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Retaining Quality Teachers

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Executive Summary
Retaining Quality Teachers

At this time, when the need for good teachers and good teaching is unprecedented, America is experiencing a shortage of qualified individuals prepared to take on the challenges of the profession, particularly in critical shortage areas, such as math and science or special education. Moreover, there is continuing concern that professionals are leaving the teaching field much earlier in their careers than are professionals from other fields. The National Center for Education Statistics (1997c) reports that across the nation 9.3% of public school teachers leave before they complete their first year in the classroom and over 1/5 of public school teachers leave their positions within their first three years of teaching. Additionally, nearly 30% of teachers leave the profession within five years of entry and even higher attrition rates exist in more disadvantaged schools (Delgado, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Ingersoll (1998) concludes that it is a mistake to assume that hiring difficulties are the result of teacher shortages in the conventional sense of the availability of candidates willing to enter the profession. The demand for new teachers comes about primarily because teachers choose to move from or leave their jobs at far higher rates than do professionals in many other occupations (NCES, 1998). "We're misdiagnosing the problem as 'recruitment' when it's really 'retention'" (Merrow, 1999, p. 64). In the fifth Phi Delta Kappa poll of teachers' attitudes toward the public schools, findings revealed that more teachers today say their schools have trouble retaining teachers (Langdon, 1999).

This study was commissioned to identify those variables affecting teacher retention and attrition and to identify effective strategies for retaining quality teachers for Virginia schools.

THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was three-fold:

1. To use qualitative, in-depth interviews and focus groups of teachers currently working in Richmond metropolitan area public schools. This facet of the study sought to identify reasons teachers were remaining in their school divisions, reasons they felt their colleagues had left their school divisions (or the teaching profession), and perceptions of teachers regarding local school division teacher retention strategies.
2. To use an administrative survey to obtain through central office contacts their perceptions of school divisions' teacher retention strategies.
3. To use qualitative, phone interviews of teachers who left their school divisions in the 1999-2000 or 2000-2001 school years to identify their reasons for leaving.

FINDINGS

Focus Groups

Findings from the teacher in-depth interviews and focus groups revealed that teacher attrition and retention variables are highly interrelated. Perceived reasons for colleagues leaving and reasons for teachers themselves staying, often acted as inverse variables (for example, a teacher left because of poor administration and remained because of quality administration). Findings vary somewhat by teaching assignment, with special education teachers showing trends of moving to regular education, reporting that more teachers are leaving because of problems with unsupportive staff and parents, and more concerns with paperwork. Secondary math and science teachers reported that colleagues left for other employment opportunities. Elementary teachers reported a greater lack of planning time than did secondary or special education teachers, and perceived that this was a factor in their colleagues' decisions to leave. It should be noted, however, that while reasons for leaving or staying vary somewhat by elementary, secondary, and special education teachers, themes seem to be across these groups rather than within them.

Teacher attrition and retention is complex, with reasons for leaving or staying often related to individual factors, yet, common themes and patterns are evident. Of the 42 teachers interviewed, almost half reported that they remained in their current position because of a commitment to

children and/or the profession. Of some concern was that 25% of the teachers in the sample informed researchers that they were currently "looking elsewhere" for career opportunities. Teachers gave reasons they perceived that their colleagues were leaving the profession. Among some of the major themes mentioned by teachers that impact a teacher's decision to leave include the following. They are listed hierarchically with the most influential variable listed first.

1. Salary and Benefits
2. External Employment Opportunities
3. Building Level Administration
   Subthemes:
   a) Spending Time in Classrooms/Visibility
   b) Listening to Teachers' Needs and Positions
   c) Professional Development
   d) Resources and Supplies
   e) Understanding Special Needs Children
   f) Teacher Placement Practices
4. District Level Administration
   Subthemes:
   a) Spending Time in Classrooms/Visibility
   b) Last-minute Meetings or Paperwork
   c) Professional Development
   d) Resources and Supplies
5. Planning Time/Workload
6. Class Size
7. SOL Impact
8. Lack of Parental Support
9. Discipline and Student Attitudes
10. Family
11. Teacher Stress/Fatigue

Teachers in the focus group interviews perceived that the most prevalent teacher retention strategy being used by their school divisions was mentoring, followed by new teacher raises and teacher seminars or meetings. Teachers expressed marked frustration when teachers at the "bottom of the pay scale" were offered salaries only slightly less than those of experienced teachers.

Administrator Survey

Results of the central office contact surveys revealed that all 7 MERC school divisions were offering new teacher salary increases, with six divisions employing this retention strategy *extensively.* New teacher salary increases were being employed and emphasized slightly more than mentorship for new teachers. Besides the most frequently reported strategies of mentorship and new teacher salaries, most divisions (5 or 6) described additional teacher retention strategies as experienced teacher salary raises, increased resources and supplies, reductions in class size, teacher decision-making with curriculum and student assessment, increased collegiality, and tuition reimbursement. With the exception of tuition reimbursement, the divisions' reports of teacher retention strategies are not consistent with the teacher focus group data. Most teachers in the focus groups felt slighted by significantly higher new teacher salary raises, and reported that resources and supplies were inadequate, class sizes and caseloads too large, and their curriculum decision-making limited. What is telling about the data is that, generally, most divisions (5) were not offering increased planning time, opportunities for peer evaluation, reduced paperwork, support for working with parents, or financial support for National Board Certification. For five school divisions, these teacher retention strategies were employed *to a very small extent* or *not at all.* For these variables, there is an apparent mismatch between what teachers need and what divisions are offering.

Exiting Teacher Telephone Interviews

When telephone interviewees were asked "What was the number one reason you chose to leave your former school division or the teaching profession?", about one fourth of the individuals could not pinpoint a single driving reason. Some respondents offered two or more reasons. Top reasons included the following, with the most reported reason listed first: *lack of administrative support, the SOL, hectic/stressful schedules, insufficient salary* and *no opportunities for job sharing/childrearing.* Also mentioned by only one or two teachers was large *caseloads.*

A total of 7 exiting teachers reported that issues related to administration caused them to leave, a finding strongly supported by teacher focus group reports. Two reports pertained to a lack of district level support, and five related to problems with building principals. Four respondents left

solely because of the focus on the SOLs. Two left because of the "stressful" or "hectic" nature of their schedules and the hours of work involved, a finding related to the lack of planning time reported in the teacher focus groups. Two left because they wanted to spend more time with their children and families, and there were no opportunities for job sharing. One teacher moved to go to another school division that offered job sharing, stating that "job sharing cut the number of her students in half", and that prior to this, "[she] didn't feel she was doing a good job with her students or at home." Two individuals (both male) left because of insufficient salary. One individual left because his caseloads for special education were too large and because he could make more money teaching in a different school division. A former 8th-grade science teacher went into pharmaceutical sales because his wife had a baby, and remained at home. His "priorities shifted to concerns of pay".

What is consistent across all facets of the study---the teacher focus groups, the central office administrator surveys, and the exiting teacher telephone interviews—are the findings that insufficient salary, lack of administrative support, and lack of planning time are the top reasons that teachers leave the profession. These factors not only lead to teachers' sense of professionalism and improved levels of job satisfaction, but ultimately increase the likelihood of teachers' remaining in their school divisions.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have policy implications for teacher retention in public schools. First, it is important not only to raise teacher salaries across the board but also to build a differential salary scale. As important as salary, however, teachers' work conditions must be improved. Teachers interviewed in this study provided recommendations for how school divisions can offer environmental and professional support including: increased responsibilities for educational decisions, increased planning time, repair and upgrading of school buildings, increased resources and supplies, increased opportunities for collegiality among teachers, professional development activities, support for student discipline, and reduced class sizes.

Clearly, if school divisions wish to improve teacher retention, targeted efforts to increase building level and district level administrative support should be priority. After administrative support, polices to improve teacher planning time and to reduce class size should follow. Also of concern is how school divisions are dealing with pressures from the SOL. Teachers in this study clearly expressed support for standards, but not for the high-stakes assessment aspect of the SOL. While the SOL is an issue of state policy, teachers articulated that the local decisions diminished creativity in the classroom and assigned unfair accountability to teachers. Other concerns were in the areas of parental support and student discipline and attitudes.

One or more of these organizational influences inevitably leads to teacher stress and burnout. Such a state causes teachers to engage in what Kirby and Grissmer (1993) term the *human capital theory*, whereby individuals make systematic assessments of the costs and benefits of staying in or leaving the profession. They will revisit their early commitment to the profession, the realities of the nature of teaching, and the pay. Should the risks in the organization be minimal, teachers' levels of stress and burnout will be minimal. Teachers will experience career satisfaction. Should the risks be greater, teachers may respond by leaving the teaching profession or by moving to another school division. They will respond, as many of the exiting teachers did that "it is not worth it for the pay". Recurring patterns of "teacher shortages" have been characteristic of a market-driven economy, and in times of economic growth, they may pursue alternatives in the private sector, or, if they have some financial flexibility, may remain at home with children. If teachers perceive that other divisions do not have the same contextual problems, they may move. Whether exiting teachers are defined as movers or leavers, school divisions may be forced to accommodate imbalances in their personnel by recruiting teachers who are less qualified or who lack formal qualifications. When teachers leave their school divisions or the teaching profession, the discontinuity of staff can be a major inhibitor to the efficacy of individual schools in promoting the development and achievement of its student body.

RETAINING QUALITY TEACHERS

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Preface

This is the final report of a project sponsored by the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium. The Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC) is a collaborative research effort in central Virginia which involves Virginia Commonwealth University and seven surrounding school districts: Chesterfield County, Colonial Heights City, Hanover County, Henrico County, Hopewell City, Powhatan County, and Richmond City. This study was initiated in 1999 to provide information on how to retain quality teachers in Virginia. The project was directed by a research team that included representatives from each of the MERC public school systems and professors and a MERC Researcher from Virginia Commonwealth University. This included the design and implementation of the study. The final report reflects findings as interpreted by the research team and do not constitute official policy or position by Virginia Commonwealth University.

Research Team

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RETAINING QUALITY TEACHERS

LITERATURE REVIEW OF TEACHER ATTRITION

External Factors in Teacher Attrition

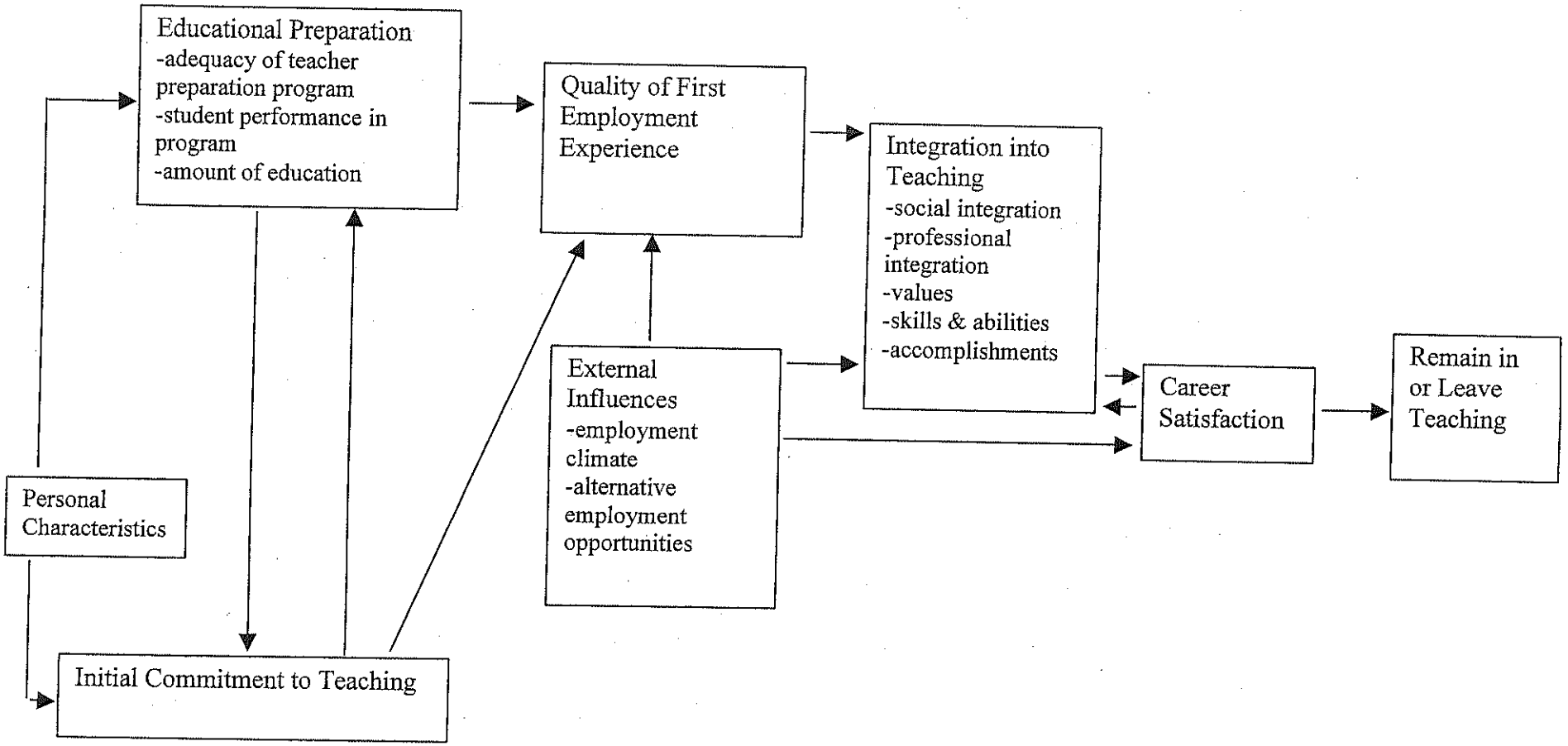
Local school districts may have little or no control over some factors that cause teachers to leave the profession. These factors include salaries, relocation, the individual's initial commitment to teaching, the individual's pre-service training, the external employment climate, and retirement.

Low salaries have been linked to higher rates of teacher attrition, yet regarding the degree to which they are linked, results are mixed (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Gritz and Theobold, 1996; NCES, 1997a; Murnane, Singer & Willett, 1989). In an NCES (1997) study, teachers identified low salaries as the second most common reason for leaving the profession. Langdon's (1999) survey, however, indicated that low pay was first on the list of reasons for difficulties in recruiting and retaining good teachers. Shen (1997) also found that the amount of annual salary for teachers was positively correlated with teacher retention. Virginia falls below the national average for teacher salaries. Wermers (2001) points out that Virginia falls below the national average for teacher salaries. Virginia teachers are paid an average salary of $40, 197, over $2,500 below the national average of $42, 717. Although opinion polls show that taxpayers would like teachers to be paid more (Haselkorn & Harris, 1998), resources available to schools have not increased enough to raise salaries to "competitive" levels across the profession.

NCES (1997) found that of those teachers who leave teaching, 35% do so because they relocate. Teachers, however, are less willing to relocate to obtain a job than other professionals because the financial payoff is less (Newman, 1998). Shen (1997) found that less experienced teachers relocate more often than those with more experience. Experienced teachers who move may find themselves penalized by loss of seniority and wages, as well as their vested pension plans, because of state policies based on local rather than national labor markets (NASBE, 1998).

While the early attrition of teachers is due to a complex array of variables, there are some data proposing that an individual's initial commitment to teaching is a contributing factor. (Chapman, 1983, 1984; Chapman & Green, 1986; Odell & Ferraro, 1992). The studies reveal a social learning model of the multiple influences on teacher retention. The model suggests that the roots of long-term teacher retention are longitudinal and harken back to the teachers' early commitments to teaching (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A Suggested Model of the Influences Associated with Teacher Attrition



Source: Chapman, D. W. (1984). Teacher Retention. The test of a model. *American Educational Research Journal, 21*(3), 645-658.

Theoretical Approaches

There are essentially two approaches to studying teacher retention and attrition. The first approach, multivariate or theoretical, inquires into a set of variables simultaneously to test theories explaining why teachers choose to stay in or leave the profession. The second, the bivariate approach, inquires into the relationship between retention/attrition and another variable.

The human capital theory, falling under the first approach, (Arnold et al., 1993; Kirby & Grissmer, 1993) posits that individuals make systematic assessment of benefits and costs of entering and staying in a profession. This suggests that teachers consider monetary (income, promotion, other benefits) and non-monetary (such as workplace conditions, relationships with coworkers, hours and workload) factors in making career decisions alongside considering the costs involved in retraining for a new occupation and income foregone during the process. Thus, individuals change positions based on "maximization of net returns, taking into account both benefits and costs" (Arnold et al., 1993, p. 26). In staying in a position one often accrues knowledge, skills and contacts that are relevant to that occupation, an investment in that location (e.g. home ownership) and knowledge and /or seniority within a particular institution. It is argued that as these capitals increase, the less likely a teacher is to leave.

Other theories have been built to explain teacher attrition and retention. Chapman (1984) and Chapman and Green (1986) found that teachers differed in personal characteristics, educational experience/initial commitment, professional integration into teaching, external influences, and career satisfaction. These researchers concluded that teacher retention/attrition is a result of the social learning process. Theobald (1990) found that a decision to continue teaching in the same school district was negatively related to property wealth of the community and positively related to salary. His was a theory of teachers as economically rational decision makers.

The bivariate approach is more prevalent in the literature. One of the most comprehensive studies on teacher attrition was conducted by Murnane et al.(1991) who determined the following: teacher attrition is high in the first years, mature women stay and younger women

Research Journal, 21(3), 645-658.

leave; elementary school teacher stay the longest periods, whereas chemistry and physics teachers stay the shortest times; teachers with high test scores are more likely to leave earlier; teachers who are paid more stay longer; regardless of race, teachers who work in large urban districts tend to have shorter teaching careers than do teachers working in smaller suburban districts; and, after controlling for district difference, Black teachers are less likely than White teachers to leave teaching.

In addition to salary, other factors studied include teacher/student ratio, teachers' involvement in decision-making, administrative support, teaching level, student characteristics, and school location. Teacher retention was found to be positively correlated with a larger student/teacher ratio (Theobald, 1990), more involvement in decision-making by teachers (Bacharach, 1990; Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1983), and having more support from the administration (Bobbitt, Faupel, & Bums, 1991; Metzke, 1988). Also, teachers at the secondary level leave teaching sooner than those at the elementary level (Heyns, 1988; Keith, Warren, & Dilts, 1983; Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1989). Secondary teachers also have higher attrition rates in urban schools (Corcoran, Walker, & White, 1988; Haberman, 1987), where new teachers have difficulty learning how to work effectively with urban students (Grant, 1989).

In 1997, Shen combined the strengths of the multivariate and bivariate approaches using a nationally representative sample. The results supported previous findings. First, teachers with less experience tend to move or leave, whereas more experienced teachers tend to stay; second, the amount of salary was positively correlated with teacher retention, and third, empowering teachers and giving them more influence over school and teaching policies are also associated with teacher retention. Lastly, an appreciation of intrinsic merits of the teaching profession was found to help teachers remain in teaching.

Job Satisfaction and Work Environment (Internal Factors)

Most of the studies on teacher retention focus largely on teacher personal characteristics. Ingersoll (2001), however, found that school characteristics and organizational conditions, including lack of administrative support, salary, student discipline and motivation, class size,

inadequate planning time, and lack of opportunity for advancement, have significant effects on teacher turnover, even after controlling for the characteristics of both teachers and schools.

School districts do exercise influence over several internal factors in the teacher attrition puzzle. For both beginning and veteran teachers, issues in the work environment may provide the impetus for teachers leaving the profession. The large numbers of students assigned to classrooms, limited instructional resources, and the inability to meet students' needs (Billingsley & Cross, 1992) have been associated with teacher attrition. Futrell (1999) describes the frustration that many teachers feel because of the "rigid, bureaucratic hierarchy in which teachers are treated like tall children rather than like professionals" (p. 31). A lack of authority in making decisions about curriculum, assessment, scheduling, and policy leads both experienced and novice teachers to doubt their professional status. Snider (1999) asserts that many new teachers are demoralized by the lack of autonomy and professional status they find in the schools and "as many as one-half of all new teachers respond by leaving the profession" (p. 64).

Work environment clearly leads to levels of teacher job satisfaction. Researchers have linked a number of aspects of job satisfaction to teacher retention, and there is general agreement that all of these aspects are a part of the teacher retention puzzle. Among these are administrative leadership and support (Betancourt-Smith, Inman, & Marlow, 1994; Chittom & Sistrunk, 1990; Billingsley, 1993), salary (Kim & Loadman, 1994; Kirby & Grissmer, 1993), and interaction and emotional support from mentors and colleagues (Kim & Loadman, 1994; Billingsley, 1993; Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Relationships with parents and families (Shann, 1998; Billingsley, 1993) and with students (Shann, 1998; Kim & Loadman, 1994) were also identified as components of teacher satisfaction. Finally, teachers indicated that professional challenge and autonomy (Shann, 1998; Kim & Loadman, 1994), as well as opportunities for advancement (Kim & Loadman, 1994), were related to their job satisfaction.

In the literature, job satisfaction is often equated with work conditions, which appear to play a key role in keeping teachers in the field. After interviewing and surveying 59 experienced teachers, Yee (1990) found that teachers highly involved in their work attributed their decision to stay in teaching more to supportive work conditions than to pay; other highly involved teachers

reported unsupportive workplace conditions as the main reason they left the field. Supportive work conditions included appropriate workload, opportunities for collegial interaction, professional development, participation in decision-making, and support for student discipline. Findings on teachers in general show that administrative support and teacher autonomy play a large part in shaping teachers' attitudes toward teaching; and that teachers who control the terms of their work are more likely to feel more committed to the field (Andermann, Belzer & Smith, 1991, Blasé & Kirby, 1992; Conley, 1991; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Fullan, 1992; Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989a,b, Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Turk, Meeks & Turk, 1982; Yee, 1990).

Both novice and experienced teachers describe student discipline as a major concern. Langdon's (1996) survey determined that discipline was the primary reason teachers left the profession. Findings of the National Center for Education Statistics (1997c) also support that teachers are more likely to leave the profession if they believe that student motivation and discipline are problems in their schools.

Time, according to Darling-Hammond (1996), may also be a concern of teachers at all levels. Most secondary teachers in the U.S. have around five hours each week to prepare for six hours of classes each day. Elementary teachers typically have even less preparation time—three or fewer hours per week. Teachers, therefore, do not have time to meet with other teachers, develop curriculum or assessments, or observe one another's classes--all important activities for professional growth and development. They take papers home at night to grade and conference with students and families outside of contract hours.

In the 1986 Metropolitan Life Survey of Former Teachers in America, 57% of those surveyed described the "great stress" under which they worked in the classroom. Weil (1997), describing his own classroom teacher's perspective, agrees that teaching is stressful. He believes that teachers labor under the unreasonable expectation that the schools "will compensate for our nation's inability to cope with many of its problems" (p. 763). That expectation requires teachers to be experts not only in pedagogy and content, but also in counseling, educational policy and social reform.

Research on Teachers Most At-risk of Leaving

Additional research on improving retention of special education teachers is needed because teachers in this field are particularly at-risk. Cooley (1996) conducted a survey of 158 special education teachers to determine their plans for remaining in or leaving their current teaching positions. Only 57% indicated it likely they would still be teaching in five years. Data were analyzed to determine variables that differed significantly between teachers likely to stay in their positions and those likely to leave. The results of these analyses, along with teachers' written comments, suggest that administrative support played an important role in teachers' five-year plans.

Many of the highest teacher attrition rates in the nation are in urban districts (Adams & Dial, 1993). Common reasons cited by teachers for this attrition are lack of administrative, collegial, and parent support, lack or resources, and insufficient involvement in decision-making (Billingsley, 1993). The latter reason is consistent with data reported by Lippmann, Burns, McArthur, Burton, Smith, & Kaufman (1996), who found that urban teachers generally report having less influence over their curriculum than do teachers in suburban and rural schools.

Professional Development and Mentorship

Many first year teachers experience overwhelming isolation as they leave the support of student teaching cohorts, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors to work with children behind the closed door of a classroom. Leaving the support to which they were accustomed in their training may shatter the goals, diminish the spirits, and destroy the self-confidence of first year teachers. New teachers need assistance with both long- and short-range planning, transitioning children from one activity to another, including children with special needs or language differences, and working with parents. This assistance can best be provided by more experienced teachers who are working or have recently worked toward similar goals in similar settings.

Recognizing the importance of supporting teachers during their first years in the classroom, several states have developed mentoring programs. In California, the Beginning Teacher

Support and Assessment (Olebe, Jackson, & Danielson, 1999) program is based on the premise that teachers learn good practices through several years of study, consultation with experienced peers, and reflective practices. The Kentucky Internship Program (Brennan, Thames, & Roberts, 1999) provides guidance for new teachers through structured assistance and assessment by an experienced teacher, a university representative, and the school principal. Mentored beginning teachers seem to evince more competency and motivation than teachers without mentors (Huling-Austin, 1990).

Numerous quality induction programs and projects from the 1980s to current day, report that after five years, their inductees had remained in the profession (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Hegler & Dudley, 1987; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Odell, 1986; Summers, 1987). These reports are encouraging since, in numerous studies and models of teacher attrition, researchers identify novice teachers as the most at-risk of leaving (Chapman, 1984; Chapman & Green, 1986; Kim & Loadman, 1994; Marlow, Inman,& Smith, 1997; NCES, 1997c; Odell & Ferraro, 1992). These studies have also attempted to explain the relationship between mentoring and beginning teacher attrition. For example, interaction and emotional support from mentors and colleagues are key issues in decisions made by beginning teachers to stay or leave the profession (Kim & Loadman, 1994; Billingsley, 1993; Odell & Ferraro, 1992).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary purpose of this research was to investigate the phenomenon of teacher attrition and retention. The research questions included the following:

1. What reasons do teachers give for staying in their school division?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding reasons their colleagues have left the school division or the profession?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding school division retention strategies?
4. What do school divisions report doing to retain teachers in the first five years?
5. What reasons do teachers give for leaving their divisions or the profession during their first five years?

METHODOLOGY

The literature review reveals that quantitative data on teacher retention derived from surveys and/or government statistics dominate the literature, while in-depth qualitative studies are lacking to explain the complexities of teachers' career decisions. Few studies have offered research from a sociological perspective. The research questions for this study can best be answered with qualitative methodology. Focus group interviews were conducted to provide greater depth into the reasons teachers remain in or leave their school divisions or the teaching profession. Focus groups were conducted with teachers who have primarily been in their school divisions less than 8 years. This benchmark was important, for while the national data reports most teachers leaving at the five-year mark, the seven participating school divisions in this study report most teachers leaving at the seven-year mark. The interviews were semi-structured, with prompts as appropriate to encourage teachers to offer examples and further details regarding initial responses. A *Teacher Retention Focus Group Discussion Guide* was used that included topics such as personal perspectives of staying, personal perspectives of why their colleagues are leaving, and perceptions of school division retention strategies.

Two additional methods were conducted to triangulate findings from the focus groups. First, a *Central Office Administrator Survey* was mailed to seven area school division directors of personnel. It asked them to use a Likert Scale to rate the degree to which they employed teacher retention strategies. There were also two open-ended questions. Finally, an *Exiting Teacher Telephone Interview Protocol* was used. School division directors of personnel sent researchers a list of teachers who left their school divisions in the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years. Teachers were randomly selected from each of the MERC school divisions, and were phoned to obtain data.

Participants

Focus Groups

A stratified random sample was selected from seven school divisions in central Virginia representing urban, suburban, and rural localities. Teachers were identified by asking study team members—who were also directors of personnel in the school divisions--- to randomly select

teachers from three groups (teaching assignments) who had less than eight years of experience. The three groups of teachers, selected to offer a broad perspective across grade levels and critical shortage subject areas, were are as follows:

1. Elementary teachers
2. Middle and secondary math or science teachers
3. Special education teachers (all levels)

Each director of personnel was asked to provide the names and addresses of 12 teachers (4 per teaching assignment area) who met the criteria. Smaller divisions sent less because they had fewer teachers who met the criteria. These teachers were mailed a letter describing the study, and a consent form requesting participation. Sixty-six letters were sent, and 22 forms were returned. These teachers participated in focus groups. For school divisions where participation was low, researchers contacted the study team members for additional teachers' names. Again, these teachers were sent a letter describing the study and a consent form requesting participation. To accommodate schedules of teachers, teachers were interviewed in small groups, and in five cases, individually. This resulted in an additional 20 teachers, for a total of forty-two teachers, 14 elementary, 14 math/science, and 14 special education (See Table 1 below).

Table 1: Demographic Summary of Teacher Focus Group Participants

Grade Level/Area	Total	M	F	<8 yrs. Exp.	>7 yrs. Exp.
Elementary	14	1	13	12	1
Secondary (Math/Science)	14	4	10	10	4
Special Education	14	3	11	12	2
Total	42	8	34	35	7

Central Office Administrators

Central Office Administrators were purposefully selected to complete the Central Office Administrator Survey. Study team members from local school divisions were asked to have the individual "who knew the most about teacher retention strategies" at their administrative offices complete the form. Because sizes of local participating divisions varied, positions of individuals

ultimately completing forms varied. In either case, individuals' titles were one of the following: Director/Specialist of Human Resources/Personnel or Assistant Superintendent. All seven MERC school divisions returned surveys.

Exiting Teachers

Study team members provided assistance by mailing researchers a list of all teachers who had left their school divisions in the last two years. Because of the varied, and often limited nature of databases kept by some school divisions, it was not possible, on a consistent basis, to purposefully select exiting teachers by grade level or by years of experience taught before random selection took place. From lists provided from study team members, teachers were simply randomly selected for the telephone interviews and demographic data was obtained at that time. A demographic summary of exiting teacher participants is presented in Table 2. Telephone interviews were conducted at different times of the day and evening to accommodate varying schedules of prospective participants. Each individual contacted agreed to participate in a telephone interview regarding teacher retention before the interview began, and each individual was assured that responses were confidential. Each interview took approximately fifteen minutes. A total of 23 exiting interviews were conducted, with representation of at least three former teachers from the seven MERC school divisions.

Table 2: Demographic Summary of Exiting Teachers

Grade Level/Area	Total	M	F
Elementary	7	0	7
Secondary	9	2	7
Special Education	7	2	5
Total	**23**	**4**	**19**

Procedures

A *Teacher Retention Focus Group Discussion Guide* was developed by the research team (Appendix A). A draft of the discussion guide was pilot tested by two members of the research

team with two teachers identified through the selection process. Discussion guide questions included the following questions:

- Why do you choose to stay in your current teaching position?
- Why do you think teachers leave your school division? Why do you think teachers leave the profession?
- What does your school division currently do to retain teachers in the first five years?
- Which of these strategies do you think are most/least effective?
- What is the number one thing your school division could do to keep good teachers in the classroom? What other things could your school division do?
- How do veteran teachers influence teachers with less experience to stay in the classroom?
- What types of opportunities and support would encourage teachers to stay in your school division/the teaching profession?
- How should we recognize individual teachers for their commitment to the profession? For their excellence in teaching?
- What else is important to keeping teachers in the classroom?

The interviewers consisted of one university professor and two graduate assistants. The university professor and both of the graduate assistants had previous experience and training in conducting interviews. Further training was provided for the other graduate assistant. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for analysis.

The *Central Office Administrator Survey* and *Exiting Teacher Telephone Interview Protocol* were compared with findings from the interviews conducted in the fall and winter. Instruments were created by one university professor and one graduate assistant. Items on these instruments were selected based on themes in the scholarly literature as well as findings from the focus groups of teachers who were remaining in the school divisions.

The *Central Office Administrator Survey* (see Appendix A) was a Likert-type survey where contacts circled the extent to which their school divisions had recently or currently employed various retention strategies to retain teachers (Scale: 4-extensively; 3-to some extent; 2-to a very small extent; 1-not at all). Examples of teacher support or recognition strategies on the survey

included such items as salary increase for new teachers, salary increase for experienced teachers, increased planning time, mentorship, tuition reimbursement, and financial support for National Board Certification. Central office contacts were also encouraged, with two open-ended questions, 1) to describe any strategies that increased teacher autonomy or respect for the profession, and 2) to please list any other teacher retention strategies employed by their divisions. Lastly, central office contacts were asked to rank the top three strategies their divisions employed to retain teachers. All MERC school division contacts completed surveys and returned them by late spring.

Study team members gathered a list of all teachers who left their school divisions within the last year. Study team members provided teachers' phone numbers along with any demographic information that was archived in local databases. In the *Exiting Teachers Telephone Interview Protocol*, interviewees were asked to rate the extent to which several factors influence their decision to leave their former division (Scale: A lot; Some; Not much; None). The interview protocol also sequenced the following open-ended statements and questions, which served as the focus of the instrument:

1. First, tell me your current job position.
2. What was the number one reason you chose to leave your former school division or the teaching profession? (Interviews were terminated here if the interviewee responded that leaving was due to general retirement (not early retirement) or to simple relocation)
3. For what other reasons did you leave your former school division or the teaching profession?
4. What would have been the number one factor that might have caused you to stay in your former position?
5. Are there any other factors that might have caused you to stay in your former position?

All exiting teacher interviews took place in the summer.

Data Analysis

Several approaches to inductively analyzing the data were utilized. Transcripts were coded and individually reviewed by two researchers using two different schemes. One used Hyperresearch

qualitative software, and the other a traditional hard-copy analysis. Inter-rater reliability was established at 94%. Categories were created overall and by teaching assignment. Researchers then compared categories and combined codes that overlapped or that were discussed together in teacher interviews. Renaming of codes was based on key words in the literature and verbatim accounts of teachers. Code maps were used to analyze relationships between variables.

A random sample of the interviews was given to a research assistant and to three study team members to locate major themes. The coding for analyzing the transcripts is illustrated in Figure 2. For direct questions on the protocol that warranted single replies or "top" reasons, teacher responses could be quantified to support themes and direct quotations. Otherwise, attempts to rank issues related to teacher retention were based on the number and emphasis of teacher responses related to themes.

Figure 2

Transcript Codes

1- administration
2- autonomy
3- child rearing
4- class size/case load
5- collegiality
6- commitment to children
7- commitment to profession
8- difficult assignments for new teachers
9- discipline/student attitudes
10- early commitment
11- external employment opportunities
12- new teacher supports
13- paperwork
14- parental support
15- professional development
16- reality shock
17- resources/supplies
18- respect for profession
19- salary and benefits
20- SOL pressure
21- teacher stress/morale
22- teaching in high need schools/SES
23- veteran teacher influence
24- workload/time

The seven *Central Office Administrator Surveys* were analyzed by creating frequencies for each of the survey items. Raw data was also provided by the open-ended questions. Patterns in the data were located, then compared with and contrasted against the data from the focus group interviews. Exiting teacher interviews were analyzed similarly, creating frequencies for scaled items and offering raw data per question across all interviewees. Again, patterns in the data were located and compared/contrasted against data from other facets of the study. A model describing the influences associated with teacher retention and attrition was also offered.

RESULTS

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS (Research Questions 1-3)

Findings from the teacher in-depth interviews and focus groups revealed that teacher attrition and retention variables are highly interrelated. Reasons for leaving and reasons for staying often acted as inverse variables (for example, a teacher may leave because of poor administration or stay because of quality administration). Findings vary somewhat by teaching assignment, with special education teachers showing trends of moving to regular education, reporting more problems with unsupportive staff and parents, and reporting more concerns with paperwork. Secondary math and science teachers showed more reports of leaving for other employment opportunities. Elementary teachers reported of a lack of planning time more often than did secondary or special education teachers. Teacher attrition and retention is complex, with reasons for leaving or staying often related to individual factors, yet common themes and patterns are evident.

Research Question #1: What reasons do teachers give for staying in their school division?

Generally, teachers remained in their school divisions for one of three reasons: 1) a commitment to the profession, 2) quality administration, or 3) an appreciation for relationships with their colleagues.

Commitment

Commitment was ascertained by asking teachers why they chose to remain in their school divisions. Reasons included a commitment to the profession, stemming from a commitment to

children and/or the subject matter. Elementary teachers and teachers of special education students expressed a greater commitment level than secondary teachers.

> "I love what I do. Why? Because…it's always different. You never know what the kids are going to do. There is always a challenge to figure out. How to get that kid to understand what he doesn't understand and yet that look on his face when the light bulb goes on. They go 'oh, yeah!' There is so much reward in that that you get up the next morning and come back."

> "So basically I think mine was an inner feeling because this is what I wanted to do. It wasn't so much the money. At the time, I guess the money was okay when I started 25 years ago. Mine was more like a personal thing--it's personal satisfaction that I get working with our kids."

One teacher of special needs children felt a sense of commitment to children in her high-need school. She shared how working in an environment with children who had challenges gave her a sense of feeling important and needed.

> "You have much more low income homes, single parents. The minority over here, it's really African-American and lots of Hispanics as well—as well as Caucasian, but it's more so the other two. And their parents are really—they're doing the best that they can. They really are. They're working two and three jobs just to put food on the table. And the kids do the best that they can. But the situation I've seen—I mean, I have seen children raising themselves. And it makes me feel important and good about what I do—that I could be here. "

Table 3 displays a frequency count of reasons that teachers gave for remaining in their school divisions. While the table shows that most teachers had a commitment to teaching, 10 of the 42 teachers were "looking elsewhere". Some teachers planned for a career in teaching because they perceived that there would be more time to spend with their families. Teachers from smaller divisions shared that they remained because they preferred working in a smaller school system. A few teachers with only a couple years of teaching experience stated that they were staying in their current positions because they were "just starting out" and "still learning". And, a few teachers admitted that the reason they remained was that they "felt stuck".

Table 3. Reasons teachers give for remaining in their current teaching positions

Reason given	Number of teachers offering response
Commitment to teaching	13
Looking elsewhere	10
Commitment to children	6
Spend time with family	4
Administration and colleagues	3
Like small division	2
Still learning	2
"I'm stuck"	2
TOTAL	42

Collegiality

Time given for teachers and staff to collaborate on lessons and units, share instructional materials and strategies, and to discuss student work was also given as a reason that teachers continued working in their school divisions. Consistent with the above table, some teachers did feel that they remained in their divisions because of their colleagues, many feeling that their school was like a "family". This extended to collaborating and cooperating with each other on matters of planning and instruction.

> "I think just having the time to sit down with teachers and plan together. I know there are three of us that teach language arts and social studies in 5th grade. Two of us sit down all the time and plan together. We are pretty much doing the same lessons. I'll have an idea and say 'I'm thinking about doing this' and she [says] may be 'well, like, you can do this and this with it.'"

Administration

Because administration was such a prevalent theme in the study as a whole, it merited deeper analysis. Therefore, quotes coded 'administration' were again coded with subcodes by district level and school level. Several subthemes were found in the larger theme, including *resources and supplies, professional development, understanding of special needs children, listening to views and concerns, spending time in classrooms/visibility, paperwork, and teacher placement practices.* Some of these subthemes were mentioned about administration as related to teachers' reasons for *staying,* yet most of them were derived from reports of why teachers are *leaving.* These will be addressed under results in research question #2.

District Level Administration

Teachers gave testimony that they chose to remain in their school divisions because of support received from central office---support in offering resources and supplies and in providing professional development opportunities.

> "And any support or teaching materials, or training---whatever is needed to meet those needs, we have been very lucky in knowing that those needs would be met.

> "And I think, too, talking from central office on down, I think whenever something new is required of anybody, they come up with a means to help you get that. You know, there is a technology piece where we had to have a certain amount of technology background, so they've allowed us ways to get that."

Building Level Administration

Some teachers mentioned that they stayed because of the administrative support in their individual school buildings, defined as policies or practices present that supported teacher work and created an environment that treated teachers as professionals. As evidenced in teacher reports, many believed that such support was a rare find. Special education teachers, in particular, were grateful if their principals possessed an understanding of special needs children and/or special education law.

> "My administration is supportive. I know that if something comes up and I have followed the correct procedures that they are going to back me up. Um, and talking to

> colleagues in the area I'm not sure a lot of administrations give their faculty that much support."
>
> "We are also very pleased to have our immediate administrator and principal very well-versed in special ed. Law and who take great interest in each of the children. And, it seems like that's not the case everywhere."

Positive comments about administration also revealed a links to *resources and supplies* and to *listening to views and concerns.*

> "Whatever you need, administrators try to make sure you have, so that teaching the lessons or getting the materials or having some additional training in the area that you are not strong in."
>
> "You know, my views are important. People care about what I think. I think that that is one of the greatest things that you can do in any employee-employer situation is to have people feel like their views and their concerns are listened to."

Research Question #2: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding reasons their colleagues have left the school division or the profession?

Teachers may attribute one reason to why colleagues leave their school division or the profession, but, often, there are *multiple* influences on teachers' decisions to leave. By report of teachers, there seems to be a *hierarchy* of reasons that teachers leave school divisions or the profession. For this sample, salary was mentioned first as a reason teachers are leaving the profession, which was closely related to *other employment opportunities*. Salary aside, the number one reason teachers leave their school divisions or the teaching profession is a lack of *administrative support*, both at the district and the school level. Below in Figure 3 is a hierarchy of 11 themes mentioned by teachers in the interviews. Because the theme 'administration' was the most emphasized internal school factor, that theme was re-analyzed and re-coded to offer subthemes by district-level and building-level administration.

A discussion of findings of each of these themes follows, with elaboration of differences among teachers of elementary, secondary, and special education.

Figure 3. Hierarchy of teacher-perceived reasons that colleagues leave

1. Salary and Benefits
2. External Employment Opportunities
3. Building Level Administration
   Subthemes:
   a. Spending Time in Classrooms/Visibility
   b. Listening to Teachers' Needs and Positions
   c. Professional Development
   d. Resources and Supplies
   e. Understanding Special Needs Children
   f. Teacher Placement Practices
4. District Level Administration
   Subthemes:
   a. Spending Time in Classrooms/Visibility
   b. Last-minute Meetings or Paperwork
   c. Professional Development
   d. Resources and Supplies
5. Planning Time/Workload
6. Class Size
7. SOL Impact
8. Lack of Parental Support
9. Discipline and Student Attitudes
10. Family
11. Teacher Stress/Fatigue

Salary and Benefits

Teachers reported that their colleagues left primarily because the complete package of pay, benefits, and other incentives was inadequate. They understood that they "did not go into teaching for the money", but were disheartened by the fact that peers with similar amounts of undergraduate training "were passing them" by one-third of their salaries. Often these peers did not have an advanced degree, but because they were in the private sector, opportunities for differential pay were available. Several teachers stated that they worked additional jobs either after school or during the summer to circumvent salaries that were not "keeping pace with the economy". Teachers of special education believed more teachers left because of salary than did elementary or secondary teachers.

> "Partially, the money. Not that I'm that money-oriented. It is just insulting to me what we make. It is truly insulting. When I got out of college it was nice. You made a lot. I

made more than my husband then. Within a year he had passed me by $10,000. It was embarrassing."

"I think if you look at your peers that are the same age as you in the business world, they are making more and don't even have a master's degree. They are making 3 times as much as me. If they do a good job, they are going to get bonuses. There are no bonuses if your SOL scores are good or if all your kids pass."

"If you're raising a family, conceivably there could be a big difference between $35,000 and $37,000. If $2,000 is critical in your budget, then you start moving to a division that can pay you that extra $2,000. And it's gonna be more attractive than the one that can't."

"The other thing, of course, is that teaching salaries are not growing with the rate of the economy. So to live off a teaching salary is a struggle. Both [my husband and I] have extra jobs to supplement living expenses."

"But, really and truly, the one thing-and you can't just put it to the side-it is a big salary thing. The salary thing is just a real big factor-and especially when the governor said it is up to the localities. And where is the localities is supposed to get money."

"Pay us what we deserve!"

"That sort of thing, um, I have seen people leave for salary reasons um, those usually are the primary breadwinners in a family."

"And so, some have left because their principals were horrible, and they said "I don't need this--my salary is not paying the bills, it's bonus money. I can live on my husband's salary." And they've just left."

"I don't get enough pay. There's no respect."

"Pay us."

"If the requirements of the job are so much more than that contract time, then there needs to be some sort of appropriate compensation, or there needs to be, at the very least, an acknowledgment of it."

"In keeping teachers in the classroom I would say it is going to be probably the money. Because in the true scheme of things you've got to provide for your family and feel good about things. I know working two jobs it is hard to do that and still feel good and have time with your family and so forth. The main reason I went into teaching so that I would have my afternoon's home with my kids. I thought this is a good job to have if you're going to work and have kids."

External Employment Opportunities

Due to the fact that opportunities to increase salaries exist in the private sector, teachers

perceived that their colleagues would consider work outside the field of education or in another school division. Most of these reports came from secondary teachers who saw their colleagues in math and science pursue other options with their subject matter knowledge.

> " I feel with the shortage of teachers now—they jump faster—'I can go over here.' I mean, they are checking base pays everywhere. 'I don't have the hassle here, the grass is greener over there.'"

> "I know, with my math degree, I can go make twice at Phillip Morris what I make this year. "There's better opportunity in the private sector and I don't know any other reason that these people are leaving. For the most part, they are younger people who have not been in [the education field] for very long, in my observation".

Administration

Just as it is possible for teachers to stay because of a good administration, it is likely that teachers will leave if they perceive that administration is poor. Both at the central office level and the school level, administration was the second most frequently perceived reason that teachers were leaving. While many teachers praised a supportive administration, others perceived weaknesses in administrators' ability to support teachers' work and to provide an environment where teachers were treated as professionals. As mentioned earlier, because administration was such a prevalent theme in the study, further analysis was necessary. Therefore, quotes coded 'administration' were again subcoded by district level and school level. There were slightly more complaints about building level administration than about district level administration. Findings did not vary according to teaching assignment, except for teachers of children with special needs, who reported more lack of support from principals than did secondary or elementary teachers.

District Level Administration

Four subthemes were found in the larger theme, district-level administration, including *listening to teachers' needs, resources and supplies, professional development, spending time in classrooms/visibility,* and *paperwork.* At the district level, these themes worked in tandem and seemed to carry equal weight with regard to reasons teachers leave the profession.

District Level Administration Subtheme: ***Spending Time in Classrooms/Visibility***

Teachers stated that colleagues left because of lack of support from district level administration, complaining that central office staff was not "visible." This related to spending time in the classrooms.

> "Be in the trenches. Come and talk to us. See us, um, be visible. Ask us, what, talk to us—find out what we need, um, what they could do to help in the positions.
>
> "I think that the so-called "experts" in Central Office need to be more visible. They need to come to the classroom, because, after all, they are the experts, so they say. And they can always, then direct us."
>
> "I was observed by _____. He came in one door and went out the next."

District Level Administration Subtheme: ***Last-minute Meetings or Paperwork***

Teachers asserted that the "endless meetings" and paperwork were driving colleagues out of the classroom. They mentioned a top-down hierarchy, where school level staff was only applying pressure on teachers to complete paperwork because of central office level staff. "Don't give us something last minute to do!" was a comment by one teacher summarizing a pattern evident in the data among all teachers. These "last-minute things" included meetings or paperwork (sometimes related to the SOL) that they were given by administrators. Teachers shared that this practice often made them feel less professional, and that their time, or their students' learning, was not valued. Elementary teachers expressed more frustration in this area because of a schedule that already lacks adequate planning time.

> "I think it's even higher up--the central office or whatever you call it. They're giving [principals] stuff, 'oh, by the way, you need to do this by tomorrow.' And then our administration is like, 'well, sorry it's last minute, but this needs to be done by tomorrow.' And so, I've got this planned, you want my lesson plans in a week in advance, and you want me to do all this, but now you need me to stop what I have planned so I can do this for central office."
>
> "It's like your time is not valuable, it doesn't count as much as what they want. It's like, this morning, I did two-in-services with two grade levels. And I felt really bad because they hadn't been notified in advance that I was coming and taking their planning period. So, I could look at some of the faces in that room and tell that they weren't listening to

> me because they were frustrated, because I know there were things that they had planned on getting done.
>
> "Oh, but these are the new SOL this year", and they [central office] move on. Was that hour I spent on SOL paperwork the best use of that hour or should I have been mixing yellow and red to make orange because I'm out of orange paint? Or planning something, or having a conference with a parent. Or working on something that would directly benefit the kids—not just another piece of paper.

Many of the teachers of special education who participated in the focus groups said they were moving to regular education because of the paperwork. These teachers were frustrated with the additional SOL-related paperwork "on top of" the IEPs.

> "The paperwork has just become so tremendous. It is almost impossible. You're constantly grading. You have an SOL analysis. You've gotta put everything down about 5 times. This sheet says, 'How many got question 1 wrong?' Then another piece of paper says, 'What did you do to improve that?' We've got IEPs and now on top of that we have SOL.

District Level Administration Subtheme: ***Listening to Teachers' Needs and Positions***

Teachers wanted more decision-making power in their schools, but thought that everything was "talked down" from the central office.

> "Just a basic lack of support. A couple [teachers who left] said they didn't have any decision-making and they thought that everything was sort of talked out from central office"

District Level Administration Subtheme: ***Professional Development***

Professional development was also a reported issue in teachers leaving, for both novice and veteran teachers. Teachers, particularly teachers of children with special needs, complained that district professional development activities were not helpful to them. When professional development activities did not match teachers individual needs, they felt that their time was not valued. Other teachers felt that although some district policies were good on paper (such as mentoring), more accountability and time needed to be invested in them.

> "So then, I have to go to something that the PE teachers are going to, or something that the Science teachers are going to that has nothing to do with me. It certainly isn't going to help a new teacher. I was not valued. I was being given busy work."

> "The good ideals are [mentoring], you pair a new teacher with a veteran teacher and you go through processes and make sure that those teachers that are new coming in have somebody to bounce their ideas off of—their problems and what-not. And I think it needs to be more accountability in the process. I've found myself as a mentor to another teacher kind of skirting the system because really you don't have enough time to do it.

District Level Administration Subtheme: ***Resources and Supplies***

Instructional materials and functional, current technology were described by focus group teachers as inadequate, and as a reason for teachers leaving a school division or contributing to teachers' decisions to leave a profession. Some teachers were frustrated by the lack of resources and supplies provided by central office. This was related to listening to teachers' needs and views.

> "I had asked the administration to get me new chairs. The chairs had been in this building for 31 years. There were very old. I got them because my room was the only one with carpet and the sleigh chairs could move on carpet. The kids kept tripping over them. There were too many kids in the room for those chairs! One day this one kid falls and says he hates these chairs and I told him to go home and mention this to his mom. Sure enough, his mom called, and within a month I had all new chairs. I had been asking to get new chairs for two years, but as soon as a parent complains about it, then something is done. Why did it take that kid getting hurt for me to get new chairs? If they had just listened to me I would have been fine."

Building Level Administration

Subthemes were found when analyzing teacher responses about building level administration. Some of the same themes mentioned for district level comments were also mentioned at the building level. These included *resources and supplies, professional development,* and *spending time in classrooms/visibility.* Besides these 3 subthemes, an additional 3 themes were identified (*understanding children with special needs, listening to teachers' needs and positions*, and *teacher placement practices*) that distinguished teachers' perceptions of building level administration impact on colleagues' decisions to leave. Again, with the exception of *teacher placement practices,* these themes were generally emphasized to the same degree among the focus groups.

Building Level Administration Subtheme: ***Understanding Special Needs Children***

Teachers of children with special needs perceived that colleagues left the profession because they did not get support from their immediate administration. These teachers felt particularly isolated because they may also have lacked the collegial support of regular education teachers.

> "I know as a special educator, I haven't always had the level of administrative support that I currently receive. A lot of special education teachers get out altogether because of that.
>
> "Special ed., I think, gets, "Who cares about those kids anyway? As long as we got the door closed and nobody's screaming and nobody's coming through the window. Then, who cares, really?" I mean, that's the attitude. And I am at a supportive site. I really, really am this year. But, I think, in general, in my experience in 10 years, that's the feeling I get from the other teachers and from the administration."

Building Level Administration Subtheme: ***Teacher Placement Practices***

At the building level, some teachers did not have a sense of security about their teaching assignments when returning to school in the fall. Further exacerbating the already complex demands of being a novice teacher, two teachers in the focus groups gave accounts of receiving classes that were "a little bit less than desirable".

> "[Teachers leave] so that they do not have to live under the threat of being moved into a position that they don't want or don't feel comfortable with, or competent in."
>
> "A new teacher comes in and often gets stuck with those classes that are a little bit less than desirable, whereas the veterans get the plum classes where they got the higher level. And so, you're automatically putting new teachers that are younger into a situation where they are having to deal with problems in the classroom.

Building Level Administration Subtheme: ***Spending Time in Classrooms/Visibility***

Teachers also felt that colleagues left because they felt their principals were not visible, and did not care what occurred in the classrooms. One focus group participant shared an anecdote of a teacher who received "Teacher of the Year", but had never been observed.

> "Just a basic lack of support. . . a couple of teachers said they haven't been observed at all."
>
> I don't think some people here even care that I'm here or care what I'm doing in my classroom. The principal where I was before made a point of coming into your classroom seeing what was going on."

Building Level Administration Subtheme: ***Listening to Teachers' Needs and Positions***

Some teachers also felt that principals did not listen to teachers' needs and positions. This extended to not only resources and supplies, but also to decision-making regarding school policies and instruction. Most often this was attributed to the leadership style of the principal or to the "top-down" nature of schools; other times, it was that parents' needs and concerns were placed above the teachers when it came to decisions about the school. Teachers wanted more autonomy with regard to decisions made about school policy and student learning.

> "Well, I think some of it had to do with the principal who we had here before. She was hard for some people to work for. Very dictatorial."
>
> ". . . Organizations, you got hierarchies. . .Teachers are at the bottom of the hierarchies. And I thin that psychologically puts them in something of a demeaning position.
>
> "This school is, I think, one of the worst schools because the parents run the school."

Building Level Administration Subtheme: ***Professional Development***

Teachers also expressed concern about issues related to in-service staff development. Lack of support in teacher evaluation, conference opportunities, and continuing education were mentioned as reasons teachers left school divisions. Teachers of special education students mentioned that staff development was not targeted to their needs. Other teachers felt that there were not enough opportunities to advance professionally in teaching, and that there was no incentive to obtain an advanced degree because the pay differential was not sufficient.

> "In-service training is focused toward regular-ed. We're told we must participate in it. But most of that in-service is focused on how regular-ed teachers need to teach regular-ed."

Building Level Administration Subtheme: ***Resources and Supplies***

Some teachers also felt that building level administration did not provide the resources and supplies needed by teachers. Teachers wanted principals to listen to their needs.

> "Listen to them. Listen to their individual needs. It's so frustrating when I don't have enough test for my kids. This is how many books I have. I need more books. There are other schools that you could call and say 'do you have any extra text books? Send them here.' If they would just listen to your needs and get those things in there to help us teach it would be alright."

> "A friend of mine left [teaching] this year to work at Capital One. She is making a lot of bucks. I asked her why she left; she had only been there for three years and she was like, 'They just didn't listen to me.'"

Teachers shared anecdotes of spending their own money on resources and supplies, of frustrations with students working on very slow computers, and of the absence of necessities for children, such as tissue or soap.

> "I think a lot of people don't realize how much teachers spend of their own money. I spend a fortune. I mean, it's just impossible. If you don't, your kids will lack in a lot of things. They're not getting experiences that they would've in class. "

> "We are supposed to teach the SOL that the kids are taking and we have computers that it takes 15 minutes for the word processing to come up. And the new teachers are sitting with brand new super Macs."

> "You shouldn't have to write a note to parents for donated tissue boxes. That should be something that is provided...you don't go into a [corporate] office and take out soap from your pocket...this is silly, this school should, if they have a bathroom have a sink there, which there is and there ought to be soap available for the kids to use without having to provide it themselves...they provide it in prisons, don't they?"

Planning Time/Workload

After salary and administrative support, lack of time given for teachers to plan lessons and units, gather materials, phone parents, grade student products, and complete paperwork offered stories from teachers as to why colleagues, particularly at the elementary level, leave. Elementary teachers compared their planning time to peers at the middle and secondary levels who often have 90 minutes of planning time, a relatively calm duty period, and an unencumbered lunch. Teachers at the elementary level, by contrast, gave accounts of having some days without any

planning time at all. Teachers wanted more time for collegial interaction, for reflecting on teaching, and for completing necessary paperwork and planning to perform the job well.

> "And I think elementary is a lot different from middle and high school. I don't think people realize the difference in those grades. In high school you have at least one planning period a day and you don't have to walk the kids to lunch and you don't have to pick them up. You don't have to walk the kids to resource and pick them up. My 30-minute lunch time, 10 minutes on both ends are gone…
>
> "...I had three friends that went from elementary to middle. They are, like, "You need to move up. It is unreal. I absolutely love it. I didn't realize how hard I worked in elementary. You have duty-free lunch. You get this block planning period, then you also get some other duty where you could be sitting in the hallway checking passes.' I wanted to slap them!"
>
> "And getting a chance to meet with them [other teachers] to discuss our children and to be able to give them modifications or strategies to work with those children within their classroom-the time to do that. We don't always get to do like we should appropriately. So, it goes back to more planning time and not only for us but also for the other teachers as well."
>
> "I don't want to be treated any different cause every teacher could list all of the things that they have to do but perhaps the school systems ion general could be aware that teachers after they have taught a full day really don't need to stay after school every day for meetings until five or six o'clock and then be expected to go home and do more paperwork on that too and that's the reason so many teachers are burning out."
>
> "And there's nobody I know in teaching, not a soul, that works their school hours. If you can, then you are not doing what you are supposed to be doing. I would like to meet you and figure out how you're doing it because it's taking me seven years to figure out how to do that. No. It involves weekends, and it involves before school, after school time, weekends. And here's another factor-it does take away from your family-you have to have a really strong, supportive family in order to do this year in and year out. Because there's no way that it doesn't suck some time away from your family."

Class Size

Number of students assigned to classrooms or to caseloads was the next most frequently emphasized perceived reason that teachers leave school divisions or the teaching profession. Classroom teachers gave examples of class rosters with 24 at-risk students, with most classes having 28-32 students. Teachers expressed that such large class sizes made it difficult to coordinate learning activities in an efficient and productive way. Teachers of special education students were also overwhelmed by large caseloads.

"[I have] anywhere from 28 to 32 in most of my classes. I have one class of 24, and that's my below-average class. Ideally that class shouldn't be more than about 16, when you're dealing with...kids with a 72,73 IQ. It's just hard to really get to them in a group of 24."

"The number of teachers available for us to serve children is very low. We have high caseloads. And it would be nicer--I mean, I have four grade levels right now. This year my caseload only has 12 students on it currently. But by the end of the year, I will probably have almost 20. Last year I had at the end of the year, 23 students."

"You know I really agree with money but I really want to throw in class size, because I know that's a big issue for us. The talking and at least publicly saying that we having smaller class size but in the schools we aren't seeing that, its not being held to the promise and as teachers we know what a difference that could make."

SOL Impact

Teachers believed that the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) could be driving teachers out of the classroom. Unfair application of accountability, loss of freedom and creativity, and extra responsibilities were mentioned as possible contributors to teacher attrition.

" The school system, they want you to have the kids well-prepared. Which is understandable, but they push a lot on you. Do this. Do that. This might work. Attend this workshop. Go here, go there. Stick to the curriculum. They also have to realize that you get children on that grade level that are maybe two or three grade levels low in reading. I'm like, 'Well they don't know what they should to be prepared for me to teach them the fifth grade SOL's.' Someone from the Superintendent's office may come in to your classroom and ask you, well, 'Why weren't you using this?' These are children, and not machines or robots where you program them."

"Not so much from the state part of it, but from within your building. They come back and they're looking at your numbers---What is the percentage of children that have passed in your class? And it's a reflection of their teaching. When a lot of times, we teach in _____, which is considered an inner city school. We have to look at the population of the kids that we're trying to teach. . . it is a lot of pressure to put on teachers."

Lack of Parental Support

Teachers felt that some colleagues also left because of lack of parental support.

"Also, it seems throughout the years I have found that we just don't seem to have the parental support. You know, we are often caught in the middle. We sometimes get the blame for their children failing. The parental support is just not there and some of the issues that are becoming problems in public schools [are] kind of threatening. I guess, 'cause you never know."

"Money. Lack of parental support. I mean, you get into it completely. It's not like you think it's gonna be. And year after year from the beginning I've told myself, 'I'm not going to do this again.' And then I do because there's always a kid every year that tugs at my heart and I think, 'Ok, I may be the only positive person in this child's life.'"

"And some of the reasons that they have left is the pressure. The pressure of the SOLs- are there. And lack of parent support. So all that ties in together. That is a big issue. You're talking about student discipline within the school. And a lack of support from the parents. Oh yeah. It's always a major issue."

Discipline and Student Attitudes

Student behavior problems and lack of student motivation were also reasons teachers gave for colleagues leaving their school divisions. Teachers expressed that they have witnessed first-hand colleagues who have been driven out of the classroom because they were unable to maintain student discipline. Other teachers reported that students are "different today", and a level of respect afforded to teachers---even in the primary grades---was lacking.

"The disrespect is one thing that drives me nuts. They [students] are like, 'yeah!' and then look at you with those eyes. Or they just go, 'duh, that's what I was saying. You're crazy or stupid.' They're brutally honest in first grade."

"I have a reputation for maintaining very strict discipline in my classes…I've actually seen [students] drive [teachers] out with emotional problems and all. I think that maintaining discipline is absolutely crucial, and I'm just not sure that it's something you can teach."

"From the children. Yes, it's getting harder and harder to maintain control in classroom."

"Yeah, discipline is an issue. How you manage a classroom has an influence on that- especially in special-ed. A lot of times you get a lot of kids who are raising themselves and if you don't make a connection on an individual basis with the student, it is going to be a little bit more difficult. You also have to be able to realize that some of these kids are going to have some really rough days and they're used to being treated as adults at home."

Family

Priorities related to child rearing or home making also influenced teachers' decisions to leave. Teachers reported that colleagues with five to seven years of experience were leaving because they had young children, an option when spouses had salaries adequate to support a family. Other teachers simply shared that women were leaving the teaching profession because they felt they were spending more time working as teachers than being with their families.

"One girl left teaching to stay home with her family. She was working a lot. She was spending more time working as a teacher than being with her family."

"There are so many new teachers, that 5 to 7 year mark. They are having babies and staying home and maybe their husband is making better money and they are able to stay at home. Maybe they wanted to stay home all the time, but just couldn't, and whoever they are married to is saying, 'You can do it now.'"

Teacher Stress/Fatigue

Of particular note in the focus groups was the number of relatively new teachers who spoke of their stress and fatigue levels. They did not believe that this early in their careers they should be "worn out" (burned out).

"Well, I am getting a little bit tired. It's only been five years, but it's hard."

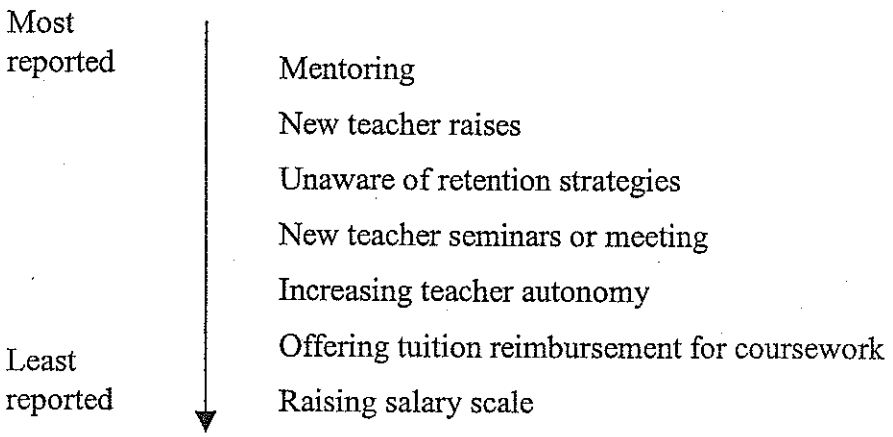
"They [teachers that leave] just do not want that kind of a job that is twenty-four/seven. The stress level is just way too high.

"I feel like, at seven years, I should not be worn out. I shouldn't be worn out."

Research Question #3: What are the perceptions of teachers regarding school division retention strategies?

When asked the direct question, "What is your school division doing to retain teachers in the first five years?", the following strategies were reported (see Figure 4). They are listed hierarchically, from most reported to least reported. Teachers, by and large, mentioned mentoring as the primary strategy used by their school divisions, followed closely by new teacher raises.

Figure 4. Hierarchy of teacher-reported school division teacher-retention strategies



Teacher attitudes toward local mentoring programs were very positive.

> "We have an excellent one [mentorship program], where before you can begin on your first day you are matched with someone in your same grade level and try to do that and meets with you and that person is compensated who is your mentor and your mentee would have this experience on a regular basis. And that's not an option its part of the program that the county has throughout the year."

> "Where's the 'off' switch for the copier? Who do I see about payroll issues? How do I request a sub?" Everything you could ask this person. It was kind of nice because you didn't have to go straight to the principal and bother him with tedious details. But in the second year I think they got re-certification points for mentoring. But, the second year she would still come to me because I think we had developed a bond. It was so nice because even when I see her shopping around town, "That's my mama. She took care of me."

Other teachers appreciated the mentor concept, but had concerns over paperwork and criteria for selecting and pairing mentors with beginning teachers.

> "I would consider that a good recommendation, the person who's chosen needs to be carefully selected, I've seen it not work based on who's chosen just cause someone's been in the building 20 years does not make them one of those lively old candidates to be somebody's, cause possibly they don't take it seriously Somebody actually who's just gotten over being new is usually a wonderful mentor after three or four years because they know exactly how you feel and they are right there to help you, and they don't leave you on your own as much where someone else might say you know figure this out and they don't help you try to figure it out too."

> "It is very hard to find the time to do the paperwork that is associated with it. And, in all honesty, I think I've been a great mentor to my mentees. I've looked after them faithfully and diligently all year long. I have not done the paperwork. I don't have time."
>
> "Or if you picked a mentor that like would be your friend or something they try to pick like an experienced teacher that was not in your department not in your team. It was like I never even saw her."

Interestingly, teachers were markedly upset at the fact that teachers at the bottom of the salary scale were making close to teachers who were higher on the salary scale. In short, teachers did not feel it was fair to give new teachers raises without giving all teachers raises.

> "It does hinder morale when the new teacher comes in and just gets whatever bonus, and a lot of them bring some things with them. But, a lot of times, they have to get things from us. And they're gonna come in and their money, their salary is about to get up there where I've been teaching 23 years, and they're going to come in with $5,000 less. There's a problem with that and, you know, that doesn't help with morale either when you see people come in."
>
> "And I can't blame teachers that just do the same thing every year and they are not creative not trying to get better every year. Well they have no incentive. They are getting paid the same as a starting teacher."
>
> "Beginning teacher salaries have gone up, for sure. What I make as a sixth year teacher is only about $1,200 less than what a first year teacher make."
>
> "It's frustrating that people that have been in the profession now for 5 or 6 years they make less then people who are just starting because they are desperate for new teachers and how they can justify is totally beyond me! That someone that is starting out right now is you'd be better off to quit and start again. And you would get paid more money right now in our county because they need people. I just can't believe that because they don't do anything for the people who are number 2, 3, 4, or 5 above you and does not do a whole lot for moral. I can tell you!"

Several teachers were unaware of any school division teacher retention strategies, yet many referred to the beginning-of-the-year new teacher orientations or meetings that were held for new teachers throughout the year. Teachers not only felt that this time was essential for new teachers to bond and share ideas, but also a way to understand district policies and practices. Another teacher, offering an example of a policy that works to increase teacher autonomy and respect for the profession, shared that feeling like a professional means making one's own decisions (when

possible) about work and time. Such an environment, according to this teacher, is not just a professional one, but also a motivational one.

> "In _____a teacher work day is a work day whether you are working at home, whether you are working on your fishing boat, whether you are working in your classroom. You are a professional, you decide, as long as you have A, B, and C done. That showed us, you know, hey, we do our grades at home, we do our papers at home and if you work better there, stay there. It was considerate of our needs and that was a motivator.

Some teachers also felt that their divisions did "a good job" in offering tuition reimbursement for coursework.

> One of the things that _____does very well is that they encourage us to continue our education and to be life-long learners. You could take university classes and they will pay up to a thousand dollars.

When asked the direct question, "How can school divisions recognize teachers for their commitment to teaching and to the profession?", teachers had a difficult time giving suggestions for how they could be recognized. While they appreciated local gestures such as pins, certificates, awards dinners, etc., most said that building level recognition was essential.

> "Someone could just be telling me that I'm doing a good job now and then, and that would be awesome. Just to have somebody say to you, 'Wow.'"

> "We have faculty meetings about once a month and the principal always praises those teachers who are doing well, so he affirms everyone, and you say, "Oh I want to do a good job on something in particular that I am good at. Let me get personal recognition."

> "That would be good. That is an opportunity. I know that you said you really weren't talking about money..I can tell you whenever I see a business offering bonuses, it would make it very hard to figure out what to make it contingent upon, but it is so nice to see someone in a business working their butt off and then getting the little bit extra above and beyond what they normally get. To see some kind of bonus. I feel like in the science department we have really good SOL scores and if somebody else in a business were to do that good in whatever they were working on then they would be getting a bonus I think."

> "I think that if someone is doing a good job in the private sector, they're rewarded with bonuses. I think if teachers do a good job, they should be rewarded with some sort of bonus."

> "I don't know. Other than you know you give teachers certificates for doing well and you give them little incentives for coming to work. That is always an incentive."
>
> "It does involve money, but one of the things that I think they could do that would really make a difference would be if they could make it easier for good teachers to present at conferences. If they would re-look at the benefits package that they've already got in place, that would make a difference because I have my masters."

When asked the direct question, "What is the number one thing school divisions could do to keep good teachers", all teachers were able to provide a "number one thing". They are listed below in Table 3. Consistent with the overall emphasis of the theme throughout the interviews, of the 42 teachers, 14 (one third) said school divisions must raise teacher salaries. The next top recommendation was to increase administrative support for teachers' work, both at the district and school levels. This was followed closely by an increase in teacher planning time, a recommendation most strongly suggested by elementary teachers. Several teachers also stated to "treat them like professionals", and while it can be argued that this recommendation is best situated under 'administrative support', it is more apt to be a larger phenomenon encompassing many of the recommendations in Table 4.

Table 4. Teacher Recommendations for Reducing Teacher Attrition

Recommendation	Total Recommendations
Raise salaries	14
Increase administrative support	8
Increase planning time	7
Treat teachers like professionals	4
Decrease class size or caseload	3
Strengthen mentoring program	2
End practice of giving new teachers the most difficult assignments	2
More resources	1
More recognition	1
Total	42

Other suggestions included offering teachers a more flexible schedule and compensation for work outside contract hours.

> "Something that would encourage people to stay, and actually we have a little bit of that- very, very little. There is a slight amount of flex-time. Another thing would be to give them comp time. You know, a lot of times we have to work late for this or for that. So, you know, it would be nice if we could have comp time."

CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR SURVEYS

Research Question #4: What do school divisions report doing to retain teachers in the first five years?

Table 5 shows the responses of each of the central office contacts from the MERC school divisions regarding locally employed teacher retention strategies (A summary of raw data obtained from central office administrator surveys is provided in Appendix B). Consistent with the findings from the teacher focus groups, school divisions are offering raises to new teachers as their top retention strategy. Specifically, all 7 MERC school divisions are offering new teacher salary increases, with six divisions employing the retention strategy *extensively*. This strategy is being employed and emphasized slightly more than mentorship for new teachers, which reveals 5 divisions employing it *extensively*, and 2 divisions employing it *to some extent*. This was followed by tuition reimbursement and salary increases for experienced teachers.

Three of the MERC school divisions were offering an extensive increase in resources and supplies. Only two extensively employed such teacher retention strategies as teacher decision making with curriculum, increased opportunities for collegial interaction, or financial support for National Board Certification (teachers in the focus groups made no voluntary reference to National Board Certification throughout the interviews).

Besides the most reported employed strategies of mentorship and new teacher salaries, overall, most divisions (5 or 6) employed teacher retention strategies of experienced teacher salary raises, increased resources and supplies, reductions in class size, teacher decision-making with curriculum and student assessment, increased collegiality, and tuition reimbursement. With the

exception of tuition reimbursement, these findings are not consistent with the teacher focus group data. Most teachers felt that resources and supplies were inadequate, class sizes and caseloads too large, and their curriculum decision-making limited with the SOL.

Survey results were mixed with regard to strategies of teacher decision-making with regard to scheduling and policy, and use of administrator evaluation. What is telling about the data is that, generally, most divisions (5) were not offering increased planning time, opportunities for peer evaluation, reduced paperwork, support for working with parents, or financial support for National Board Certification. For five school divisions, these teacher retention strategies were employed *to a very small extent* or *not at all.* For these variables, there is a mismatch between what teachers need and what divisions are offering. Opportunities for peers to evaluate one another and to observe one another can be a valuable aspect of collegiality, which was defined by teachers in the focus groups as a key reason for staying. Also, lack of planning time and paperwork were listed as top reasons for teachers leaving the profession.

Table 5. Number of MERC school divisions employing various teacher retention strategies.

Teacher Support or Recognition Strategy	Extensively	To Some Extent	To a Very Small Extent	Not at All
Salary increase for new teachers	6	1		
Salary increase for experienced teachers	4	2		1
Increase in provision of resources and supplies	3	3	1	
Increased planning time		2	2	3
Reductions in class size	1	4	2	
Teacher decision-making with curriculum	2	3	2	
Teacher decision-making with student assessment		5	2	
Teacher decision-making with scheduling		4	2	1
Teacher decision-making with policy		3	3	1
Increased opportunities for collegial interaction	2	3	2	
Mentorship	5	2		
Peer evaluation		2	4	1
Administrator evaluation	1	3	2	1
Reduced paperwork		2	2	3
Support for working with parents		2	5	
Tuition reimbursement	4	2	1	
Financial support for National Board Certification	2		1	4

Findings of the open-ended questions on the administrator survey revealed few trends (see Appendix B for summary of raw data). When asked to describe any strategies that their divisions used to increase teacher autonomy or respect for the profession, administrator contacts had varied responses. The only pattern in the data was teacher recognition. Two divisions used

strategies focused on teacher recognition (such as annual school board gifts or outstanding teacher award recognitions, including Teacher of the Year, recognition at events, and formal or informal personal contacts by the superintendent and school board members). Other divisions mentioned such strategies as a new evaluation system for teachers, a redesigning of the mentorship program, a strong code of student conduct to support teacher work, and increased teacher decision-making.

When asked to list any other teacher retention strategies employed (that were not listed specifically as a Likert-type survey item), responses included 1) offering extended contracts, 2) offering discretionary leave, 3) a good benefits package, 4) and offering a masters degree satellite program in the school division for employees. One small division elaborated that they focused a great amount of time making personal contacts with teachers. They believed that having central office staff visible and available in the buildings established an open climate where teachers felt free to voice concerns and ask for support.

Lastly, central office administrator contacts were asked to list the top three strategies employed by their division to retain teachers. Six of the divisions (one did not offer a response) recorded that their number one teacher retention strategy was teacher raises (four reported "new" teacher raises, and two contacts did not specify whether it was new teacher raises or experienced teacher raises). One division perceived that an increase in resources and supplies was the number one strategy, and the other division reported that extended contracts to teachers offered their best hope of retaining teachers. Other themes in the top three rankings of teacher retention strategies were mentorship, teacher recognition, tuition reimbursement, and teacher input into curriculum development.

EXITING TEACHER TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Research Question #5: What reasons do teachers give for leaving their divisions or the profession during their first five years?

Exiting Teachers' Current Job Positions

Of the 23 telephone interviews, three interviews were terminated because one was related to retirement (not early retirement), and two were due solely to issues of relocation. Consistent with teacher focus group reports, of the remaining individuals who participated in the telephone interviews, nine individuals left for external career opportunities, leaving the teaching profession altogether. Their current positions were in the private industry, and included careers in areas such as pharmaceutical sales or private sales, real estate, and accounting. One individual worked as a lab technician for Lens Crafters. One former teacher who moved to the private sector shared that she tutored children in reading "on-the-side" because she still "loved teaching and children". Four of these individuals who left the teaching profession altogether remained in education, but worked for education agencies other than the public schools. Four persons remained in teaching, but moved to a different school division (Consistent with the literature, these individuals are differentiated as "movers", not "leavers"). Another five individuals (females) were "staying at home" with their children. Four of these women had no intentions of returning, and one planned to return. Lastly, two teachers had opted for early retirement.

Exiting Teachers' "Number One" Reasons for Leaving

When telephone interviewees were asked "What was the number one reason you chose to leave your former school division or the teaching profession?", about one fourth of the individuals could not pinpoint one driving reason. That is, some respondents offered two or more reasons. Top reasons included the following, with the most reported reason listed first: *lack of administrative support, the SOL, hectic/stressful schedules, insufficient salary* and *no opportunities for job sharing/childrearing.* Also mentioned by two teachers was *large caseloads.*

A total of 7 interviewees reported that issues related to administration caused them to leave, a finding strongly supported by teacher focus group reports. Two reports pertained to a lack of district level support, and five related to problems with building principals. One teacher who took early retirement felt "harassment by administrators" or "shunning by administrators" who "wanted [her] out at the top of the scale". Two interviewees said that principal support and student discipline worked in tandem as a factor in their decisions to leave. For example, one

interviewee responded that the building and district level administration was poor, allowing parents to run the schools and giving teachers no autonomy or control. This individual was specifically moving to another county where she perceived that teachers did have control and autonomy. A former special education teacher expressed similar feelings about lack of administrative support for student discipline, and "on top of that", the SOL accountability.

> "You have so many different behaviors to deal with and parents resent their children being reprimanded, call the principal and complain and the principal then tells you to handle the situation differently. The support isn't there---and on top of that you add SOL accountability. Children say, "You can't make me behave" but you're accountable for making that kid meet the district's SOL goals."

Four respondents left solely because of the focus on the SOLs. One "stay-at-home mom", as she described herself, left because "it [teaching] was not the job that [she] had gone into teaching for. She stated that she "was becoming a secretary and writing down dates of SOL mastery". One former middle school science teacher retired earlier than originally planned. This teacher, although she praised the level of support she received from administration, left because she resented the SOL.

> ". . .but the SOLs I resented, not the standards, but the fact that the teacher and the school were totally responsible and the parent and the child were not. All the penalty came down on the school and not on the student; the system wasn't built for consequences. A child could fail Science 8 straight years and still be promoted, but I was responsible for teaching them a core curriculum. So since Science wasn't valued by the school system, it wasn't valued by the students. I am doing all this paperwork instead of looking at what I needed to improve on, in terms of what our SOL scores were. And if you cared, and if you wanted to do it right, you wouldn't believe how many hours the paperwork took, before school, after school, planning periods, and that left less and less time for planning my lessons, working with students, calling parents. . ."

Another "stay at home mom" would have stayed in her former position except for the SOL meetings and the stress created by the SOL on parents, teachers, and students.

Two left because of the "stressful" or "hectic" nature of their schedules and the hours of work involved, a finding reminiscent of the teacher focus groups reporting a lack of planning time. One former teacher commented that she "worked 60 hours a week and weekends", and that she used to have art, music, and physical education everyday, but now she had it only three days

each week. Other teachers also remarked that teaching "wore them out" and that "schedules were too much without a break all day". One former teacher who went to work in the private sector noted that "it was too much to do to for the pay". A current real estate agent summarized by the following statement:

> ". . .too stressful, just too hectic, too busy, from the time you get there until the time you leave, you don't get a break. You do better in a factory. I took a lunch break of 25 minutes and felt like I shouldn't have. The routine was too rigorous. All the things you had to do in the course of a day---you find things in your mailbox in the morning in addition to all your teaching. I enjoyed the teaching part and the kids, I just thought the schedule here was too hectic."

Two left because they wanted to spend more time with their children and families, and there were no opportunities for job sharing. One teacher left to go to another school division that had job sharing, stating that "job sharing cut the number of her students in half", and that prior to this, "[she] didn't feel she was doing a good job with her students or at home." "For women who are pregnant, there are not a lot of options for part-time teaching in the public schools", a former teacher of special education commented. One interviewee mentioned that she wanted to stay at home to be with her children, but that otherwise she "was happy" in her former division.

Two individuals (both male) left because of insufficient salary. One individual left because his caseloads for special education were too large and because he could make more money teaching in his new school division. A former 8th-grade science teacher went into pharmaceutical sales because his wife had a baby and remained at home, and his priorities shifted to concerns about pay. One individual who now works in an educational setting other than the public schools, left because he had received an advanced degree and wanted to "move on", although he specifically mentioned that there was "nothing bad" going on in his former division.

Other Influences on Teachers' Decisions to Leave

When respondents were asked the direct question, "For what *other* reasons did you leave your former school division or the teaching profession," responses varied. As mentioned earlier, one fourth of those interviewed said there were no other reasons. Besides their "number one" reason for leaving, interviewees also mentioned *low salary, student discipline, professional development*

that did not relate to individual needs, and *lack of flexibility provided in teachers' schedules*. Teachers' willingness to share other reasons for leaving offers support for the theory that there are multiple influences on teachers' decisions to leave.

To address further the additional influences on teachers' decisions to leave, telephone respondents were also asked the degree to which certain factors influenced their decisions to leave. Table 6 summarizes how interviewees rated the impact of factors on their decisions to leave. From the data, it is evident that *administrative support* played a major role in teachers' decisions to leave their school divisions. This factor was so important, in fact, that even after some teachers listed reason after reason for leaving, they often paraphrased that if their "old principal was still there, [they'd] have stayed." Administrative support was accompanied by *salary*. What is interesting in this study is that the focus group teachers reported salary as a top reason that teachers left, but for the exiting teachers, only two left because salary was the top issue. For the exiting teachers, administrative support played just as much of an influence as salary in their decisions to leave.

Student discipline seemed to be highlighted more than in the telephone interviews than in the teacher focus groups, perhaps supporting focus group reports that teachers who leave often have trouble maintaining student discipline. Although two teachers stated that issues related to the SOL were the number one reason for leaving, for the majority of telephone interviewees, SOL-related mandates and duties did not seem to have a significant impact on their decisions to leave.

Table 6. Degree to which certain factors influenced teachers' decisions to leave

Factor	A lot	Some	Not Much	None
Salary	6	3	4	4
Resources and Supplies	3	3	4	5
Administrative Support	8	1	4	4
Discipline	4	4	4	5
Parental Support	3	4	2	9
Mentorship or Other Support for New Teachers	4	1	2	10
Professional Development Opportunities	3	3	1	9
SOL-related Mandates and Duties	3	2	4	8

Factors That Might Have Caused Exiting Teachers to Stay

When asked what their school divisions could have done to have caused them to stay, three former employees said that nothing could have changed their minds.

> "It would have been a pretty tough sell, I wanted to be at home with my child. I guess if there had been more help with the curriculum, with the assessment of kids, with materials---but we were given the SOLs and told the kids had to master them and that was it."

One stay-at-home mom commented that complete reform would be necessary, including teacher raises and the Standards of Learning. One teacher who was transferring to a different school division said she was thinking about leaving teaching altogether.

> "The pay is not worth it. The lack of respect for the profession. No power. Kids rule the school. You lose faith in the classroom. Even with the summers off, it's not worth it. I went in because I love kids, but I dread going back to work. No reward for the job. SOLs –all you do is teach to the test. It's stressful! I'm switching systems, and it's somewhat better, but the issues are all still there. It's not fun anymore. I know teachers who are quitting mid-year and cleaning up after people in nursing homes instead---what's going on here? It's my 8th year, and I'm burnt out! I can't look at a flier for back-to-school without being depressed."

Three former teachers wanted more planning time. One teacher suggested he would have stayed if the schedule were less rigorous, and if he had had two preparations instead of three. These teachers said teaching "took up [their] whole life, and a lot of the duties that should have been done at school were done at home". One former elementary teacher now working in private industry suggested that outdoor recreation for students could be manned so teachers could have more planning time. Yet another teacher suggested that during different times of the day, someone coming in to give teachers a 15-30 minute break or down time. "Teachers need a little more flexibility," she said. "Year round school might allow some of this flexibility."

One teacher would have stayed if she had she been "treated as a professional". This teacher felt that all teachers should not be the same, and that the "SOLs have created robot teachers". She claimed, "there's no room for creativity." Another former special education teacher offered the following:

> "Curriculum should not be decided by a committee; this does not allow for individualization; SOLs aren't really a bad thing, but my county does not allow flexibility in the curriculum. And even if they did, most elementary teachers wouldn't have time to plan like they should."

Simple recognition of their work would have caused two teachers to stay. A teacher who took early retirement would have stayed had someone said "you are worthwhile, we need you in the system". This former 6th grade teacher argued that pay was not enough, that recognition and encouragement were important. She claimed that in the 35 years she taught that no one ever said "you're doing a good job!" Another former special education teacher put it this way:

> "If I would have seen more support---a tap on my shoulder, a "good job", "we're glad to have you here." Just the principal or assistant principal stopping by to say hi to me or to the kids. Evaluation observations are not enough. Principals need to show interest and participation in class activities. When you do extraordinary things with children to spark their learning, the principal doesn't even know unless a parent comes in to tell her."

Some former teachers would have remained in their school divisions had there been job-sharing options or part-time work available.

Class size and caseload were issues. One special education teacher admitted that he would have stayed if his caseloads were smaller. One former sixth grade teacher would have stayed if there had been a reduction of rosters and class size. She commented that she "couldn't even remember last names," even though she believed that "middle school children need more of a personal relationship with their teachers."

Two teachers commented specifically that they would have stayed for more money. One teacher said that at least an additional $5,000 would be needed, while another would have only remained for $20,000 more. A comment was made that the problem did not lie with base pay for a beginning teacher, but rather higher up in the scale. These former teachers expressed anger that new teachers were making as much as those with significant experience.

Summary of Results

What is consistent across all facets of the study---the teacher focus groups, the central office administrator surveys, and the exiting teacher telephone interviews—are the findings that insufficient salary, lack of administrative support, and lack of planning time are the top reasons that teachers leave the profession. These factors not only lead to teachers' sense of professionalism and improved levels of job satisfaction, but ultimately increase the likelihood of teachers' remaining in their school divisions.

The results of this study are consistent with others that low salary is linked to higher rates of teacher attrition (Darling-Hammond, 1999; NCES, 1997a; Murnane, Singer & Willett, 1989). What is interesting in this study is that the focus group teachers said salary was the top reason that teachers left, but for the exiting teachers, only two left because salary was the top issue. For the exiting teachers, administrative support played just as much of an influence as salary in their decisions to leave. In an NCES study (1997), teachers also identified salary as the second most common reason for leaving. An explanation for the findings of salary as a top reason in teacher focus groups is that Virginia falls below the national average for teacher salaries, over $2,500 short of the national average of $42,717. Teachers in this study tended to compare their salaries with non-teaching salaries. This is consistent with a detailed study of pay and turnover in the

USA (Gritz & Theobold, 1996) that reported that teachers' decision to remain in teaching was most influenced by the comparison of teaching with non-teaching salaries.

The ILO/UNESCO Joint Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers warns also of the problem of retaining beginning teachers with higher starting salaries only to have the salaries stagnate by mid-career. Teachers in this study mentioned new teacher salaries as factors in decisions to leave. Even though experienced teachers were accruing seniority within their school divisions, they were not being compensated for it. When teachers applied "cost-benefit analysis" to their decisions to leave, their lack of salary increase may have influenced their decisions.

School divisions appear to be doing the right things for new teachers—better pay, better support through mentorship programs. If issues related to administration and the work environment are not resolved first, however, those new teachers are still at risk of leaving. The issue may not be so much about salary as it is about the demands of the profession and the inadequate compensation for such work. Teachers' comments such as "it's not worth the pay" support this assertion. Also, increased salaries and other monetary allowances alone may not have a high and long-term impact on attrition without attending to those factors internal to the organization that drive teachers out of the classroom.

This study supports previous research that the overarching theme of administrative support plays a substantial part in shaping teachers' attitudes toward teaching, and that teachers who control the terms of their work are more likely to feel more committed to the field (Andermann, Belzer & Smith, 1991, Blasé & Kirby, 1992; Conley, 1991; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Fullan, 1992; Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989a,b, Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Turk, Meeks & Turk, 1982; Yee, 1990). This research mentions appropriate workload, opportunities for collegial interaction, professional development, participation in decision-making, and support for student discipline as reasons teachers stayed. Clearly, teachers in focus groups in this study who were committed to staying reported a strong administration, opportunities for collegiality, autonomy, and opportunities for decision-making.

With the standards movement and societal changes, both the profession of teaching and the roles for teachers are changing. Teaching is no longer a profession with contract hours from 8:00a/m.-3:00p/m, where women, for example, can spend time in the afternoons with their families. As a result of this trend, teachers are requesting flex time or part-time work in order to pursue careers and simultaneously raise a family. At the same time, teachers are calling for improved working conditions. Weiss (1999) explains that in the past women had little choice but to accept poor workplace conditions, but today women have greater access to alternative careers and, therefore, have higher expectations for their workplace. Consequently, workplace conditions may play a more pivotal role in determining new teacher attrition.

This study supports the most recent work by Ingersoll (2001) who found that school characteristics and organizational influences have significant effects on teacher turnover that have been overlooked by previous research. Consistent with this study, Ingersoll's study found that salary, lack of administrative support, inadequate planning time, class size, student discipline and motivation, and lack of opportunity for advancement were influences in teachers' decisions to leave. Our study attempted to dissect the many smaller components of "administrative support", and to create a hierarchy of organizational influences based on descriptive, qualitative data from teachers who remain and teachers who leave or move to another school division.

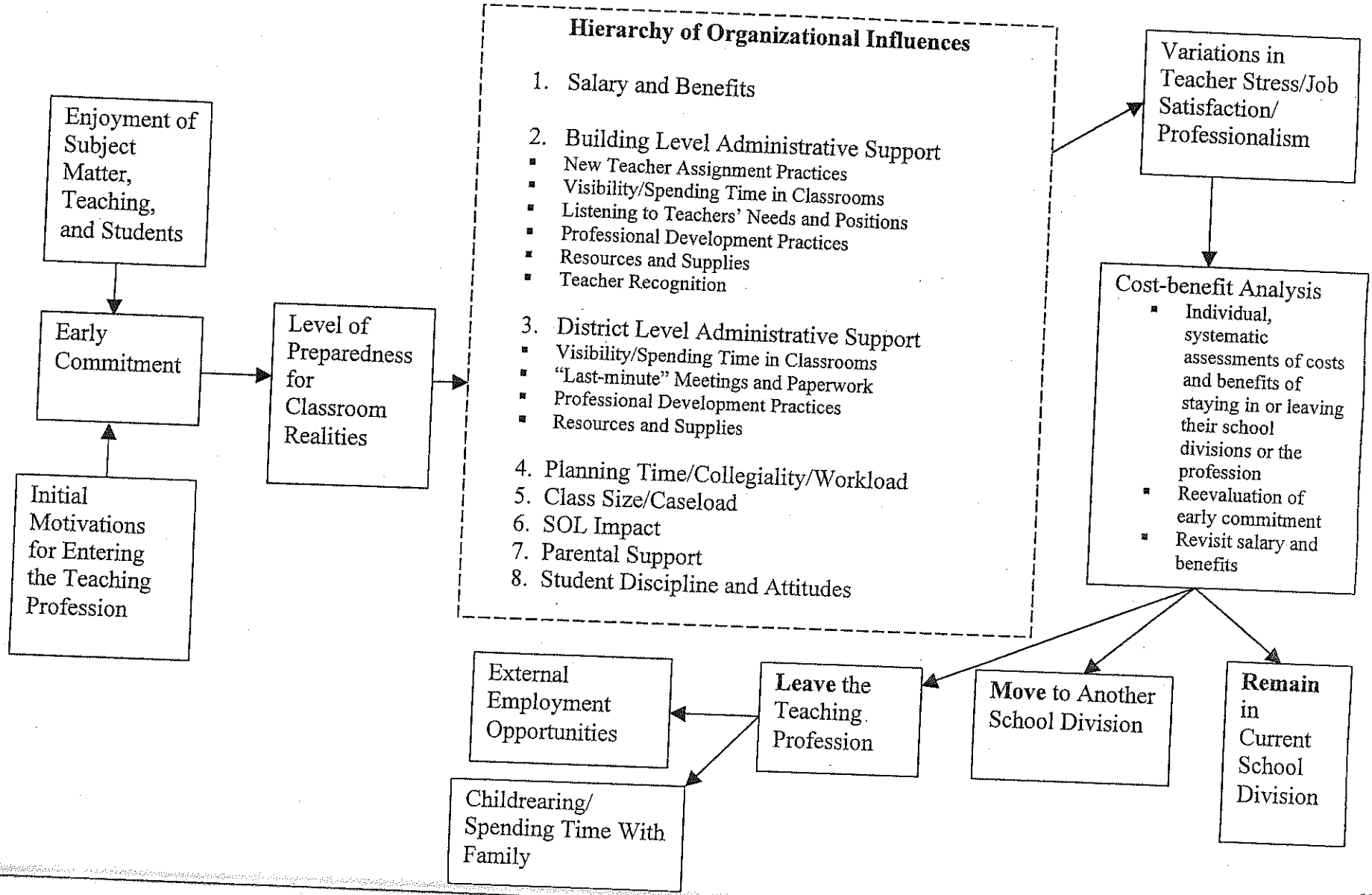
Figure 5 summarizes the findings of this study by offering a suggested flowchart of the multiple influences associated with teacher retention and attrition. Building on the teacher attrition model by Chapman (1984), this study found that organizational influences were the major factors in a teachers' decision to leave or to stay. Most teachers enter teaching with an early commitment to teaching and to students, but find that factors in the structure and organization of schools work against the support of teachers' work. These factors have an even greater impact on individuals who are not "prepared for the realities of the classroom". Within the organizations, however, this study found that there is a hierarchy of risks associated with a teachers' leaving.

Aside from salary and benefits (which is also an issue of state policy), administrative support plays the largest role in keeping good teachers. The model outlines the many aspects of administrative support and its vital role in keeping good teachers. Clearly, if school divisions

wish to improve teacher retention, targeted efforts to increase building level and district level administrative support should be priority. After administrative support, polices to improve teacher planning time and to reduce class size should follow. Also of concern is how school divisions are dealing with pressures from the SOL. Teachers in this study clearly expressed support for standards, but not for the high-stakes assessment aspect of the SOL. And again, while the SOL is an issue of state policy, teachers felt that the local decisions made in the name of the SOL took away creativity from the classroom and assigned unfair accountability to teachers. Other concerns were in the areas of parental support and student discipline and attitudes. It is also important to note that while there is a hierarchy of organizational influences, teachers stressed how those influences at the bottom of the hierarchy were still "big issues".

One or more of these organizational influences inevitably leads to teacher stress and burnout. Such a state causes teachers to engage in what Kirby and Grissmer (1993) called the *human capital theory*, whereby individuals make systematic assessments of the costs and benefits of staying in or leaving the profession. They will revisit their early commitment to the profession, the realities of the nature of teaching, and the salaries and benefits. Should the risks in the organization be minimal, teachers' levels of stress and burnout will be minimal. Teachers will experience career satisfaction. Should the risks be greater, they will leave the teaching profession or move to another school division. They will respond, as many of the exiting teachers did, that "it is not worth it for the pay". If economic times are good, they may pursue alternatives in the private sector, if they have some financial flexibility, they may remain at home with their families. If they perceive that another district does not have the same problems, they may move to that school division.

Figure 5. Suggested Model of the Influences Associated with Teacher Retention and Attrition



Discussion and Recommendations

Recommendations in the literature to decrease teacher attrition vary from focusing on a single strategy such as salary, while other arguments center around supporting a comprehensive overhaul of human resource policies that would include the redesign of job classifications, career advancement and development, and the revalorization of the profession. Particularly for hard-to-staff schools, this may mean serous investments in such things as "rebuilding crumbling school buildings, providing state-of-the art learning resources, raising teacher salaries, and reconfiguring management structures to allow teachers to share in decision-making"(Claycomb, 2000, p. 20).

Chapman (1994) classifies recommendations as high impact/hard to implement; high impact/easy to implement; low impact/hard to implement and low impact/easy to implement. Because teacher retention strategies are often expensive, states, districts, and school divisions are searching for those which are high-impact, non-monetary and easy to implement in times of fiscal constraint (Chapman et al., 1993). Although they involve some cost, strategies directed towards working conditions are frequently less expensive than the costs of teacher dissatisfaction, loss, and retraining. Highly effective teacher retention strategies that are lower in cost include collegiality (greater collaboration between teachers) and involving teachers in decisions (Lewis et al., 1999; Johnson, 1990; NASBE, 1998; Sclan, 1993). Specific implementation of the strategy would include common planning periods, team teaching, and regularly-scheduled collaboration with other teachers and administrators.

The following recommendations (some of which were also outlined in the June 2001 Draft Report of the Joint Task Force on the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia (Joint Task Force on the K-12 Teaching Profession in Virginia, 2001)) focus on the categories of salary and working conditions .

STATE LEVEL

1. Raise teacher salaries to at least the national average. Ultimately, salaries should match those professions that required similar background experience. Higher salaries should also be offered to teachers who agree to teach in high need areas by geographic location

and discipline. It is important not only to raise teachers' salaries across the board but also to build a more differential salary scale based on teaching levels and qualifications. Salaries could be related to National Board Certification. This is supported by Chapman (1994), who has argued that increasing salaries is the "single most direct and effective way to reduce attrition" although not always practical (high impact but hard to implement) due to fiscal limitations.

2. Increase funding for mentor teacher programs to support beginning teachers.
3. Make state funds available for teacher induction programs that include all beginning teachers, basing programs on ones that have proven successful.
4. Increase support of the National Board Certification bonus program and support higher education in developing programs to support teachers in applying for National Board Certification.
5. Consider ways of allocating resources that ensure all districts can afford top-quality professional development.
6. Commit to creating policies that specifically serve teachers and students in high-poverty schools, such as smaller class sizes, more planning time, and high quality resources.

DISTRICT LEVEL

1. Be as creative as possible in implementation of policies that promote teacher professionalism, including increasing teacher responsibilities for educational decisions.
2. Increase the visibility and time spent in classrooms by central office staff. Teachers clearly expressed that the presence of central office staff made them feel like the "experts" cared.
3. Listen to teachers' needs and positions, and respond in a timely fashion.
4. Ensure that school level professional development activities are meaningful and relate to teachers' assignments. Teachers in this study expressed that when professional development was poor, that they "felt that their time was not being valued".
5. Give teachers plenty of notice before scheduling meetings or sending out paperwork to be completed. Teacher felt that principals were only giving them notices for meetings or the paperwork, but that the pressure was really from the district level. Consider ways to

reduce paperwork for special education teachers, since they reported moving to regular education for this reason.

6. Recognize all teachers for their individual strengths and accomplishments. This recognition might be a verbal recognition of teachers' contributions to the learning process or the awarding of small perks such as gift certificates or prime parking spaces.
7. Ensure that buildings are repaired and upgraded. Ensure that schools have all the needed resources and supplies, including furniture, textbooks, and working technology, before the school year begins. Schools should supply incidental items such as office supplies, tissue, or soap. Increase the amount that teachers' receive for classroom spending money for instructional supplies. When teachers do spend money for specific materials for classroom lessons, reimburse them. Without adequate instructional supplies teachers cannot teach. This aspect of the working conditions makes teaching difficult and is likely to accelerate the attrition of new teachers.
8. Create opportunities for teachers to advance, including National Board Certification, and presentations at conferences. Link to compensation.
9. Work with school level staff to increase planning time for teachers, particularly at the elementary level. Consider creative ways to offer teachers more flexibility in their schedules. The alternative is to give compensation time for teachers who work beyond contract hours. Many exiting teachers in this study wanted more planning time because of the "hectic and stressful" nature of their jobs.
10. Adopt policies to reduce class size and caseloads. For regular education teachers with difficult teaching assignments or for teachers of students with special needs, ensure that a paraprofessional is present in the classroom if class size cannot be reduced.
11. Strengthen mentoring programs by offering training and compensation for mentors. It is likely that mentoring programs that feature collaboration between new and experienced teachers, improve new teachers' effectiveness and decrease their high attrition rates.
12. Employ common-sense policies with regard to the SOL, considering teachers' workload and context for teaching.
13. Provide flexible career pathways whereby teachers are not expected to work full time continuously to retirement with the same job description. Options available to teachers might include balancing work within the classroom with responsibilities in

administration, curriculum projects, or teacher or paraprofessional supervision. Flexibility could also include job sharing and team-teaching (Wagner, 1993). With such flexibility and varied responsibility should come different career profiles to be recognized and rewarded.

SCHOOL LEVEL

Principals play a crucial part of administrative support by supporting and encouraging teachers. When principals communicate their expectations clearly, enforce student rules of conduct consistently, and support teachers in doing so, provide professional development or resources when necessary, and when teachers are evaluated fairly and recognized for their strengths and accomplishments, teachers are more inclined to have high morale and to be committed to their teaching positions.

1. Increase administrative and school support for teachers, particularly for new teachers, while expanding all teachers' decision-making roles.
2. End the practice of assigning the most inexperienced teachers to the most difficult teaching assignments.
3. Ensure that elements of a mentorship program are consistent with best practices in mentorship. In particular, give careful attention to the selecting and matching of mentors and beginning teachers. According to the findings of this study, and consistent with previous literature (Ganser, 2000), mentors should work in the same teaching assignment as their mentees, be in the same building, and have no more than a ten-year age gap with the mentee. The mentors should also have training, be familiar with the knowledge of beginning teacher problems, be committed to the role of mentor, and have good interpersonal skills (Huling-Austin, 1990; Rowley, 1999).
4. Include in new teacher induction programs a heavy emphasis on classroom management skills and student discipline.
5. Consider creative ways to offer teachers more planning time, particularly at the elementary level, including time to meet with and to observe other teachers.
6. Make concerted efforts to recognize teachers for their contributions to the school and to student learning.

7. Release teachers from burdensome administrative tasks so they have more time and responsibility for teaching.
8. Give careful attention to teachers of special education students. Show interest in the children and what they are doing in the classrooms. This study revealed that these teachers already felt isolated from their colleagues.
9. Spend time in teachers' classrooms beyond the yearly evaluation. Again, teachers expressed that being observed meant that "someone cared about what was going on".
10. Listen to teachers' needs and positions and respond in a timely manner.
11. Offer a menu of quality professional development activities that match teachers' perceptions of areas heeding improvement.
12. Work with central office to ensure that all teachers have resources and supplies, including working technology, before the school year begins.
13. Encourage teachers to "be creative" in their teaching while using the SOL as a guide.
14. Create a school environment that welcomes parents into the school.
15. Work with teachers to develop a school-wide discipline plan for consistency.

CONCLUSION

Clearly some teachers who leave the teaching profession may be benefiting themselves, their schools, and their students. Because rates of attrition are so much higher in teaching than in other professions, however, it is likely that committed and quality teachers are also leaving. This work reveals there are many aspects of the teaching profession that must be revisited in order to improve teacher retention. This is important because teachers may leave their school divisions or the teaching profession for one reason or for several reasons. There are multiple influences on teacher attrition, and they vary with the individual, further adding to the complexity. One teacher, when asked why teachers are leaving, offers a reply encompassing many reasons. She states,

> "One has to do with pay and knowing that in _____we are paid far less, thousand of dollars less than the surrounding counties for the same years of experience. Two, I think support was a big issue as well as the kindness which you get from the administration in the field—the building administration. In the end, from teachers who were brand new, they said they didn't realize that it would be like this, like this meaning all of the ways that you are pulled by several different people and all the expectations.

> Paperwork, after school, how to manage your time, how to organize it all when you feel like things are coming at you from all different directions, and there were even a few that said that their student teaching experience didn't mirror with the real world like, so they had issues with how to adjust."

What is consistent across all facets of this study is the finding that insufficient salary, lack of administrative support, and lack of planning time are the top reasons that teachers leave the profession. These factors not only lead to teachers' sense of professionalism and improved levels of job satisfaction, but ultimately increase the likelihood of teachers' remaining in their school divisions. To retain quality teachers for Virginia schools, a menu of recommendations exist. The alternative to the recommendations put forth in this paper is to accept the end of the era of the 30-35-year career teacher. Mary Futrell states that, "We're going to see a profession in which if a teacher stays five to seven years, that's a senior teacher. And that's not good for America." From an organizational perspective, teacher attrition in schools is of concern not only because it can be an indication of underlying problems in how well schools work, but also it can be disruptive, in and of itself, for the quality of school community and performance.

APPENDIX A

Teacher Retention Focus Group Discussion Guide

Teacher Retention Focus Group Discussion Guide

(5 minutes) Introduction

- Greeting
- Purpose of focus group—opportunity for teachers to share their perspectives on the effectiveness of teacher retention incentives.
- Ground rules
    a. Role of moderator
    b. Recording equipment
    c. Confidentiality of comments/responses
    d. Individual options (no right or wrong)
    e. Speak one at a time and as clearly as possible

(5 minutes) Get-Acquainted Period

- Participants share names, positions, number of years teaching experience, school divisions

(20 minutes) Personal Perspectives on Staying and Leaving

- Why do you choose to stay in your current teaching position?
- Why do you think teachers leave your school division? Why do you think teachers leave the profession?

(15 minutes) School Division Strategies

- What does your school division currently do to retain teachers in the first 5 years?
- Which of these strategies do you think are most/least effective?
- What is the number one thing your school division could do to keep good teachers in the classroom?
- What other things could your school division do?
- How do veteran teachers influence teachers with less experience to stay in the classroom/school division?

(10 minutes) Extended Retention Strategies

- What types of opportunities and support would encourage teachers to stay in your school division/the teaching profession?
- How should we recognize individual teachers for their commitment to the profession and to their students? For their excellence in teaching?
- What else is important to keeping teachers in the classroom?

(5 minutes) Summary and Closure

- Recap discussion
- Thank participants

Central Office Administrator Survey

Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium
Virginia Commonwealth University

Retaining Quality Teachers Study

Administrator Survey

Name of Person Completing Survey _____

Position or Title _____

Work Phone Number _____

Email _____

PRIOR TO COMPLETING THIS SURVEY PLEASE READ THIS STATEMENT

Participation in this survey is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Also, please be advised that you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss to you. For questions, concerns, or special accommodations, please contact Janine Certo at 827-1216.

School Division _____

Date of Survey Completion _____

MERC Study- Retaining Quality Teachers

Administrator Survey

Please circle the extent to which your school division has recently or currently employed the following strategies to retain teachers. Use the following scale:

4= Extensively
3= To Some Extent
2= To a Very Small Extent
1= Not at All

Teacher Support or Recognition Strategy	**Extensively**	**To Some Extent**	**To a Very Small Extent**	**Not at All**
Salary increase for new teachers	4	3	2	1
Salary increase for experienced teachers	4	3	2	1
Increase in provision of resources and supplies	4	3	2	1
Increased planning time	4	3	2	1
Reductions in class size	4	3	2	1
Teacher decision-making with curriculum	4	3	2	1
Teacher decision-making with student assessment	4	3	2	1
Teacher decision-making with scheduling	4	3	2	1
Teacher decision-making with policy	4	3	2	1
Increased opportunities for collegial interaction	4	3	2	1
Mentorship	4	3	2	1
Peer evaluation	4	3	2	1
Administrator evaluation	4	3	2	1
Reduced paperwork	4	3	2	1
Support for working with parents	4	3	2	1
Tuition reimbursement	4	3	2	1
Financial support for National Board Certification	4	3	2	1

Please describe any strategies to increase teacher autonomy and/or respect for teachers and the profession.

Please list any other teacher retention strategies employed by your division.

Of the above strategies or those on the previous page, please list the top three strategies your division employs to retain teachers.

Number One Strategy _____

Number Two Strategy _____

Number Three Strategy _____

Thank you.

Exiting Teacher Interview Protocol

MERC Study- Retaining Quality Teachers

Exiting Teacher Interview Protocol

1. Inform individuals of who you are and why you are calling----that this will be an interview to learn about why they left their former school division or the teaching profession.

   Say verbatim to individual:

   Participation in this interview is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Also, please be advised that you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss to you. The results of this study may help school divisions to improve teacher retention strategies. Do you have any questions for me?

2. Assure individuals that their answers to the questions are completely confidential and that it is important to answer honestly.

Questions:

1. First, please tell me your current job position.

2. What was the number one reason you chose to leave your former school division or the teaching profession?

Terminate interview here if ascertained that "leaving" was due to external factor of relocation. Go to next person on the list.

3. For what other reasons did you leave your former school division or the teaching profession?

4. What would have been the number one factor that might have caused you to stay in your former position?

5. How much did each of the following factors influence your decision to leave your former school division or the profession?

   Scale: A lot Some Not much None

   - Salary
   - Resources and Supplies
   - Administrative Support
   - Discipline
   - Parental Support
   - Mentorship or Other Support for New Teachers
   - Professional Development Opportunities
   - SOL-related Mandates and Duties

6. Finally, are there any other factors that might have caused you to stay in your former position?

APPENDIX B

Summary of Raw Data From Administrator Survey

Division responses to "please describe any strategies to increase teacher autonomy and/or respect for teachers and the profession".

- No response given.
- -Outstanding Performance awards go to teachers who have shown excellence in their profession for the current school year.
  -Teachers of the Year recognized at Convocation
  -Annual gifts from the School Board-ex. pocket calendars
- No response given.
- -Development of a new evaluation system
  -Redesigning our mentorship program
  -Strong code-of-conduct to support teachers
- No response given.
- -Teacher input into the block scheduling process
  -Teacher input into textbook selection
  -Teacher input into curriculum development
  -Teacher input through TAC
- -Recognition of many teachers at school board meetings and at special events.
  -Personal contacts, both formal and informal, by the superintendent and school board members with teachers and administrators

Division responses to "please list any other teacher retention strategies employed by your division.

- No response given.
- Being a small division, we focus a great amount of time making personal contacts with teachers. Having central office staff visible and available in the buildings establishes an open climate. Teachers feel free to voice concerns and "ask for support".
- Salary increase and $750 for every employee: includes support and clerical as well as teachers.
- -Shared decision-making
  -Teacher input into budget and calendar
  -SOL coordination to assist teachers
  -Service-oriented administrative staff that serves as a resource for teachers
- No response given.
- -Tuition reimbursement
  -Rehiring of retirees for critical areas on a part-time basis
  -Offer extended contracts
  -Offering of discretionary leave
  -Benefits package
- Offer masters degree satellite programs in the school division for employees.

Division responses to "of the above strategies or those on the previous page, please list the top three strategies your division employs to retain teachers".

- #1 Increased salary

#2 Tuition reimbursement
#3 Increased opportunities for collegial interaction

- #1 Increase in provision of resources and supplies
  #2 Recognition
  #3 Support from mentors, peer coaches and administration

- #1 Salary
  #2 Work conditions are good
  #3 Support from community for schools
- No response given

- #1 Salary increase for new teachers
  #2 Salary increase for experienced teachers
  #3 Mentorship

  - #1 Extended contracts to teachers
  #2 Curriculum development input
  #3 Benefits package

- #1 Salary increase for experienced teachers
  #2 Mentorship (three-year program)
  #3 Recognition of many teachers at school board meetings and at special events

APPENDIX C

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