. And I feel too, this might be my first year with kindergarten, but I feel too that I'm teaching them not just for the classroom, but for life. And that's where it becomes overwhelming. Like I'm teaching them that it's not okay to sell drugs, it's not okay to, you know, beat

> your wife up. You know, I'm teaching them lifelong skills and I think that can make it, the workload overwhelming because I look at the big responsibility that I have and I think that can be overwhelming. I just go there. Take one day at a time. Just work with them in the four walls, don't hang out in the lunch room and just get caught up in all the other mess. But I think it's helpful people that are coming in like I guess supervisors, it's nice to have a supervisor that understands what's like, when they remember what it was like when they were the teacher. That's helpful and that makes your workload feel easier. The demographics I think make your workload harder.

Participant #6 stated that she did not include meeting the needs of the students as a reason why teacher responsibilities was a factor for attrition. She knew the students would require more because of their demographics by saying,

> I partially agree with her on that. Where I don't agree on is, the reason I teach in an urban area is because I know the kids don't know anything and I feel like I need to help them. You can work in the Buckhead area and you don't have the letter-number issue but just look at the workload. Our (inaudible) is the problem, not the children. You know you come to an urban school district, they don't know a number. There is no exposure. If you come in and you don't know that and then you really feel like you (laughs). So most people they know that those kids are not. They don't have the exposure. That's the part that I don't mind. I love it when the child gets the light bulb moment. Oh I get it. It's the paperwork and the last minute paperwork that comes in bulk.

Participant #5 added:

> I taught in other states and in other places and I'll tell you right now, the workload here, we have so much more paperwork. If you go to Buckhead, if you go to Gwinnett county, teachers are not doing nearly as much paperwork as we are.

Participant #8 stated:

> Also, I kinda agree with #4 in that sense because also some of our paperwork is just not paperwork for your school but it's like they have ESL, ESOL, now you've multiplied your paperwork fifty times that. And if you have an SST or EIP 5 times out of 10 if you have a child who does not know their letters and all that, you have to document that because there's a good chance that you're sending them on the SST path. So that's why you have to go ahead and do more paperwork as opposed to a Buckhead area, as opposed to a whatever area as far as like when the children are coming in normal. So, therefore, you have much more paperwork because for you to even be able to (inaudible), you gotta have 10 days out of those (inaudible). Now 4 or 5 children, that's 40 days of work on top of just coming in and just teaching. So I do agree with 4.

Participant #8 reemphasized how the type of students a school serves influences the teacher responsibilities, paperwork.

Gender

At the elementary level, it is difficult to recruit male teachers. Krieg's (2006) study supports that gender has an influence on teacher attrition. The following were the emergent themes that developed form from the participants' statements in the focus group and responses from the individual interviews: (a) women are more nurturing, (b) males have difficulty relating to younger children, (c) males are perceived to be the provider, and (d) teaching is seen as a woman's profession. Participant #9 stated:

> For me, I think, females are more attracted to the teaching career because we are more maternal towards our kids. Plus it helps for those of us that are parents with the days off. You're able, you know, to work your schedule around the schedule of your children so that helps us.

Participant #8 stated, "Women are more nurturing to younger children, women are more loving and everything." The majority of the participants agreed with women being more nurturing than men. He continued saying, "I think that females are more sought after in this profession as opposed to men." Participant #9 stated:

> I think it's a legal issue too. I think more people haven't touched on that because they are small kids. It would be frowned upon for me to walk in the boys' restroom and say, 'Come let's go. What are you all doing?' But for a male to walk in, especially an elementary school, definitely middle and high, for a male to walk into the females' restroom, that's an issue. You know, parents see a male coming out of the restroom, whoa! Or hugging, sitting in their laps, cradling. But if that same parent saw a female, even to a male, it

> would not be an issue. So it becomes a legal issue and just one of comfort for males versus females.

According to Participant #12:

> Women have been groomed to be teachers since birth. As little girls grow up, people naturally assume the girl will be a teacher or a nurse. Males or boys always think of careers where they are able to use their bronze. You not find many males in the world of education. When you do find them, they are usually found in the middle, high and college level. This may be because males relate to the older child better than the elementary level child.

Due to the recent inappropriate relationships involving teachers and students, society has become very critical of male teacher behavior. Males are taking positions that do not require them to perform duties that would not receive societal scrutiny because of their gender. Participant #5 stated:

> I know as a kindergarten teacher, there are a lot of unbuttoning and buttoning that you have do to and as a parent, myself, I don't know if I want a man buttoning up my little girl's pants that wasn't her father. That would just, even though I know that they're (inaudible) teacher, it's uncomfortable for me. I think, you know, you just see it as a woman's role, as stereotypical as that is. You know, but, or biased, gender biased as it is, you know, there's just certain things that I feel are awkward for a man to do.

Society has given the role of head of household to the males. This role requires men be assertive and dominant. Women predominantly hold teaching positions.

Participant #1 stated that the societal role of a man creates conflict for them in teaching by saying:

> I think that men most likely lead the school system because they have a power struggle. It's easier for you, I don't want to say dictate, but it's easier for you to put things in place for female teachers and say, here do this, this is how I want you to do it. But then it becomes a power struggle trying to relate the same information to a man because then they feel like, well who are you to tell me. And they may not feel that way, but I think that it's just something innate for men to want to have that leadership role. And when they're not in that leadership position, it becomes a conflict for them, an internal conflict. So I'm not gonna sit here and have somebody over me all my life. I'm gonna try and be over somebody else. So I really think that's why a lot of men lead the teaching profession, even if they move up the ladder in education. They don't stay in the classroom for very long.

Participant #5 stated that men seek jobs that have higher salaries because they are head of household by saying, "Better pay. I know a lot of people that have left because they found jobs in other areas that pay better . . . and when you're supposed to be head of household and you're looking to provide your family needs you to provide." Participant #7 agreed with participant #5 by saying, "Men seek pay and are often times head of household and require or seek higher paying occupations."

The perspectives of the participants in the focus group and individual interviews revealed that society has placed stereotypes on the types of careers men and women

should seek. The participants shared experiences and observations that provided the researcher with the understanding that it is a challenge for men to work on the elementary level due abilities to relate young children. Perspectives shared indicated men have an innate role to provide and be leaders. Being an elementary teacher would be a compromise to this purpose.

Salary

In Kelly's (2004) event history analysis, the findings showed that salary has been a factor in high attrition rates over the history in education. The participants in this study collectively did not consider salary as an influence for teacher attrition in the selected school system. The emergent theme that formed from the participants' perspective was: high salary levels promote retention. The perspectives shared during the focus group and individual interviews did not present any circumstances that would influence teacher attrition. Participant #5 expressed that salary did not influence attrition by saying, "No, we get paid more than most systems." Participant #9 stated:

> I don't think salary has anything to do with attrition. I think it's things we talked about the paperwork, the morale, the job related issues because personally, I would love to go to another county. However, I need the twice a month. I need to keep my husband helping me to pay those bills. If I get once a month, I'm gonna get a divorce. Plus, you know I get people that tell me girl how do you stay in Atlanta? Girl I get combat pay and that's just an inside joke. So I don't think the salary is making us leave. You know, it

> looks bad for our system when we're the highest paid but we have the highest turnover. So money is not keeping us here.

The selected school system is one of the highest paying school systems found in the Metropolitan Atlanta area. The perspectives presented in this study in relation to salary influencing teacher attrition revealed that salary had a positive influence on attrition in the selected school system. Salary promotes teacher retention.

Teacher Experience

Teacher experience was identified as a factor influencing teacher attrition based on previous research (Hanushek et al., 2004). The emergent theme was: teachers with less invested time are prone to leave. The participants had less dialogue on this factor. The researcher observed that participants had to think about this factor before responding to questions. Participant #8 stated, "Young teachers are the ones I see leaving the teaching profession. The older teachers don't have any other skills but teaching and that is why they stay instead of leaving the teaching profession." Participant #8 expressed how teaching has changed since starting teaching career by saying, "Teaching was fun when you had to teach. Now you are told what to teach, how to teach, when to teach and you are not as creative as much." Participant #1 stated:

> I think that if I'm in this 20 years, I'm gonna stay there until I can retire because I've given this thing too much of my lifetime for me to quit and start over somewhere else. And I'm looking I don't have 401K and I'm mad. You know, so I really think the teaching experience has a lot to do with it. The years, the amount of years that you're here, compared to like the second or

> third years you're teaching, can pick up and leave and do something else. Somebody that's been here like 15 to 20 years, they're not going anywhere. They are too close to retiring to go anywhere.

Participant # 9 stated:

> I would say along the same lines, even before you get tenured, that's a long time in your life. Like I'm at nine right now and I'm looking, if I were to start anywhere else, I'd be starting back at ground level zero and having to go my way back up. So once you've invested a certain amount of your time, it's like moving backwards that you'd rather not leave.

Participants #7 and #9 expressed the perspectives of veteran teachers. Veteran teachers have invested time in their teaching career. This includes their retirement and salary. The participants expressed that the decision of leaving and starting over in a new career is less likely in an older teacher than in a new and younger teacher. The participants perspectives concluded that more experienced teachers are less likely to leave due to invested time. Newer and younger teachers have the years and time to start over and learn new skills for another career.

Discipline Referrals

Brown, Gonzalez, and Slate (2008) conducted a qualitative study and reported that student discipline was a major factor for all participants in the study for deciding to leave their school system. The participants in this study provided their perspectives on discipline influencing teacher attrition. The following are emergent themes that formed

from the participants' perspectives: administrative discipline strategies are inconsistent and teachers are given inadequate support for student discipline. Participant #1 stated:

> I think there are definitely some improvements that can be made with discipline as a system, as a whole. And I think a lot of it has to do with consistency. I think that there are discipline actions taken for certain children in certain classes, certain children in certain grades. You know, the least favorites in terms of the challenges. So and I don't think that's fair. I think you need to be consistent across the board no matter who you are, what your last name is and where you grew up. You do at times understand things that happen. I think that's been the issue in the system as a whole, not just here in the schools but just everywhere in general that I see.

Participant #5 expressed how discipline infractions are not corrected and dismissed by saying, "A lot is swept under the rug because they don't want any negative attention brought on the school." The selected school system has annual discipline referral reports and principals do not want their school to have a high number of incidents reported. The participants collectively understood the population they serve and knew discipline problems would more challenging. However, they did express that newer teachers with little education background have difficulty with student discipline.

Participant #10 minimized discipline referral influence but still acknowledged that it does have an influence on teacher attrition by stating:

> I don't think it's as influential but if you're not getting the support that you need to deal with the behavior issues, if you're made to seem like it's your

> fault that these children are behaving the way, that they are and they came to you that way, then that can affect you moving, maybe moving to another school, not necessarily leaving the teaching field.

The perspectives shared on discipline referrals indicated that teacher attrition is influenced by teacher attrition. The participants attributed inconsistency in discipline strategies and inadequate support given by administrators as main causes from this factor.

Relationships with Colleagues

The Symbolic Interactionism perspective explains that people derive meaning through social interaction. The factor, relationships with colleagues, is examined through the lenses of the participants in this study. Their perspectives provided the researcher with an in-depth understanding of how relationships with colleagues influence teacher attrition. The following emergent theme formed from the perspectives expressed by the participants during the focus group and individual interviews: competitive culture creates division amongst teachers.

Participant #9 explains how it is important to build for teachers to build bonds by saying:

> . . . We're here from dawn to dusk or dusk to dawn so you know we do try to bond as a staff because it takes all of us to build on up. I think it could be better if the administration would work with us. I've been at my school, like I said, for 20 something odd years and I've seen it go from the top to the bottom. I've seen when we were close nit where if such and such was out, I needed to know why she was out, if you sick, think about such and such in the

> hospital whereas another teacher could be out and they've been out for 2 weeks and nobody knows. So I think, you know, that kinda helps. We keep each other up.

Participant #5 stated:

> At our school, it's competitive. It's always let me see if I can one-up you, put my name so I get credit and you don't get credit. And even to the extent to where, I came from one school where it was like a family. You know, we might not have dealt with the administration well but we had to bond together as a family. I have never felt so white than I have at my school.

Participants expressed how administrators have made the culture at the school competitive that it makes it difficult to build a trusting relationship with colleagues. Participant #8 expressed how administrators have created division amongst teachers by saying, "I have seen teachers on the same grade levels that don't get along because the administrators treat some teachers differently." Participant #6 stated:

> I think that, this being my second year, I don't trust people yet. Anything that I tell anybody in this building is something I could tell everybody in this building. I don't tell anybody anything because you're not really sure and maybe because it's my second year, I do feel a lot more comfortable this year than I did last year but you're not really sure who's gonna say what because you don't have that kind of climate where you could say what you feel. So if you were able to say what you feel and not be looked at funny or why did you say that, then I would feel more comfortable in saying what I felt because

> you're not really trying to offend anybody. You're trying to get your point across but you're not really sure, can you say that, is he gonna repeat it, and if he repeats it, is it gonna be said the way you meant it to come across. And I've had coworkers that have tried to speak up and then they look at her and (inaudible). So I just learned from watching her not to say anything. I just told (inaudible) just don't say anything. Just nod. I would be afraid of speaking say something that I wouldn't say. It's because I've seen their friends turn the other corned. It almost looks like anything you say, they take offense. And so I didn't want to step on anyone's toes. But I do feel like it's not, the environment it's not as (inaudible) as it could be. So you talk about getting I was surprised (inaudible). I know how you feel. They job everyday. But you can if you can't act like that open guy all the time.

Participant #6 expressed how teachers are not that comfortable talking with each other in the building because they are not sure the conversation will not be repeated and used against that person. This type of behavior makes it uncomfortable for all faculty and staff. Participant #6 said, "I don't think it's as comfortable as it could be." Participant #9 expressed how administration decisions hinder the ability to build relationships throughout the building because competitiveness drives the culture of the school by saying:

> I'm gonna jump in. I think too, even if you're school is not conducive, I think the teams that you want could be, but because at certain schools you're moved around a lot, you're taught to be competitive and taught to, oh my god I gotta

> be on this list or I'm gonna be on this list, oh she's mad with me now and then you know you're being ostracized . . . that competitiveness that is so embedded from the administration that you don't even bond with the people that you work closely on your grade level so that affects.

The majority of participants agreed that administrators create a division in the organization by making the culture competitive and constant assignment changes of teachers. Participant #4 stated:

> I've been at two schools since I've been teaching. My first school, everybody spoke to everybody and everybody once a month we had margaritas. Once a month they went bowling. They did this, they did that. But I came to another school and I was like wow, everybody just kinda just keeps to themselves. But what happened was all the newbies got together. It was like 15 newbies. So the newbies got together and then it became a grade level thing. It was like, my grade level would go out with this grade level and it was like three grade, it was basically a little hallway. So it's like my whole hallway got connected and then I said I'm gonna venture out on this side of the hallway. So it turned out where I knew everybody which was good. But then the administration changed. So when the administration changed, the administrator would bring her crew and people that she knows. And then there are some people that I think, because I think, APS is set up where you can kind of, it's set up where you can kinda work your way up. You can work your way up so I would just say that some people would say, ok I'm gonna

> cling to the administration so that I could get this next promotion and this one. So then that kinda splits, kinda divides. And I call it "narks." I believe there are "narks" that would just kind of float around and then go back and whisper to administration. So then it kinda makes it where you don't want to go out with anybody or hang out with anyone and I've had a grade level switch. And I would say going from one grade level to another can be a little bit difficult.

Participants #4's statement on the factor of how teacher relationships with colleagues influences teacher attrition expressed how the administration makes it difficult for teachers to build bonds in order to increase administrative control. Through organizational division, administrative power is greater and reduces opposition. Participants #11 and #5 gave examples of how their administrators make division in their schools. Participant #11 stated:

> I do believe that the administration has a lot to do with division in the building especially around test time, you know. I teach in a grade where you don't test, but I have sent the faculty meetings here where how so and so did a wonderful job and there are three teachers on their level and meanwhile you talk about one teacher that did a wonderful job when you know that all three of them tried. I mean, it is what it is. And I just really do think that they cause a lot of the division in the building.

Participant #5 stated:

> I agree with that. We sit through faculty meetings and it's the same clique that gets called every single time. What's (inaudible) at our school and it's the

> same names called every single time. And it's like, for those of us that aren't part of the clique, it's like ok, here we get to hear them praise these people all over again and you get to a point where you're just disheartened. You're like, well ok, I'm never gonna be on that list, why even bother?

The participants perspectives revealed that teacher relationships with colleagues influences teacher attrition because of the because of the competitiveness created by the school building administrators. Participants indicated that teachers are unable to build relationships amongst colleagues because the competitiveness creates a division among the teachers. One participant indicated that was a strategy administrators used to "conquer."

The participants provided perspectives on the nine factors identified in this study to influence teacher attrition in the selected school system. The participants' perspective revealed that salary did not have an influence on teacher attrition for the selected school system in this study. This is contrary to the literature that found salary as an influence for teacher attrition (Onrich, Pas, & Yinger, 2008; Flowers, 2003; Kelly's, 2004; The National Education Association, 2002; Brown, Gonzalez, & Slate's, 2008).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher perceptions of the factors that influence teacher attrition in three elementary schools in a Metropolitan Atlanta school system. This study stemmed from the researchers observations of teachers excessive transfers within the system and the high number of teachers leaving the system. The selected school system is one of the highest paying systems in the state of Georgia and yet, there it is one of the top two schools with the highest attrition rates. In order to address this problem the researcher chose a mixed method to understand how the nine factors: principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues, influence teachers' decisions to leave the selected school system.

Conclusions

The researcher randomly surveyed 30 teachers from three elementary schools. The survey was categorized based on the nine factors identified to influence teacher attrition. The researcher utilized the demographics of the survey to purposively select the focus group and individual participants. The selected participants took part in the focus group and individual interviews. Then the survey was analyzed according to central tendency. The mean was determined in order to answer the research question, "What

factors are more influential in the high teacher attrition rate of the selected school system?" The results of the quantitative data analysis were presented in Chapter V.

Through focus group and individual interviews, the researcher was able to explore the perceptions of the participants even further. The study revealed that the teacher attrition rate is influenced by principal behaviors due to principals' inability to communicate effectively with staff. The participants contributed this behavior to the pressures to make academic targets from top school officials. The participants pointed out that school principals are unable to consistently implement effective management skills. The participants expressed that the lack of management skills creates confusion and stress for teachers.

The researcher inquired about school climate and the study revealed nepotism displayed by administration hinders teacher collaboration. Most participants felt the exhibited favoritism contributes to division and animosity amongst the teachers. Participants identified alternative teacher preparation programs as a major factor why preparation programs influence the teacher attrition in the selected school system. They contributed to the programs providing insufficient training based on the content of the program. The participants also revealed that new or inexperienced teachers are not given adequate support to be successful in the classroom. The amount of experience provided through some of the alternative programs makes the support received once the teachers enter into the classroom crucial factor for these teachers to stay.

Teachers receive inadequate time to complete job duties. The majority of the participants felt "overwhelmed" with the amount of paperwork teachers have to fill out.

A participant contributed the paperwork on the type of students that are served at the selected schools sites. The research revealed that teaching is perceived as a woman's job. Men innately seek leadership roles and are perceived to be the provider. Their societal role creates conflicts with working in a career predominantly run by women. The participants also shared expressed that men have difficulty relating to younger kids. Women are capable because they are more nurturing. The participants did not consider salary as a factor that contributes to teacher attrition. The participants perceived salary as a positive influence promoting teacher retention.

During the focus group and individual interviews, the participants expressed that teachers with less years are more prone to leave. Veteran teachers have invested time and find it difficult to start over and begin a new career. The majority of participants in the study perceived the main contributor for discipline referrals influencing teacher attrition was inadequate support to teachers for student discipline and administrative discipline strategy inconsistencies. The lack of support is a major emerging theme throughout this study. The participants perceived that competitive culture creates division amongst teachers.

Implications

The following implications derived from the findings of this study relative to the participant's perceptions of the factors that influence teacher attrition

Implication for Leadership Practice

1. Teachers are overwhelmed with the amount of paperwork. Teachers will continue to leave if other means to documentation are not created to reduce the workload.
2. Participants' perspectives indicate that new and inexperienced teachers need more support to improve job satisfaction increased job satisfaction will reduce teacher attrition.
3. Team building activities are needed to bring camaraderie amongst teachers.
4. Principals need refresher courses in order to enhance communication and personal skills.
5. Teachers need principal expectations defined to decrease pressure and allow teachers to obtain school goals.
6. The numerous programs and reforms have made it difficult for principals to implement strategic management skills, causing teacher dissatisfaction.
7. Teachers feel unappreciated due to unfair treatment decreasing teacher morale and increasing teacher attrition.
8. New and inexperienced teachers need consistent support to help in their transitioning to classroom teaching.
9. Teachers have to fill out forms to document the special needs of students in urban schools. Constant documentation has become overwhelming and increasing teacher attrition.

10. Teachers are not informed of the specific job duties required of them in their individual schools. This creates confusion and stress that can cause teacher attrition.
11. Men do not seek elementary teacher positions due to the small margin to advance in their career on this level.
12. New teachers are not having a successful transition into the classroom creating discomfort providing effective instruction. Poor instruction creates poor student achievement and negative evaluations that result in teacher attrition.
13. Teachers do not understand discipline strategies for elementary level students causing dissatisfaction.
14. Administrators do not inform teachers of the discipline strategies that were used for student discipline referrals. By not receiving notification, teachers perceive this as not being supported making them dissatisfied.

Implications for Policy

1. The findings from this research served as an aid for the local school district.
2. The information from this study will give data to help develop strategies to reduce system teacher attrition.
3. The findings were used to give a deeper understanding to the factors that influence teacher attrition.
4. Based on the findings, teacher alternative programs need to be revised to clearly meet the needs of the teachers and school system.

5. The selected school system needs to create interesting ways to recruit more male teachers on the elementary level.
6. Teachers are given opportunities and privileges based on personal reasons, creating dissatisfaction amongst the staff.
7. Teachers are not confident from the training provided by teacher preparation programs predicting teacher attrition.
8. The rigor in teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare teachers for urban schools.
9. Men leave the elementary level in order to gain a position seeking leadership roles. The middle and high schools provide more leadership positions.
10. Salary is a factor that influences teachers to stay in the school system.

Recommendations

This study gave an in-depth understanding on how teachers perceived the factors principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues, influenced teacher attrition in the selected school system. The following recommendations are based on the data analysis of this research.

Recommendations for Leadership Practice

1. In this study, discipline referrals were determined to promote dissatisfaction amongst the majority of the group. The school administration should review

and update its discipline policies to address the concerns and incidents in school buildings.

2. It is recommended that school leaders plan designated team building days away from school site to increase more personable interaction. These days will include activities that promote bonding and open dialogue. These days are designed to promote cohesiveness in the organization.
3. It is recommended that the school system conducts refresher workshops for school administrators on effective leadership practices and communications skills. This will help school administrators increase teacher morale and lower teacher attrition.
4. It is recommended that the school district collaborate with the colleges and universities in the state of Georgia with the instructional programs and information on the type of students that are served in the system. Teachers will be prepared for teaching in the selected school system.
5. It is highly recommended that each new and inexperienced teacher is given a mentor teacher that does not teach in their school building. The mentor teacher's sole responsibility is to mentor. It will be an advisory position to provide adequate time and guidance for the teacher.
6. It is recommended that school leaders provide opportunities for male teachers to serve as mentors for males within the school. Their role will increase the positive impact of male teachers on the elementary level.

7. The study indicated that inexperienced teachers are having difficulty in adjusting to teaching. It is recommended that the school system create a year induction process for new teachers. This program will track the teachers and meet monthly to discuss experience and provide support and guidance. The program will be divided into induction groups based on school clusters. Teachers will be provided with support specific to the programs and instruction in their schools.
8. It is recommended that school administrators meet with new and inexperienced teachers once a month. During theses sessions, the administrators will provide feedback from observations and address any concerns from the teachers.
9. It is recommended that the school system implement an annual workshop for teachers on effective strategies to implement for student discipline and on the school discipline plan. This will help teachers fully understand student discipline procedures within each individual school.

Recommendations for Policy

1. It is highly recommended that the school district and alternative programs that the school system hires from create a curriculum that will increase the preparation and instructional knowledge of the teacher candidates. This will improve teacher performance and reduce teacher attrition.
2. Based on the findings, it is recommended that a policy change is made to increase the amount of daily planning time. A portion of this time needs to be

designated for teacher classroom planning. Scheduling meetings will not be permitted during this time. The amount of time given to teachers for planning inadequate. Teachers arrive early and stay late, and they still cannot effectively complete daily duties.

3. It is recommended that the school system creates a guideline for the criteria of hiring or selecting candidates for positions or leadership teams.
4. It is recommended that the school system create an incentive to attract male teachers to the system. These incentives could be initial hiring bonuses. This same practice is used for hiring science and math teachers.
5. It is recommended that all teachers are given a student discipline handbook that provides a breakdown of infractions and the consequences for each. This book should also provide guidance on how a discipline referral should be documented.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Further research can be done by adding more factors to the study that may influence teacher attrition in the selected school system based off of previous research.
2. Further research can be conducted by changing the participants. Future research may involve teachers that have left the school system to understand how the factors in this research influenced their decision to leave.

3. Further research can be done by conducting three focus groups. Each focus group will include teachers of the same school to examine the influences of teacher attrition for each school.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher perspectives on the nine factors, principal behavior, school climate, teacher responsibilities, teacher preparation, gender, salary, years teaching, discipline referrals, and relationships with colleagues, that influence teacher attrition in a Metropolitan Atlanta area school system.

The research indicated discipline referrals to be the most dissatisfying factor of the nine explored. The second most dissatisfying factor was teacher responsibilities. Focus group and individual interview participants provided profound insight into how the nine factors influence teacher attrition.

The participants' perspectives provided information that can aid the Metropolitan Atlanta school system in eliminating the underlying factors that contribute to teacher attrition. Recommendations were given to help in the development of strategies implemented to decrease the attrition rate based off the findings of this study.

APPENDIX A

Teacher Attrition Rates in a Selected School System

	2001			2002			2003		
	Left Teaching	Teaching in Another System	Total Teacher Attrition to the System (%)	Left Teaching	Teaching in Another System	Total Teacher Attrition to the System (%)	Left Teaching	Teaching in Another System	Total Teacher Attrition to the System (%)
Selected School System	10.7	6.4	*17.1*	13.8	4.6	*18.6*	14.6	2.8	*17.4*

	2004			2005		
	Left Teaching	Teaching in Another System	Total Teacher Attrition to the System (%)	Left Teaching	Teaching in Another System	Total Teacher Attrition to the System (%)
Selected School System	14.0	3.7	*17.8*	14.5	4.5	*19.0*

Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2007)

APPENDIX B

Approval Letter from School System

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Making A Difference

RESEARCH, PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY
130 TRINITY AVENUE, S.W., 7TH FLOOR
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-3624
PHONE: 404-802-2780
FAX: 404-802-1719

July 14, 2009

Ms. Fantara J. Houston
5532 Village Trace
Union City, GA 30291

Dear Ms. Houston:

Your request to conduct research, within the Atlanta Public Schools (APS), was reviewed by the Research Screening Committee in accordance with the guidelines. Your research study entitled, "Teacher Perceptions of the Factors which Influence Teacher Attrition in Three Elementary Schools in a Metropolitan Atlanta School System" was approved under the following conditions:

1. Your study involves 30 teachers from Dobbs Elementary School, Cleveland Elementary School, and Humphries Elementary School.
2. Your study is confined, in APS, and the previously mentioned schools. The principals have the final approval on whether research studies are conducted in their schools. You must obtain each principal's approval prior to beginning your research study. If a principal does not approve of your study or does not believe that it is in the best interest of the school to participate, you may select a comparable APS school as a replacement, with the principal's approval.
3. Your research design involves interviews to collect data on factors which influence teacher attrition. You must mail the questionnaire to the principal prior to your research process.
4. The data collection phase of your research study must be completed by the end of the 2009-2010 school year.
5. Activities related to your research study are intrinsic to the ongoing program at this school, but must not interfere with the instructional program in the core curriculum classes or with the state and local testing programs.
6. The confidentiality of students, teachers, other APS staff members, the schools, and the school system must be ensured in all research studies. Pseudonyms for people and the schools, as well as references to APS as "a large urban school system," are required in the title and text of your final report before publication or presentation outside of APS.
7. APS staff members can participate in your research study **only** on a voluntary basis.
8. If changes are made in the research design or in the instruments used, you must notify the Department of Research, Planning, and Accountability prior to beginning your study.

This letter serves as official notification of the approval of your proposed research study, pending the above conditions. Remember that a copy of the results of your completed study must be submitted to the Department of Research, Planning, and Accountability. Please contact me at (404) 802-2773 or kwhite@atlanta.k12.ga.us if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. White

Kevin J. White, M.A.
Demographer

KW:dd - #142

xc: Mr. Lester McKee
Mr. Michael Pitts
Ms. Rhonda Ware-Brazier
Ms. Dana Evans
Mr. Donald Clark

APPENDIX C

Letter to Principals

Dear _____:

My name is Fantara J. Houston and I am a doctoral student at Clark Atlanta University. I have recently been approved to conduct research in _____. My study is entitled, Teacher Perceptions of the Factors Which Influence Teacher Attrition in Three Elementary Schools in a Metropolitan Atlanta School System.

I am interested in your school's teachers participating in this study. The research requires 15 teachers from each school site to complete a school climate survey. Out of the fifteen teachers, five will be selected to participate in a focus group and an interview. The teacher's participation is solely on a volunteer basis and will be greatly appreciated for the completion of this study.

I have attached _____ letter of approval to conduct the study, participant letter of consent, and the school climate survey. The survey can be forwarded to the teachers; completed electronically, and emailed back to me at fhouston@atlanta.k12.ga.us. I will also provide hard copies of the survey for teachers who prefer completing the survey by paper. The teachers will have until September 16, 2009 to complete the survey. I will pick up the surveys on this date and inform the teachers of their selection to participate in the focus group and interviews by September 18, 2009. It is important that I meet these deadlines to complete the study in the time given by the university.

During the focus group and interview sessions, refreshments will be provided for their participation in the study. I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your time. I can be contacted at 404-683-4791.

Sincerely,

Fantara J. Houston, Ed.S
Doctoral Student
Clark Atlanta University

APPENDIX D

Participant Permission Letter and Consent

Researcher's Name: Fantara J. Houston

Institution: Clark Atlanta University

Department: Educational Leadership

Dissertation Title: Teacher Perceptions of School Leadership Interpersonal Skills, School Climate, Teacher Responsibility, Teacher Educational Preparation, and Gender in an Atlanta Metropolitan School System

I give Fantara J. Houston permission to use my statements from the focus group and interview. This interview will be used to collect data for a dissertation at Clark Atlanta University. The interview will provide the researcher with information that will help enhance the strategies used by school systems to improve teacher retention in a Metropolitan Atlanta area school system. I understand that my participation in this study is very important and my identity will be kept confidential.

Interviewee's Name _____

Interviewee Signature _____

Date _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

For further information, you may contact:

Institution: Clark Atlanta University
Department: Educational Leadership
Street Address: 223 James P. Brawley Dr.
City/State: Atlanta, Georgia
Zip Code: 30314
Phone: 404-880-8000

Advisor: Dr. Noran Moffett
Institution: Clark Atlanta University
Department: Educational Leadership
Phone: 404-880-8000

APPENDIX E

Survey Cover Letter

Dear Participants:

This is a survey for a study on teacher attrition focusing on the elementary school level conducted in _____. I am a doctoral student at Clark Atlanta University and in the data collection phase of my study. I would greatly appreciate your participation in my study by filling this quick survey out and returning it to the main office, where a box will be placed to collect it. It is very important that all survy items are answered. If there are any unanswered item, your survey will be invalid and will no be used in the study.

There is another phase to the study, the focus group and interview phase. If you are selected, I will need to have a way to get in touch with you. Please fill in your contact information at the bottom of this letter.

Once again, I want to thank you for your participation n my study.

Sincerely,

Fantara J.Houston, Ed.S.
Doctoral Student
Clark Atlanta University

Contact Information:

Name _____

Email _____

Phone Number _____

APPENDIX F

School Climate Survey 2009

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this examination o school climate. This survey is designed to inform school systems with data that will identify important factors that influence teacher attrition for the improvement of the educational organization. Your survey participation is important to collect accurate and valid data. This information will be used in a study on teacher attrition in a Metro-Atlanta Public school system.

Please indicate your perception on school climate by selecting very dissatisfied =1, dissatisfied = 2, satisfied = 3, very satisfied = 4.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Strongly Satisfied
Relationship with Colleagues				
1. The adults in the school support and respect each other.	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers do not feel threatened by voicing opinions.	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers maintain close professional relationships with one another.	1	2	3	4
4. Faculty and staff take responsibility to improve the school.	1	2	3	4
5. Teachers are given the opportunity for professional development.	1	2	3	4
6. Teachers feel comfortable addressing concerns about the school.	1	2	3	4

Appendix F (continued)

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Strongly Satisfied
School Facilities/School Climate				
7. The school is safe and secure for entire school body.	1	2	3	4
8. The school is kept clean and repairs are done in a timely manner.	1	2	3	4
Faculty –Student Interaction				
9. Teachers treat students fairly.	1	2	3	4
10. Students have pride in their school.	1	2	3	4
11. Teachers agree in school discipline procedures.	1	2	3	4
12. Teachers are able to build trusting relationships with students.	1	2	3	4
Student Discipline				
13. Students treat each other and teachers with respect.	1	2	3	4
14. Students are well behaved during classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4
15. Students obey the school rules.	1	2	3	4
16. Students are referred to administration for discipline rarely.	1	2	3	4
17. Administrators provide adequate support to discipline in the school building.	1	2	3	4

Appendix F (continued)

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Strongly Satisfied
Teacher-School Administration Interaction				
18. Administrator shows respect to teachers' teaching methods.	1	2	3	4
19. Administrator is intimidating during observations and evaluations.	1	2	3	4
20. Administrator provides guidance for teachers.	1	2	3	4
21. Administrator treats teachers equally and with respect.	1	2	3	4
22. Administration is very supportive and encouraging when conducting observations.	1	2	3	4
23. Teacher evaluations are conducted fairly and honestly.	1	2	3	4
24. Administrators involve teachers in decision-making.	1	2	3	4
25. Administrators are receptive to suggestions.	1	2	3	4
26. Administrators promote a friendly work environment.	1	2	3	4
Teacher Responsibilities				
27. You feel successful and competent working at my school.	1	2	3	4
28. To your knowledge, teachers in the building think that I am a good teacher.	1	2	3	4

Appendix F (continued)

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Strongly Satisfied
29. You are provided with enough planning time to be an effective teacher.	1	2	3	4
30. Your teacher load is reasonable.	1	2	3	4
31. The number of hours you work is reasonable.	1	2	3	4
32. The school schedule allows enough time for an effective instructional day.	1	2	3	4
33. You are treated like a professional.	1	2	3	4
34. Teachers are given adequate supplies to perform the duties of their job.	1	2	3	4
35. Paper work does not overshadow instructional planning.	1	2	3	4
36. Teachers are given fair notice of staff meetings.	1	2	3	4
37. Staff meetings occur too frequently and are too long.	1	2	3	4
Teacher Experience				
38. Years of experience have an effect on teacher attrition.	1	2	3	4
39. My experience has helped me as a classroom teacher.	1	2	3	4
Salary				
40. Teacher salary scale is fair.	1	2	3	4
41. Teachers salary has an affect on job satisfaction.	1	2	3	4

Appendix F (continued)

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Strongly Satisfied
42. Teacher salary is adequate for job duties performed.	1	2	3	4
Teacher Preparation				
43. My education prepared me to be successful in the classroom.	1	2	3	4

Answer the following questions by circling the letter the appropriate response.

44. How many years have you worked in this school system?

A. Less than a year
B. 1-5 years
C. 6-10 years
D. 11-15 years
E. 16-20 years
F. 21-25 years
G. 25-30 years
H. 31-40 years

45. What is your current assignment?

A. Kindergarten
B. First Grade
C. Second Grade
D. Third Grade
E. Fourth Grade
F. Fifth Grade
G. Special Education Class
H. EIP

46. How many years have you been in your current assignment?

A. 1-5 years
B. 6-10 years
C. 11-15 years
D. 16-20 years
E. 21-25 years
F. 26-30 years

Appendix F (continued)

47. What type of teacher preparation did you receive?

    A. Traditional- 4 year institution
    B. Post-Baccalaureate Program
    C. Internships/Alternative Programs

48. What is the highest degree you have earned?

    A. Bachelor
    B. Master
    C. Specialist
    D. Doctorate

49. What is your age range?

    A. 25 & Below
    B. 26-30
    C. 31-40
    D. 41-50
    E. 51 & Over

50. What is your gender?

    A. Male
    B. Female

51. How long do you plan to teach?

    A. Plan to leave as soon as I can
    B. Teach until a better opportunity becomes available
    C. Teach until I am eligible for retirement
    D. Teach until regular retirement eligibility
    E. Remain until forced to retire

52. What are your plans for next school year?

    A. I plan to stay.
    B. I plan to transfer within the school system.
    C. I plan to leave the school system.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey

APPENDIX G

Focus Group Questions

Gender

1. What do you believe makes women teachers more attracted to the teaching profession than males?

2. What do you think about male teachers being reported to be more likely to leave the teaching profession than female teachers?

Teacher Preparation

1. Do you think the type of preparation program a teacher received training from can predict if they will be successful in the classroom?

2. What is your position on teacher preparation being influential in teacher attrition?

Principal Behaviors

1. How do you feel about the principal behaviors you have seen in your district that would contribute to the high rate of teacher attrition?

2. Do you think the school principals possess the skills that can make the organization successful?

Teacher Responsibility

1. Do you think your workload is reasonable and realistic in the time frame allotted in a day? Why or why not?

2. What are some duties that you think could be reduced or eliminated to help teachers be more effective in completing tasks?

3. What is your position on teacher responsibility being a major influence in the high rate of teacher attrition in your school system?

Appendix G (continued)

School Climate

1. Do you feel school climate is a major factor for teachers deciding to leave? Why or why not?

Teaching Experience

1. Do you believe teaching experience predicts if a teacher will leave or stay in this school system?

2. Do you feel teaching experience is a major factor influencing the high teaching attrition rate in your school system?

Salary

1. Do you feel salary is a big factor in your school district? If not, why are teachers leaving in large numbers?

Discipline Referrals

1. How would you describe the student behavior in your school system?

2. Do you think student discipline is a main factor for so many teachers leaving the school system? Why or why not?

Teacher Relationships

1. How would you describe the interaction between the teachers in your school building?

2. Do teachers feel comfortable discussing school business amongst themselves?

3. Are teachers willing to work together? Or is it more of a competitive relationship?

APPENDIX H

Interview Questions

Gender

1. How do you think gender has an effect on the teaching field?
2. How did your gender influence your decision on becoming a teacher?
3. What impact do male teachers have on the profession?
4. Why do you think there are such small numbers of men in the educational field?

Teacher Preparation

1. Why did you choose to teach in your school system?
2. How beneficial was the program in your preparation for the classroom?
3. Do you feel it is important to participate in a teacher preparation program? Why?
4. How much training is needed to ensure a teacher is prepared to work in this school system?

Principal Behaviors

1. What type of behaviors does your principal display while interacting with the teachers and students in the building?
2. How does this behavior effect the school environment?
3. How does the faculty respond to the behaviors of the principal?
4. Is this behavior consistent with the administration throughout the district? If not, how would you describe it?
5. Do you think principal behavior is influential in teacher attrition?

Appendix H (continued)

Teacher Responsibility

1. How would you describe the workload for teachers in your school district?

2. Are teachers provided with an adequate amount of time to complete duties and planning? What do you consider and adequate amount of planning?

3. Does the workload allow you to be effective in the classroom?

School Climate

1. How would you describe the climate in your school?

2. What are some factors that have an effect on the climate at your school?

3. Do you think school system's climate is has influence on the high attrition rate?

Attrition

1. Have you ever considered leaving your school system?

2. What were some of the influences that were guiding your decision?

3. How would you describe the type of teachers that have chosen to leave?

4. What do you think the factors were that motivated them to leave?

5. Did the teachers that decided to leave go to another school or leave the teaching profession all together?

Teaching Experience

1. How have your years of experience affected your perception of the teaching profession?

2. How does experience affect teachers in deciding to stay or leave the teaching profession?

3. Do you feel there is a certain group that is leaving? What groups have you observed to be more likely to leave?

Appendix H (continued)

Salary

1. Does your salary accurately compensate the amount of work you put into teaching?

2. Do you think believe that salary is prime influence in deciding to leave the school system?

3. Are teachers leaving the system to earn higher salaries?

Teacher Relationships

1. Do the teachers in your school have positive relationships?

2. Is everyone engaged in activities and willingly work as a team?

3. Do you think teachers leave the school system because they feel alienated in their schools?

Discipline Referrals

1. How is the student discipline in your school?

2. How would the student behavior influence a teacher's decision to leave or stay?

3. How would describe the discipline in the school system/ If a problem, is the severity enough to make teachers leave? Why?

APPENDIX I

Analysis of Perceptions on School Climate

Variables	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Strongly Satisfied (%)
Teacher Relationships with Colleagues				
1. The adults in the school support and respect each other.	3.3	6.7	56.7	33.3
2. Teachers do not feel threatened by voicing opinions.	6.7	36.7	36.7	20.0
3. Teachers maintain close professional relationships with one another.	3.3	10.0	56.7	30.0
4. Faculty and staff take responsibility to improve the school.	-	6.7	73.3	20.0
5. Teachers are given the opportunity for professional development.	-	3.3	50.0	46.7
6. Teachers feel comfortable addressing concerns about the school.	10.0	30.0	50.0	10.0
School Facilities/School Climate				
7. The school is safe and secure for entire school body.		.16.7	66.7	16.7
8. The school is kept clean and repairs are done in a timely manner.	3.3	23.3	60.0	13.3

Appendix I (continued)

Variables	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Strongly Satisfied (%)
Faculty/Students Interaction				
9. Teachers treat students fairly.	3.3	3.3	66.7	26.7
10. Students have pride in their school.	-	20.0	70.0	10.0
11. Teachers agree with school discipline procedures.	6.7	33.3	50.0	10.0
12. Teachers are able to build trusting relationships with students.	-	3.3	63.3	33.3
Student Discipline				
13. Students treat each other and teachers with respect.	-	53.3	36.7	10.0
14. Students are well behaved during classroom instruction.	3.3	36.7	53.3	6.7
15. Students obey the school rules.	3.3	40.0	43.3	13.3
16. Students are referred to administration for discipline rarely.	3.3	23.3	66.7	6.7
17. Administration provides adequate support to discipline in the school building.	6.7	30.0	43.3	20.0
Teacher/School Administration Interaction				
19. Administrator is intimidating during observations and evaluations	16.7	20.0	43.3	20.0
20. Administrator provides guidance for teachers.	3.3	16.7	56.7	23.3
Teacher Responsibilities				
21. Administrator treats teachers equally and with respect.	-	23.3	43.3	33.3

Appendix I (continued)

Variables	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Strongly Satisfied (%)
22. Administration is very supportive and encouraging when conducting observations.	-	20	46.7	33.3
23. Teacher evaluations are conducted fairly and honestly.	-	13.3	53.3	33.3
24. Administrators involve teachers indecision-making.	3.3	36.7	36.7	23.3
25. Administrators are receptive to suggestions.	3.3	26.7	53.5	16.7
26. Administrators promote a friendly work environment.	3.3	13.3	53.3	30.0
27. You feel successful and competent working at my school.	-	16.7	60.0	23.3
28. To your knowledge, teachers in the building think that I am a good teacher.	-	10.0	63.3	26.7
29. You are provided with enough planning time to be an effective teacher.	13.3	36.7	43.3	6.7
30. Your workload is reasonable.	10.0	36.7	40.0	13.3
31. The number of hours you work is reasonable.	13.3	33.3	46.7	6.7
32. The school schedule allows enough time for an effective instructional day.	10.0	30.0	50.0	10.0
33. You are treated like a professional.	-	16.7	46.7	36.7
34. Teachers are given adequate supplies to perform the duties of their job.	16.7	23.3	43.3	16.7

Appendix I (continued)

Variables	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Strongly Satisfied (%)
35. Paperwork does not overshadow instructional planning.	13.3	63.3	20.0	3.3
36. Teachers are given fair notice of staff meetings.	-	16.7	60	23.3
37. Staff meetings occur too frequently and are too long.	16.7	26.7	50.0	6.7
Teacher Experience				
38. Years of experience have an effect on teacher attrition.	3.3	20.0	60.0	16.7
39. My experience has helped me as a classroom teacher.		3.3	56.7	40.0
Salary				
40. Teacher salary scale is fair.	6.7	20.0	63.3	10.0
41. Teacher salary has an affect on job satisfaction	6.7	13.3	66.7	13.3
42. Teacher salary is adequate for job duties performed.	10.0	30.0	56.7	3.3
Teacher Preparation				
43. My education prepared me to be successful in the classroom.	-	13.3	36.7	50.0

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