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Meeting the Needs of Teachers as Whole Learners

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spending more time with my family and friends. I am thankful for this opportunity, but also thankful to have it behind me to move on to other adventures.

Abstract

This exploratory study investigated the applicability of the Whole Child/Whole Learner concept to the teaching profession. Utilizing open-ended questions on a web-based questionnaire that was completed by secondary-level teachers throughout Arkansas, this pragmatic qualitative inquiry obtained information about teachers' experiences in, and attitudes toward, the teaching profession. The constant comparative method was used to analyze participants' responses to open-ended questions; patterns and themes that emerged through the data were then examined through the lenses of the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner approach.

Of the five, 'safe' was the tenet that arose least frequently in participants' responses. 'Healthy,' 'engaged,' and 'challenged' all emerged with roughly equal frequency. 'Supported' was the tenet from the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework that appeared most commonly as a need in participants' responses to open-ended items about their experiences in the teaching profession.

Given the valuable insight yielded by this exploratory study of the applicability of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework to teachers at the secondary level, it is recommended that this study be replicated with a greater number of teachers, as well as with teachers at all grade levels.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

This study examines the ongoing teacher shortage in Arkansas through the lens of the Whole Child/Whole Learner. While numerous studies have been undertaken to examine teacher shortages (e.g., Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016), none to date have examined this issue through the lens of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework.

Explaining, "In new fields of study where little work has been done, few definitive hypotheses exist, and little is known about the nature of the phenomenon, qualitative inquiry is a reasonable beginning point for research," Patton (2015) asserts that exploratory studies, "using qualitative methods, is the way new fields of inquiry are developed, especially in the policy arena" (p. 230).

Just such an exploratory study, this investigation serves to begin a new strain in the research literature on teacher retention. The results of this study provide valuable information about the relationship between teachers being healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, and their likely retention in the profession. By contributing to the understanding of teachers' needs, the study offers policymakers and practitioners information that may help them to retain teachers to help students.

Problem Statement

Teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates, with 43% of teachers in Arkansas leaving within their first five years of teaching (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016). Additionally, fewer teachers are entering teacher preparation programs, which furthers the problem. Sutcher et al. (2016) suggested that the ongoing teacher

shortage can be solved in large part by retaining the teachers who are currently in the system.

Background of the Problem

Since the end of the Great Recession, it has been difficult for school leaders across the United States to find sufficient qualified teachers to serve their students (Sutcher et al., 2016). News reports have regularly chronicled the teacher shortage that has bedeviled many states (Hale, 2015; KATV, 2016; Markovich, 2015; Nix, 2015). Markovich (2015) reported that, in the state of Washington, the lack of teachers had reached a 'crisis' level, with 45% of principals indicating that they could not fill all teaching positions with highly qualified teachers. One principal whom Markovich (2015) interviewed reported having had to fill in as a substitute teacher, himself, because neither a teacher nor a suitable substitute could be found. Strauss (2015a, 2015b, 2017), for her part, has highlighted multiple mid-career teachers who have decided to leave the teaching profession – not because of the often challenging behaviors of the almost exclusively underprivileged students whom these educators have taught, but because successions of so-called reform efforts by policymakers have increased the bureaucratic burdens of teachers. These efforts have caused them to feel increasingly dispirited, while not helping them to improve outcomes for students.

Many states, such as Arizona, California, Nevada, and Oklahoma report having inexperienced, unlicensed teachers filling classroom vacancies (Strauss, 2015a). Nix (2015) described Oklahoma as trying to fill teacher vacancies by putting 1,000 uncertified teachers in classrooms. That author went on to explain that many teachers are electing to travel from Oklahoma to nearby states to teach, due to the higher salaries that

are paid in those neighboring states. During the recession, Oklahoma made more cuts to its state budget than any other state, which has had a profound impact on education funding in the Sooner State (Nix, 2015).

The Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research (2016) has reported that, while the number of teachers increased by 3.4% between the 2004-2005 and 2014-2015 academic years, the total number of students increased by 4.5% during that same timeframe, resulting in a net shortage of teachers for those students. In Arkansas, shortages exist in specific subject areas, high-poverty schools, and high-minority schools. In addition, the average rate of teacher attrition after only 1 year in the profession is 15.29%; after three years, is 30.57%; and after five years, is 36.19%, with those rates showing increasing trends (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016).

Evidence suggested that the shortage of teachers across the nation will only continue to increase (Sutcher et al., 2016). In Arkansas, the total number of teacher candidates declined by 2,997 between 2010 and 2015, with the shortage most pronounced in low-income, high poverty areas of the state (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016), while in California the number of teacher preparation enrollees has declined 75% in less than 10 years (Strauss, 2015a).

In addition to a lack of enrollees in teacher preparation programs, many experienced teachers are leaving the profession for a variety of reasons (Strauss, 2015b). One poll showed a 23% decrease in teacher satisfaction in just a seven-year span of time (Strauss, 2015a).

Key Terms

Burnout is defined as physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion from work that is emotionally demanding (Shaufelli & Greenglass, 2001).

Challenged, as it relates to students, is defined as follows: "Each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global economy" (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD], 2013, p. 1). For purposes of this investigation, whose focus is on educators, the term will signify teachers feeling encouraged to refine their practices, even to accept additional responsibilities.

Emotional Exhaustion is defined as emotionally overextended and drained by those served (Shaufelli & Greenglass, 2001).

Depersonalization is defined as a decline in one's feelings of accomplishment (Shaufelli & Greenglass, 2001).

Engaged, as it relates to students, is defined as follows: "Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community" (ASCD, 2013). For purposes of this study, with its focus on educators, the term will refer both to teachers' "meaningful participation in decision making" (ASCD, 2013, p. 1) and to Kahn's (1990) definition of personal engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence…, and active, full role performance" (p. 700).

Healthy, for purposes of this investigation, refers to educators' health and well-being, including their "access to health, mental health, and dental services" (ASCD, 2013, p. 1).

Safe, for purposes of this study, means that the school environment is "physically and emotionally safe for students and adults" (ASCD, 2013, p. 1).

Self-efficacy is a personality variable that reflects a person's optimistic self-beliefs about his job (Shahab & Ali, 2013).

Supported, for purposes of this study, refers to educators being "well qualified and properly credentialed" (ASCD, 2013, p. 4); moreover, it refers to their ongoing, professional learning with support from school leaders and other colleagues.

Significance of the Study

Trombly (2014) claimed that "similar patterns repeat themselves at both higher and lower scales within complex systems" (p. 50). He explained that the kinds of complaints that students voice about teachers are the same that teachers voice about building-level administrators, and that building-level administrators voice about district-level administrators. He suggested that those in an organization need to keep two mindsets: the individual's role in the organization, as well as the overall picture of the organization. It is my contention that these ideas can be extended when thinking of the Whole Child (ASCD, 2013). Not only should students be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, but teachers should also be afforded every opportunity to experience those same things.

In 2013, with the publication of the tenets of the Whole Child, ASCD identified educators as both contributing to and benefiting from the five tenets of the Whole Child initiative, which calls for students to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Indeed, educators are explicitly mentioned in the indicators of several of the tenets. In the 'healthy' tenet, educators' mental and physical health is mentioned several

times, indicating that part of the responsibility of the district is to help sustain educators' health and well-being. In the 'safe' tenet, it is mentioned several times that staff members should have a physically and emotionally safe environment, as well as opportunities for learning. The 'supported' tenet, ASCD (2013) goes on to explain, requires that school staff members should be engaged in decision-making processes, involving them more fully in the school.

Research Questions

The research questions that drove this study were:

1. Are teachers' basic needs to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged being met?

2. Is it conceivable that a focus on these five tenets as they relate to teachers might increase the number of teachers who decide to remain in the profession?

Limitations

The link to the online questionnaire that was employed in this study was emailed to all secondary-level principals in Arkansas whose email addresses are included in the Listserv maintained by the Arkansas Association for Educational Administrators. Secondary principals were asked to forward the email to all teachers on their faculties. Consequently, data collection was limited to teachers from high schools whose principals are members of the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA) and of the Arkansas Association of Secondary Principals, a subsidiary organization of the AAEA. While results represent information that was submitted only by teachers in Arkansas high schools, readers outside Arkansas may determine that these results may also be applicable to schools in their own states.

As the researcher, I have been the key instrument for collecting, analyzing, categorizing, and interpreting the information contained in the survey responses. Those who place greater credence in research characterized by randomized controlled trials might perceive the qualitative nature of this study, and of my serving as the primary research instrument, as a limitation (Merriam, 1998). Consequently, in the pages that follow, I have worked to demonstrate the trustworthiness of my findings by clearly explaining the processes that I used to collect, analyze, and interpret participating teachers' responses to the open-ended items that were included on the online survey that they completed (Patton, 2015).

Summary

This exploratory qualitative study examined responses from Arkansas secondary-level teachers about their experiences in, and attitudes toward, the teaching profession through the lenses of the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework. The aim of this investigation was to determine the applicability of that framework to understanding and addressing the lived experiences of teachers, in order that more teachers might be retained in the profession.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Literature Search Strategy

The following is an extensive review of the available literature published on teacher retention and satisfaction in relation to the whole learner. Initially a search of Arkansas Tech University's databases was conducted using the search terms "whole learner", yielding a result of 1,740 results, none of which were useful to this investigation. Subsequent searches were undertaken, using a variety of search terms. The last such search was conducted with the search terms "employee health". The search yielded 3,551 which was narrowed to 955 by focusing on peer reviewed journals published between 2006 and 2016. Some items were beneficial, but others were not relevant to the study. I examined the reference lists of articles that were useful to identify other sources to pursue.

Introduction to the Literature

Teacher Elizabeth Janeczko stated "The burden of teaching has finally caught up with me" (Strauss, 2017, When I Started Teaching, I wasn't Scared of Anything, para. 3). Explaining that she has been hit by students, and had students throw books out the window and punch walls, she asserted that she has never been scared until now. What Ms. Janeczko – a veteran teacher – fears is not that she will be physically injured, but that she is not making a difference in the academic and life outcomes of her students. Describing herself and her colleagues as suffering "indignities," she referred not to the behavior or attitudes of students, but to the continuous waves of reform initiatives and calls for accountability. Stephanie Keiles, another veteran teacher, explained how she is being forced to follow mandates, including standardized testing, that are not best for kids

(Strauss, 2015b). Both teachers have quit teaching in public schools due to burdens being placed on them that neither believes help kids. In addition, Keiles mentioned how privatization is undercutting public schools, and that pay for teachers in Michigan has either been frozen or decreased for the last five years (Strauss, 2015b). Teacher attrition is at an all-time high in many states and there are fewer and fewer people going into the profession, which is causing a nation-wide teacher shortage that is only getting worse.

In July 2014, the United States Department of Education launched an initiative entitled the Excellent Educators for All Initiative which was meant to ensure that states hired qualified teachers to teach in high-minority and high-poverty areas (Williams, Adrien, Murthy, & Pietryka, 2016); however, across the nation and in Arkansas teacher shortages are compromising students' access to qualified teachers, particularly in high-minority and high-poverty areas (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016). National teacher education enrollment numbers dropped 35% from 2009 to 2014, with the number of traditional and non-traditional teacher candidates in Arkansas dropping from 8,255 in 2010 to 5,258 in 2015 (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016). It was estimated that the year 2016 would have the lowest numbers of both traditionally and non-traditionally licensed teachers in over 10 years (Sutcher et al., 2016). The Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research (2016) expressed that the number of teacher candidates in Arkansas is only 63% of what the state needs to fill vacancies, because – while the number of students has grown by 4.5% – the number of teachers has only grown by 3.4% from 2004 to 2015. In addition, for the 2016-17 school year, even greater numbers of shortage areas were identified. Nationally, the same trends are being

seen, with the shortage of special education and science teachers increasing across the country (USDOE, 2016).

In addition to the lack of teachers going into the profession, and to the numbers of teachers who retire from the profession after a lifetime in the field, teacher attrition plays a part in the present shortage. In Arkansas, 16% of teachers leave after 1 year, 37% after three years, and 40% after five years, with high-poverty, high-minority schools having teacher attrition rates 2.4 times higher than those in other areas (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016). According to Sutcher et al. (2016), the nation lost hundreds of thousands of teachers each year, the majority before retirement age. Reducing attrition would make a greater difference in countering the teacher shortage than any other intervention, because reducing attrition by half would almost eliminate the shortage (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Teachers leave the profession for various reasons, with the characteristics of schools playing a key role (Borman & Dowling, 2008). One research study suggested that teachers leave because of lack of leadership, the culture of their school building, the nature of relationships, lack of time for collaboration, and because they do not feel as if they have decision-making power (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Another adds to the list by citing that teachers also leave for personal safety reasons and because of unhealthy conditions within buildings (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2007). Teachers in Arkansas who were considering leaving the profession cited the top two reasons as stress/workload and salary (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016).

Sutcher and his colleagues (2016) stated that 55% of teachers leave because of dissatisfaction, and 25% of those are because of accountability issues. Even though the

numbers of minority teachers have increased since the 80s, minority teachers often find themselves working in high-poverty and hard to staff schools, causing them to leave at higher rates (Ingersoll & May, 2011). In general, teachers leave the profession at higher rates if they serve in high-poverty, high-minority, and low-achieving schools (e.g., Allensworth, Ponisciak, Mazzeo, 2009; USDOE, 2016), or if they have had little formal teacher preparation – a situation that often exists at higher poverty, higher minority schools (Sutcher et al., 2016). While some authors suggested paying teachers more in order to attract and retain better teachers (Denby, 2016), others have identified that salaries alone are not sufficient to retain teachers at hard to staff schools (Almy & Tooley, 2012). Results from a 2012 study indicated that working conditions matter most in a teacher's decision to leave, and argued that the reason turnover is greater in high-poverty, high-minority schools is that teachers felt that conditions were not favorable, not because the students were more challenging (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012).

Younger teachers have the highest attrition rates (Allensworth et al., 2009). Gordon and Maxey (2000) claimed that beginning teachers are often assigned to teach the most challenging students, but are given very little support or resources to help with an already stressful teaching situation. Mentoring can help new teachers during the first couple of years, but, in order to achieve long-term stability, teachers must form relationships with colleagues (Allensworth et al., 2009). Administrators played key roles in helping foster environments where relationships are built to increase new teachers' satisfaction and, therefore, their retention rates (Song & Mustafa, 2015). Because 23% of surveyed teachers who were changing schools voluntarily did so because of school factors (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2016), it is important to note

that leadership plays an important role in teachers' organizational commitment and therefore retention (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013). The results of one research study indicated that the elementary schools in Chicago with the greatest stability are those that also enjoy high organizational commitment (Allensworth et al., 2009). The authors of that study explained that, in elementary schools where commitment is high, stability rates are still only 91%; in high schools where the same is true, stability rates are only 88%. (See Figure 1)
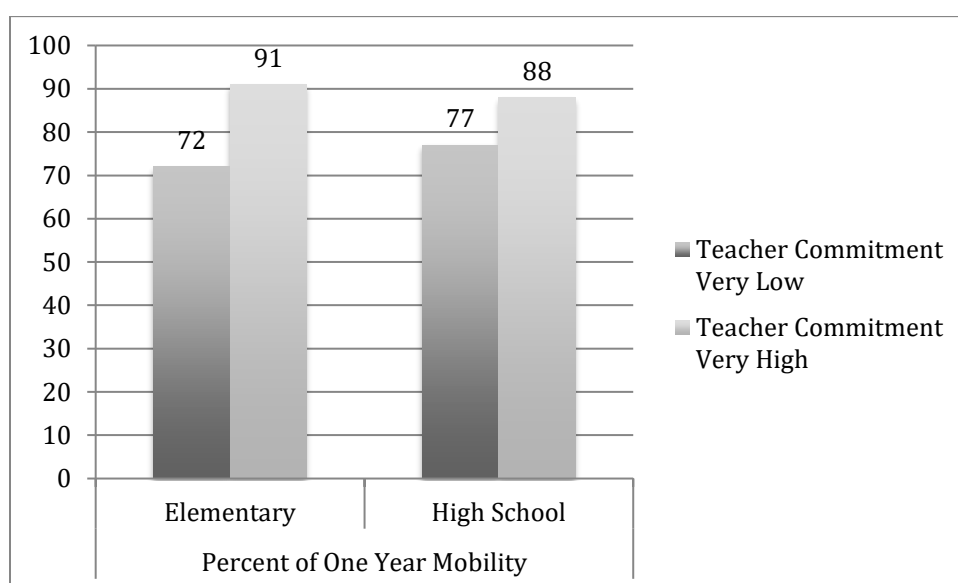
Figure 1. Percent of One-Year Stability vs. Commitment Level of Teachers. This figure illustrates the percentage of one-year teacher stability in schools that have low teacher commitment and those that have high teacher commitment, Allensworth et al. (2009).

Teachers remained in schools characterized by positive, trusting working relationships (Allensworth et al., 2009; Fullan, 2001). Allensworth et al. (2009) suggested that when schools are innovative and school faculties have a strong sense of self-efficacy, teacher retention is more likely to occur. When teachers have positive attitudes about the work environment and report collective responsibility, teacher retention is four to five percentage points higher than in schools where teachers have

negative attitudes. In high-poverty schools, teacher retention is high when teachers report leaders who have developed a shared vision, focus on student achievement, and allow teachers to learn and to grow professionally (Almy & Tooley, 2012). Conversely, teacher turnover increased when a culture of risk-taking, collaboration, and trust are missing (Allensworth et al., 2009; Johnson et al, 2012; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Whole Child

In education historian Diane Ravitch's (2010) considered estimation, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, assumed that test scores would be synonymous with good education, and that lazy teachers were the reason why students were not achieving. Consequently, Ravitch (2010) continued, NCLB laid out a system of accountability that included testing in grades 3-8, timelines for reaching 100% proficiency, meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), labeling schools who did not meet AYP, and restructuring schools who failed to improve. Unfortunately, NCLB had numerous unintended consequences, such as math and literacy being taught to the exclusion of other academic subjects, the arts being reduced significantly or deleted entirely, a test preparation obsession, and a narrowing of the curriculum that caused issues for schools, educators, and students. In addition, NCLB and high stakes testing demoralized the education profession and left public educators feeling trapped by the emphasis that the law placed on standardized test scores (Denby, 2016).

Not long after its passage, NCLB's reform measures appeared not to be working. For example, only a relative few students transferred to 'better' schools under the law's school choice provisions (Ravitch, 2010). Rasberry, Slade, Lohrmann, and Valois (2015)

recounted that, ASCD – formerly known as the Association for Supervision and

Curriculum Development – formed a task force to help counter NCLB's narrow focus on

academics. In 2006, the Commission on the Whole Child set out to define what a

successful learner was, deciding that students needed to be knowledgeable, healthy (both

mentally and physically), civically inspired, engaged in arts, prepared for work, and self-

sufficient. Finally, in 2007, ASCD utilized Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a model for

the Whole Child initiative, whose five tenets are that students must be healthy, safe,

engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2013). In 2014, ASCD and The United

States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) partnered to take the Whole

Child initiative one step further to become the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole

Child model which linked health and learning. These five tenets are a great starting place

for school and community conversations (Trybus, 2015).

School culture is important in determining adult and student outcomes (Weiner &

Higgins, 2017). Many researchers have focused on demographics in relation to teacher

satisfaction, but Johnson et al. (2012) suggested that educator satisfaction is determined

more by culture than demographics. Teachers' work environments determined whether

they have positive or negative feelings about their school (Almy & Tooley, 2012). Those

teachers who stay in their school do so because of positive school cultures, leadership,

and collegial relationships with their colleagues (Johnson et al., 2012)

Theoretical Framework

Abraham Maslow (1943) described a hierarchy of human needs that an individual

must have met in order to achieve her/his full potential. Maslow explained that, to

achieve self-actualization, one must at least partially have her/his physiological needs and

needs for safety, belongingness and love, and esteem met. Once more basic needs were closer to being met, one could strive for her/his more advanced needs also to be met (Maslow, 1943). The five tenets of the Whole Child are similar in scope and sequence (ASCD, 2013).

Since the publication of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, there have been researchers who have tried to disprove his theory. Researchers have tried to develop testable measures of the hierarchy and even though they each had weaknesses, the researchers concluded that Maslow's five needs are not independent factors, but are, in fact, overlapping rather than hierarchical (Otium, 2017). A more recent study of Chinese subjects found that, although there is a hierarchical type progression, the needs still do overlap somewhat, making them more intertwined than was originally suggested by Maslow (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

Leadership

Leadership and organizational management matter (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Seashore Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010). The leader – and teachers' perceptions of her/him – is a big factor in a teacher's decision to remain in a school (Allensworth et. al., 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Many teachers in Arkansas who consider leaving the profession, or at least changing schools, each year do so because of leadership or lack thereof (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2014). Additionally, in high-poverty urban public schools, poor administrative support is the number one reason for teacher dissatisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001). Leadership is instrumental to teacher retention; it can improve retention by four to five percentage points when a school is reported to have strong leadership (Allensworth et. al., 2009).

Improving the knowledge and skill of administrators would improve retention, recruitment, and effectiveness of educators (Sutcher et al., 2016).

As leaders' behaviors are reflected throughout the organizations that they serve, leaders very often come to represent those organizations (Podsakoff, Podsakoff, & Uskova, 2010). It is conceivable, then, that the satisfaction of teachers in a school is at least somewhat correlated to the ability of the school's leaders (Johnson et al., 2005). Teachers form opinions based on how much they feel appreciated, and how personally cared for, in the schools in which they work (Eisenberger, Jones, Aselage, & Sucharski, 2004). Educators want to know that administrators are invested in them, and that they respect the jobs that they are doing (Almy & Tooley, 2012).

Effective leaders are paramount for creating positive environments (Hallinger, 2011; Harris et. al, 2013). Organizational culture appears to make a positive or negative difference in workers' behaviors and practices (Harris, 1994). The climate of a school, it is suggested, can lead to higher rates of teacher retention; leadership and collegial relationships are keys to having positive school climates (Cornelia, 2010). A positive professional culture facilitated growth and change for educators (Seashore Louis et al., 2010, Weiner & Higgins, 2017), and a good leader will buffer external pressures, such as assessment, to allow teachers the space to innovate and to learn (Dworkin & Tober, 2014). When a teacher agrees that administrators encourage, acknowledge, and communicate a clear vision, turnover rates declined (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Teacher Burnout

Schaufeli and Greenglass (2001) defined burnout as the "physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in work situations that are

emotionally demanding," and named several human service professions – including teaching – whose practitioners had a high amount of stress and faced burnout (p. 501). Burnout has an effect on performance, commitment, quality, turnover, and satisfaction, and can lead to mental and physical health problems resulting in lower productivity, absenteeism, and higher turnover rates (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health [NIOSH], 2006; Tso, Liu, & Li, 2014). Burnout happens when the worker cannot handle the workload, and becomes dissatisfied (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004). When individuals become emotionally exhausted – or burned out – as the result of overwork, they experience depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, which results in lowered work performance. Teaching received the highest ranking of burnout by numerous scholars whose works were reviewed (Malik, Zaheer, & Ahmed, 2010; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001; Shahab & Ali, 2013; Tsiglis, Zachopoulou, Grammatikopoulous, 2006).

When workers are overloaded at work, their home-work interface often experiences strain, putting still more stress on the situation, leading to further burnout (Shahab & Ali, 2013). Work overload can be another stressor for teachers in that, if they are not satisfied with the job they are doing, they feel they are pulled in too many directions and can experience burnout (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004). According to Shahab and Ali (2013), when teachers have professional commitment, it can lead to satisfaction and lessen the likelihood for burnout. The authors also claimed that teachers who are satisfied experience low turnover, low absenteeism, and higher quality of work.

Student learning and achievement is most directly impacted by students having a quality teacher in the classroom (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016). Zigarelli (1996) claimed that the best predictor of an effective school is teacher job satisfaction. Of Arkansas teachers surveyed, 58.7% of those who responded said they were considering leaving because of stress/workload (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016). Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) reported that teachers in Canada have less burnout. The authors stated that Canadian teachers have less burnout for a variety of reasons, but that professional learning and development is at the core of a teacher's well-being. An employee's health can be affected by stress level and it can also affect the quality of instruction that students receive (Fenech, 2006). Furthermore, a teacher's mental and physical health, working environment, and feelings of efficacy may be affected by satisfaction level (Aydin et al., 2013).

Principals are integral in sustaining a healthy school community (ASCD, 2011). Breaks, stretching and movement, and healthy food are all factors that could play into an educator's health (Ende, 2015), as Body Mass Index is negatively associated with cognitive function even after adjusting for socio-economic status (Li, Dai, Jackson, & Meuser, 2008). Higher levels of physical activity have been related to higher levels of cognitive performance and, in older adults, have been shown to also improve memory and retention (Verburgh, Königs, Scherder, & Oosterlaan, 2014).

Self-Efficacy and Autonomy

In addition to high stress causing low job satisfaction, some research suggested that too little stress can also lead to low satisfaction (Raju, 2013). This could be related to teachers' need to feel that they are making a difference with the students whom they

teach (Bandura, 1994; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). One needs to feel competent in the job being performed in order to stay motivated and to maintain psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne & Deci, 2005).

Gagne and Deci (2005) stated that teachers should feel some degree of autonomy in the job they are doing to feel satisfied. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) concluded that teachers must have high learning expectations in order to feel satisfied with a sense of autonomy. Seashore Louis and her colleagues (2010) wrote of educators' need to have a voice in decision-making processes at the schools in which they teach. Teachers with low mastery expectations often avoid challenges and often do not grow and develop as do teachers with high mastery expectations.

Whole Learner and Teacher Retention

In 2007, ASCD developed a new mission that included a whole child approach, which focused not only on academic performance, but also included the long-term development of children, which included students being healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (Slade & Griffith, 2013). Learning is an important aspect of human development, and it is imperative that what is known to be important to meeting the needs of the whole child be applied to adult learners as well (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016).

The Whole Child model is for all learners and should become a way of life for adults and students (Ende, 2015). In order to change the culture for both staff and students to succeed, the Whole Child must be kept at the forefront of all interactions (Williams, 2015). To keep teachers in the profession, policies should focus on things like mentoring/induction programs for new teachers, school environment/culture, and

strengthening leaders (Sutcher et al., 2016). When basic needs, such as safety (both physical and emotional), are not met, teaching and learning cannot happen (AFT, 2007), and the two conditions that help in this are school leadership and staff cohesion (Almy & Tooley, 2012).

Summary

The existing literature makes clear that a significant part of the current teacher shortage that is being experienced in Arkansas and across the country is the very high number of teachers who leave the profession each year after only a short time in the classroom. The literature likewise enumerates many of the factors that have resulted in this high rate of attrition. While the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework (ASCD, 2013) has contributed to educators' and policymakers' understanding of the needs of students to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, that same framework has not yet been employed in efforts to understand teachers' needs. The exploratory study described in the chapters that follow was undertaken to begin to establish a body of literature on the applicability of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework to the teaching profession.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study examined teacher attrition and retention through the lens of the Whole Child – or, more accurately, the Whole Learner. The study investigated Arkansas high school teachers' perceptions of whether they are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged at school. Various studies that have looked at teacher retention and attrition have helped determine some of the reasons why teachers leave the profession and/or their schools (Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, 2016, Sutcher et al., 2016). None, though, have examined retention through the lens of the Whole Child/Whole Learner. In efforts to help guide education reform efforts, and to increase rates of teacher retention in Arkansas, this study aimed to help determine why teachers remain in the profession, generally, and in their schools, specifically.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide the study on how to keep quality teachers in the teaching profession in Arkansas High Schools:

1. Are teachers' basic needs to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged being met?

2. Is it conceivable that a focus on these five tenets as they relate to teachers might increase the number of teachers who decide to remain in the profession?

Research Design

This exploratory investigation of the applicability of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework to the teaching profession took the form of a pragmatic qualitative inquiry, utilizing open-ended questions on a web-based questionnaire that was completed by secondary teachers throughout Arkansas. According to Agee (2009), "With a

qualitative study, a researcher is inquiring about such topics as how people are experiencing an event, a series of events, and/or a condition. The questions generally seek to uncover the perspectives of an individual, a group, or different groups" (p. 434). In keeping with Patton's (2015) description of pragmatic inquiry as "seeking practical and useful insights to inform action" (p. 153), this investigation asked participants about their experiences in the teaching profession, specifically to determine whether the kinds of information that they shared would lend themselves to examination through the lenses of the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework.

In planning the questions, I consulted with a practicing middle school principal. I discussed with her the idea that I had about my topic – that is, about the potential applicability of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework to teachers' professional experiences, and we brainstormed potential items that could be useful to answer the research questions. After the items were formulated, I created the survey instrument on a Google Form, and allowed the same administrator and a couple of additional ones to complete the survey to see if the items were clearly worded, and if they would elicit the kinds of information for which I was seeking. I specifically formulated open-ended questions knowing I would be looking for how the responses fit into the five tenets of the whole child. Feedback from these colleagues was used to refine the questions that were ultimately included on the survey to which the participants responded (Appendix A).

The survey consisted of a variety of open-ended questions, including several items designed to gain background information about each respondent's length of time as a teacher, as well as the demographic make-up of the school in which she worked (e.g., percentage of students who qualify to receive free and reduced-price lunch; percentage

students from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds). Subsequent survey items asked open-ended questions about whether and why the teacher may have changed schools during her career, what had kept her in the profession, and – if she had ever considered leaving the profession – why she considered doing so. The final item asked each respondent to explain what would have helped her most difficult year(s) of teaching not to be so difficult. Open-ended items, such as were employed on the questionnaire for this study, permit researchers to see respondents' points of view without bias or preconceptions (Patton, 2015).

Data Collection

Approval was sought and obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Arkansas Tech University. A link to a Google Form survey was sent to a representative at the Arkansas Association of Education Administrators, who then forwarded that link via a mass email through the Listserv of the Arkansas Association of Secondary School Principals. The email asked principals to forward the email – and, therefore, the link to the questionnaire – to all of the teachers within their respective buildings.

Reminder emails were sent at intervals following the initial email, both to remind receiving principals to forward the survey link to the teachers in their respective buildings, and to afford teachers sufficient opportunity to complete the survey. After two full weeks, the survey was closed, so that results could be analyzed.

Data Analysis

While I was initially discouraged by the limited number of teachers who completed the survey, that disappointment eroded as I examined the data that those respondents provided. Not only were my 49 respondents reflective (in demographic

terms) of the overall Arkansas teaching force, but the comments that they submitted were rich, descriptive, and potentially useful in helping to address the teacher shortage that confronts Arkansas and the nation.

While I had determined from the very outset of this project that I would examine participants' responses through the lenses of the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework – healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, I nevertheless employed the constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 2013) as I read and reread the completed questionnaires. Because the items on the questionnaire were open-ended, the process of determining which themes matched which tenets was an iterative one. With each new completed questionnaire, the initial patterns and themes were reviewed, and in some cases revised, to accommodate the new data.

Because participants' responses took the form of narratives, it was not uncommon for multiple tenets to be addressed in responses to individual items. Consequently, I quantified the frequency with which each of the five tenets appeared across the 49 participants' responses to the several items.

Summary

This exploratory qualitative study was undertaken in efforts to determine whether the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework, which, in the decade since its creation, has shown its utility at helping educators and policymakers to understand and address the needs of school children, has similar applicability to understanding and addressing the needs of the teachers who serve them. An on-line survey with open-ended items was administered to secondary-level teachers from across Arkansas in order to obtain

information about their experiences in and attitudes about the teaching profession.

Participating teachers' responses are presented and analyzed in the pages that follow.

Chapter Four: Results

Given the high rate of teacher turnover in the State of Arkansas, the purpose of this study was to collect data from secondary teachers who had elected to remain in the profession to determine what factors had kept them from leaving the profession as so many of their peers had. A survey was distributed electronically to secondary teachers via their building principals, whose email addresses are included in the Arkansas Association of Secondary School Principals Listserv, in an effort to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Are teachers' basic needs to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged being met?

2. Is it conceivable that a focus on these five tenets as they relate to teachers might increase the number of teachers who decide to remain in the profession?

Survey responses were analyzed, and emergent themes were identified. Respondents' comments were tallied and coded according to the five tenets of the Whole Child/Learner: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

The Respondents

While only 49 secondary teachers completed the survey, those respondents were nevertheless demographically reflective of the overall Arkansas teacher population.

Where 23.6% of the respondents were male and 71.4% were female, 28.6% of the teaching population in Arkansas are male and 76.4% are female (Arkansas Department of Education, 2017).

Of the 49 respondents, 93.9% identified themselves as White, 4.1% identified themselves as African American, and 2% identified themselves as Native American. Statewide, 89.9% of teachers are White, 8.2% are African American, 0.55% are Native American, 0.28% are Hispanic, and 0.36% are of Asian descent. Just over one quarter of the respondents – 26.5% – indicated that they were between 21 and 29 years of age. Slightly more than 16% of the respondents described themselves as being between the ages of 30 and 39 years, with an equal number between the ages of 40 and 49 years. Just under one third of the respondents – 32.7% – were between 50 and 59 years of age. The remaining 8.2% of respondents were 60 years of age or older.
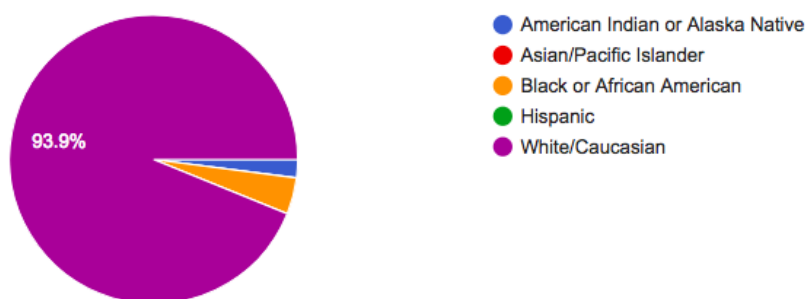
Figure 2. Ethnicity of respondents. This figure shows the percentages of the respondents that were identified in each ethnic category.
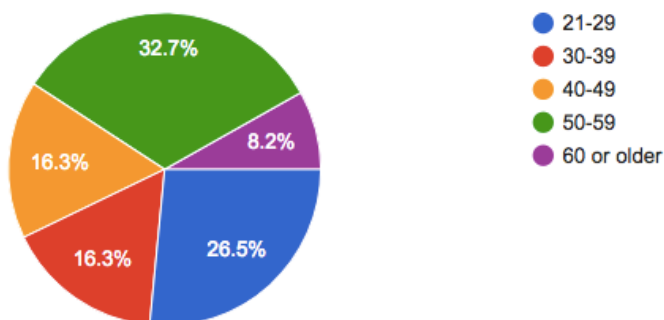
Figure 3. Age of respondents. This figure represents the age of percentage of respondents from each age group.

Almost two-thirds of the 49 respondents – 65.3% – had graduated from traditional teacher preparation programs, while 28.6% had completed such nontraditional programs as Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) programs or the Arkansas Professional Pathways to Educational Licensure (APPEL) program. The remaining 6.1% of respondents indicated that they had gone through no teacher preparation program at all.

Slightly more of the 49 respondents were early-career (1-5 years), than were either mid-career (6-20 years) or late-career (21-30+ years). Just over 18% of respondents were in their first or second year of teaching. Slightly more than 20% were in their third through fifth year of teaching. Approximately 10% of respondents were in their sixth through tenth year of teaching. Just over 16% of respondents had been teaching for between 11 and 20 years. The greatest number – 28.6% – had been teaching for between two and three decades. The remaining 6.1% of respondents had been in the teaching profession for more than 30 years.

Figure 4. Tenure in profession. This figure shows the percentage of respondents who were in each band level representing how long the respondent has been in the teaching profession.

In response to a question about the socioeconomic makeup of the student populations of their respective schools, 34.7% of the respondents were unsure of the percentage of their schools' students who qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch,

while 14.3% of the respondents expressed that they taught in schools whose free and reduced-price lunch rate was 90% or above. While only 2% indicated that between 80 and 89% of the students in their schools qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, 20.4% indicated that the rates in their own schools were between 70 and 79%. 18.4% of respondents identified that between 60 and 69% of students in their schools qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch, and the re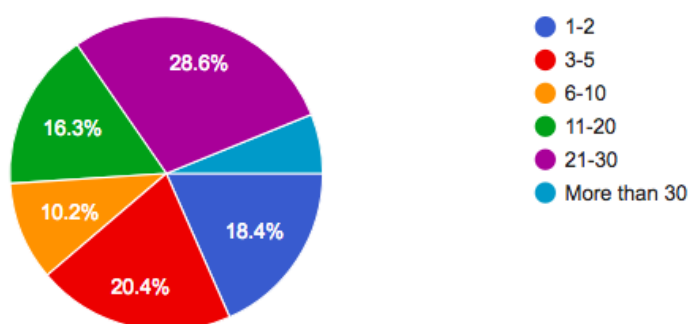maining 10.2% indicated that fewer than 60% of the students in their schools qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Asked about the racial/ethnic makeup of the student bodies of their respective schools, 59.2% of respondents indicated that fewer than 40% of their schools' students were from racial/ethnic minority groups. 12.2% of respondents identified their schools' student bodies as including between 40 and 59% students from racial/ethnic minority groups. 2% expressed that between 60 and 79% of the students whom their schools served were from racial/ethnic minority groups. A surprisingly large percentage of respondents – 26.5% – admitted not knowing what percentage of their schools' students were from racial/ethnic minority groups.

Questions were included on the survey instrument, and respondents' data were disaggregated, to identify any trends that might exist in those teachers who had moved schools and those who had considered leaving the profession. Nineteen of the respondents have changed schools and have considered leaving the profession, while 13 have changed schools but not considered leaving the profession. Of those who have not changed schools, 8 have considered leaving the profession and ten have neither changed schools nor considered leaving the profession. Of the respondents with between 11 and 20 years of experience, four times as many have considered leaving the profession as

have not considered leaving it. For those in the profession 1-5 years, an equal amount has considered leaving and have not considered leaving teaching.

When considering the data in terms of traditionally and non-traditionally prepared teachers, a higher percentage of traditionally trained teachers have considered leaving the profession. Nineteen of the 32 traditionally trained respondents admitted to considering leaving the profession, while equal numbers of non-traditionally trained teachers had considered leaving as had not considered leaving. In addition, of the three respondents who had not gone through a teacher preparation program, two had not considered leaving, while one had considered leaving the profession.

It is apparent that some of the secondary-level principals to whom I had sent the survey link to share with their teachers were not particularly attentive to the instructions that I had included. Two administrators actually took the survey, themselves – one principal and one assistant principal. In addition, an already retired teacher completed the survey, likely because her school email account has remained active, and she therefore received the email with the survey link that the principal of her former school had forwarded to that school's faculty. Despite the fact that these educators are not current classroom teachers, I included their responses in my analysis, as the data that they provided were rich and thought-provoking.

The Whole Child/Whole Learner Concept

While the topics addressed in this study are far from unique, what is novel about this exploratory investigation is the lens through which those topics are examined. The lens of the Whole Child/Whole Learner, with its five tenets, is an important addition to the ongoing scholarship on teacher retention. The needs identified by Maslow in his

hierarchy have been shown to be applicable to individuals of all ages, not only children. It makes sense, then, that adults – not least, teachers – would need to feel healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged in order to feel whole as learners, and to feel competent and satisfied in their work as professional educators.

The information provided below is presented according to each of the five tenets of the whole child (healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged). Each tenet includes an overview of the answers given by respondents that fit into each of the categories.

Participants' responses, quantified. Following my examination of the demographic information provided by responding teachers about themselves and the schools in which they teach, I analyzed participants' narrative responses to the five open-ended items through the lens of the Whole Child. More specifically, I coded participants' responses according to which of the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework that they addressed: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

In coding the answers to the questions, I used a constant comparative method in which I identified all parts of responses and categorized them according to which of the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner they seemed to indicate. While I knew from the outset that I would be looking at responses through the lens of the five tenets, I did not fully anticipate what information the participants would include in response to these open-ended items. Once responses began coming in, and I began color coding them, I recognized that numerous responses addressed multiple tenets. In theory, each response could have included all 5 of the tenets, depending on the extent of the response. For example, one respondent said that she had considered leaving the teaching profession

because of "lack of pay, benefits, and stress"; I coded that response as addressing both the 'supported' and 'healthy' tenets. Overall, I found that the tenets – not unlike the needs included in Maslow's famous hierarchy on which the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework is based – were not mutually exclusive. Neither were they entirely hierarchical. Some of the tenets overlapped; others were more dependent upon earlier tenets than others.

In participants' responses to the open-ended item *Given the challenging nature of teaching, why do you remain in the profession?* the 'healthy' tenet appeared 10 times; 'safe' was not mentioned at all; 'engaged' emerged 27 times; 'supported' appeared three times; and 'challenged' emerged 15 times.

Tenet	Appearances in Responses
Healthy	10
Safe	0
Engaged	27
Supported	3
Challenged	15

Figure 5. Responses to: Given the challenging nature of teaching, why do you remain in the profession?

Thirty-one participants indicated that they had changed schools during the course of their careers. In participants' responses to the item, *If you have changed schools, why did you decide to change schools?* the 'healthy' tenet did not appear at all; 'safe' emerged three times; 'engaged' was mentioned once; 'supported' appeared 15 times, and 'challenged' emerged 11 times.

Tenet	Appearances in Responses
Healthy	0
Safe	3
Engaged	1
Supported	15
Challenged	11

Figure 6. Responses to: If you have changed schools, why did you decide to change schools?

Eighteen respondents indicated that they had taught in the same school throughout their career. In those participants' responses to the item, *If you have never changed schools, what are the factors that keep you at your current school?* the 'healthy' tenet never appeared; 'safe' emerged only once; 'engaged' appeared six times; 'supported' emerged nine times; and 'challenged' appeared four times.

Tenet	Appearances in Responses
Healthy	0
Safe	1
Engaged	6
Supported	9
Challenged	4

Figure 7. Responses to: If you have never changed schools, what are the factors that keep you at your current school?

Twenty-seven participants indicated that they had, at some point in their teaching career, considered leaving the profession. In their responses to the item, *What factors have made you consider leaving the profession?* the 'healthy' tenet emerged 18 times; the 'safe' tenet appeared only once; the 'engaged' tenet likewise emerged only once; the 'supported' tenet appeared 18 times; and 'challenged' appeared in two responses.

Tenet	Appearances in Responses
Healthy	18
Safe	1
Engaged	1
Supported	18
Challenged	2

Figure 8. Responses to: What factors have made you consider leaving the profession?

In participants' responses to the last open-ended item on the questionnaire, Think *back to your toughest year(s) as an educator. What could have been done to help them not be as tough?* the 'healthy' tenet was mentioned 10 times; the 'safe' tenet was never mentioned; 'engaged' emerged just once; 'supported' was mentioned 31 times; and 'challenged' appeared only 3 times.

Tenet	Appearances in Responses
Healthy	10
Safe	0
Engaged	1
Supported	31
Challenged	3

Figure 9. Responses to: Think back to your toughest year(s) as an educator. What could have been done to help them not be as tough?

Healthy. Several indicators of ASCD's (2013) 'healthy' tenet address the well-being of staff as well as students, demonstrating that the school environment should foster the health and well-being of each staff member. Respondents in this investigation made numerous comments that referred, not to their physical wellbeing, but to their

emotional state. Cited about as frequently as the 'engaged' and 'challenged' tenets, it was clear that the 'healthy' tenet of the Whole Child/Whole Learner must be borne in mind when endeavoring to keep teachers in the profession.

In response to an item that asked whether they had ever considered leaving the teaching profession, 14 of the participants mentioned being overloaded, and six mentioned high levels of stress, which are known to have a negative effect on the emotional and physical health of educators, and which were highlighted in the recently released *2017 Educator Quality of Work Life Survey* (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2017). In addition, educators mentioned the lack of time, the pressures associated with increased calls for accountability, and the fear of being sued as other stressors. Those respondents who had never changed schools enumerated the following reasons, all related to the 'healthy' tenet: the school's physical location, the fact that they were happy with their current positions, and the fact that they felt listened to by the other members of their school communities.

It is clear from the results that the 'healthy' tenet must be addressed by those who seek to increase teacher retention, as educators must feel physically and emotionally healthy if they are to remain on the job and in the profession. As the participants' responses made plain, too many teachers have not always felt emotionally healthy in their teaching situations. Continuous stress contributed in no small part to participating teachers' having considered leaving their schools, even to leaving the profession. As one respondent stated, "To sum it up, we are overworked and underpaid".

Safe. In its description of the 'safe' tenet, ASCD (2013) explained that the school should be "an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and

adults" (p. 2). Further, ASCD (2013) explained that, in schools that attend to the 'safe' tenet, "Our students feel valued, respected, and cared for and are motivated to learn" (p. 2). Given the applicability of the Whole Child approach to learners of whatever age, this last statement should apply to teachers as well as to the youngsters whom they serve.

Most of the factors that contribute to a school's being physically safe are out of teachers' direct control. Selections of which security features to install in a school's physical plant, and decisions about whether to employ school resource officers (and, if so, how many), are routinely made at the district level, without the direct involvement of teachers. In Arkansas, many school buildings are older, having been built many years before such events as school shootings were a common concern. Smaller rural districts, especially, have a hard time meeting evolving security requirements because buildings are older and have been added on to repeatedly. Because they are so spread out, and because their various systems have been added piecemeal, these buildings are not conducive to being retrofitted with the latest security features. Indeed, only by replacing their existing physical plants will these schools be brought up to speed with the latest security measures. It is likely because of their being so far removed from decisions regarding school security features, and because their schools have been spared instances of major violence, that the participants in this study made no mention of physical safety in their responses to survey questions.

While physical safety was not a concern mentioned by participating teachers, a small number of respondents cited concerns for their emotional safety as reasons why they had considered leaving the teaching profession. For example, one teacher expressed having lived in "constant fear of doing something wrong with the principal". Another,

recalling her toughest year of teaching and reflecting upon what would have helped her, expressed that more collaboration with, and assistance from, other teachers in the school would have ameliorated what was her toughest year in the profession.

Importantly, participating teachers did not lay responsibility for occasions when they had not felt emotionally safe squarely at the feet of administrators. While they certainly did not absolve principals and other administrators from their duties to tend to the emotional safety of teachers, respondents were candid about the role of teaching colleagues in contributing to – or compromising – teachers' feelings of emotional safety.

Engaged. In its description of the 'engaged' tenet, ASCD (2013) portrayed the student as being "actively engaged in learning and…connected to the school and broader community" (p.3). The same description can be applied to teachers who are engaged in their work.

Teachers' engagement at the secondary school level is often fostered through their sponsoring of clubs or activities, their active participation in professional learning communities, their attendance at students' extracurricular activities, their participation with students and colleagues in community service projects, and their involvement in various other activities that occur outside the traditional school day.

Teachers' already full workloads, coupled with their own personal and family obligations, challenge their involvement in such supplemental activities. They also serve to demonstrate, and to reinforce, the engagement of those teachers who maintain their involvement despite those challenges.

One logistical factor that further challenges teachers' involvement in extracurricular activities is proximity. When teachers – especially those with families of

their own – live close to where they work, it is more convenient for them both to engage in school activities that are scheduled for beyond the traditional school day and to satisfy their family obligations, than if they lived farther away.

In responses to questions about why they had changed – or remained in – schools, participants frequently mentioned the desire to be close to their own homes, as well as the need to be close to extended family members who could assist with childcare. One respondent explained that she had decided to change schools, because "I had a baby, and it was better for my family to be near relatives". Another who had changed schools explained very simply, "I wanted to coach and work at my home school". Not only did teaching close to home offer convenience to these participants, it also reinforced their vested interest in communities of which they were a part and whose inhabitants they knew intimately and by whom they were known. As one participant explained, "We live in the district…I want to grow our community".

Not only does being 'engaged' connote being actively involved in the life of the school or other workplace, it also signifies deriving fulfillment from one's work. Seashore Louis and her colleagues (2010) wrote of teachers' desire to be included by school leaders in decision-making processes that impact them and their students. In a recent issue of Harvard Business Review, Chamorro-Premuzic and Garrad (2017) illustrated this latter definition, through their compelling descriptions of adults who are – and those who not – engaged in their work.

…Although such qualities [as people's talents, skills, and expertise] are no doubt critical, they are not sufficient to account for the wide range of subjective experiences employees have at work.

For instance, two people with similar skills and backgrounds may be working for the same company, in the same team, and have very similar roles – yet one of them may be totally immersed, enthused, and fulfilled, while the other is fed up, bored, and alienated. As a consequence, the former will perform better, stay longer in the organization, and be a positive influence on other employees, while the latter will underperform, have a negative impact on others, and quit. The difference between these two states (and people) is caused by engagement. (p. 2)

In describing the factors that had kept them from changing schools, numerous participants offered responses consistent with this notion of engagement as fulfillment. One respondent explained, "The kids need teachers, and I think I'm a good one". Another wrote, "I feel like the school system gives me what I need to be able to do my job properly". A third indicated that he derived satisfaction from teaching in what he described as a "Great school with excelling students". Several described the types of interpersonal relationships that they enjoy at their respective schools, with one writing, "Small school. I can really get to know my students"; and another enthusing, "My school is the perfect package. I have wonderful administration and amazing coworkers, and I love the students".

Supported. Of the five Whole Child/Whole Learner tenets, 'supported' emerged most frequently in participants' responses to the various survey questions. While ASCD's (2013) definition of the 'supported' tenet focuses on students, the description is equally applicable to adult learners. Teachers, no less than students, should have "access to personalized learning" and should be "supported by qualified, caring adults" (p. 4).

Likewise, teachers and students, alike, should have "structured academic, social, and emotional support systems" available to them.

From the perspective of the teacher, being supported includes feeling appreciated and cared for by those around them, including, especially, school administrators. Of the 18 respondents who reported never having changed schools, seven indicated that they felt supported in their current schools, with several specifically identifying their administrators as reasons for their having remained in their schools. One participant wrote, "The principal and other administration make it easy to stay". Another expressed gratitude for "positive feedback from administrators". One teacher who had changed schools explained that she had done so "to follow an administrator I admired". Other examples of support that respondents cited were being offered extended contracts, and being "helped [to] pay back students loans and for school to continue my education".

The 'supported' tenet also emerged through respondents' descriptions of its absence. For example, when asked why they may have contemplated leaving the profession, lack of support from a variety of sources was a primary reason given. The lack of administrative support was specifically mentioned by one-third of the respondents, some of whom decried "Non-collaborative administrative decisions"; a "Failure of Administration to 'have my back' at all levels"; "Weak administration"; and "Lack of leadership". In acknowledging their receipt of inadequate support, participants also cited insufficient pay ("The compensation does not match the amount of time worked"; "It is hard with a single income to survive on a teaching salary"); insufficient – and costly – health insurance coverage; lack of respect from parents ("Feeling unappreciated by parents"); and a proliferation of rules and regulations that, to teachers,

indicated a lack of respect from policymakers ("Frustration with state and federal requirements adding to my workload"; "It is just so much more political than I expected"; "Dealing with administrators and politicians who have no idea about the classroom, either because they have never been there or were unsuccessful in the classroom").

When asked what would have helped them during their toughest years of teaching, feeling 'supported' emerged yet again as the primary theme in participants' responses. In addition to ruing having been given "too many preps" and having had to wade through too much "paperwork" and "red tape," participants identified a need for more – and more personalized – professional development. Further, respondents specifically expressed that they would have benefited, not only from "more support from administrators," but also from greater support from, collaboration with, and communication among "colleagues," "veteran teachers," and "my department".

Challenged. ASCD (2013) described the 'challenged' tenet as meaning that "each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment". In terms of educators, I interpreted 'challenged' as requiring that they be encouraged to be lifelong learners, possessed of growth mindsets, and invited to undertake innovative practices, even new endeavors. Reminiscent of the truism that "some teachers teach for 30 years, while others teach one year 30 times," the 'challenged' tenet evokes the teacher who is always striving to become better and to grow in the craft of being an educator.

Several participating educators indicated that they had changed schools throughout their careers in order to advance professionally. One recalled having been recruited to his new school: "I was asked to come". Another described having left the

school in which she taught in order "to become assistant principal at my alma mater". A third explained that she had changed schools in order "to become a building principal". Still another reported having been excited to change schools, because "I was given the rare opportunity to build a new library from scratch. The high school did not have a high school library". Yet another wrote, "I was a paraprofessional first and changed schools within the district when I received my teaching license to fill an open position".

Other respondents explained that they had elected to remain in their schools precisely because of opportunities for advancement and challenge that existed within them. One explained that she had "started up the theater and drama program at my school, and without me, those kids wouldn't have anything like that". Several others wrote enthusiastically of the academically rigorous standards to which they and their colleagues held students, and with pride about the how their students excelled academically and otherwise.

Summary

Forty-nine secondary-level educators from across Arkansas – including one principal, one assistant principal, and one retired teacher – responded to an online survey that was designed to learn about their experiences in and attitudes about the teaching profession. In addition to providing demographic information, which revealed that the participating teachers were demographically reflective of the overall teaching population in Arkansas, respondents answered open-ended questions about their time in the profession. Participants' responses to the various items were analyzed using the constant comparative method, in order that their full richness and meaning could be gleaned. Finally, data from the open-ended items were quantified and examined through the lenses

of the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework: health, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Of the five, 'safe' was the tenet that arose least frequently in participants' responses. 'Healthy,' 'engaged,' and 'challenged' all emerged with approximately equal frequency. 'Supported' was the tenet that appeared most commonly in participants' responses.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Schools and school districts across the United States – including, not least, Arkansas – face an ongoing teacher shortage. In addition to the fact that smaller and smaller numbers of individuals are electing to enroll in teacher preparation programs, practicing educators across the country are choosing to leave the profession at an alarming rate. Indeed, Darling-Hammond and her colleagues (2016) explained that, simply by retaining the teachers who are already in the profession, the present teacher shortage could very nearly be solved. The chief value of this exploratory study is that it provides new insights, using the language of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework, about why teachers have considered leaving the profession, what has prevented them from leaving it, and what might be done to induce more educators to remain in teaching.

While the five tenets of the Whole Child approach – healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged – were originally conceived with children in mind, the aim of this exploratory study was to gauge whether those same tenets could likewise be applied to adult learners – specifically, teachers. Consequently, throughout this study, the term Whole Child/Whole Learner is employed.

Summary of Findings

A total of 49 secondary-level educators from across Arkansas – including one principal, one assistant principal, and one recently retired teacher – responded to an online survey whose link was shared with them by their principals, to whom it had been mailed electronically. Of those respondents, 71.4% were female and 28.6% were male. Approximately 40% of respondents had five years or less experience, while approximately 60% had greater than five years' experience. Racially/ethnically, 93.9%

of respondents were White, 4.1% were Black, and the remaining 2% were American Indian/Alaska Native. Twenty-six and one-half percent of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 29 years, 16.3% were between 30 and 39 years of age, 16.3% were between 40 and 49 years old, 32.7% were in their 50s, and the remaining 8.2% were older than 60 years of age. 65.3% of responding teachers were traditionally trained; 28.6% had completed non-traditional licensure programs; and 6.1% had received no formal preparation to become teachers.

Respondents teach in schools that are diverse in terms of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, although, surprisingly, many respondents did not know the precise ethnic make-up of their schools' student bodies, or the number of students in their schools who are economically disadvantaged. Of the participating teachers, more than one third did not know the percentage of their schools' students who are economically disadvantaged; more than one quarter did not know the percentage of their schools' students who are from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds. Of those who did know, 14.3% of the respondents reported that their free/reduced-price lunch population was 90% or greater, 2% said that it was 80-89%, 20.4% said that their school's population of economically disadvantaged students was 70-79%, 18.4% claimed that their school's number was 60-69%, and the remaining 10.2% said that their fewer than 60% of students in their schools qualified to receive free/reduced-price lunch. In addition, 59.2% of respondents expressed that 40% of their schools' student bodies were from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds; 12.2% said that between 40-59% of their students were from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds; and 2% said that between 60-79% of their schools' students were from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds.

When asked if they had changed schools, 63.3% of respondents answered in the affirmative. 55% of participants acknowledged having considered leaving the profession entirely. As anticipated, the reasons that respondents gave for having considered changing schools and leaving the profession aligned with the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner approach.

Of the five tenets, 'safe' emerged least frequently in participants' responses. As expressed above, no respondent mentioned ever having felt concerned about her physical safety. Also as indicated above, this may have to do with the fact that building- and district-level administrators, not classroom teachers, tend to be involved in discussions about the safety features of the school's physical plant, as well as in decisions about whether/how many school resources officers to employ. Still, this tenet was not entirely absent from respondents' comments. Several participants shared comments indicating that they had occasionally felt that their school environments weren't emotionally safe places for them to be, either because of ill-mannered administrators or discourteous teaching colleagues. Some respondents had changed schools – and some had even considered leaving the profession entirely – as a result of these experiences.

Emerging with equal frequency in participants' responses to open-ended items about their experiences in the education profession were the 'healthy,' 'engaged,' and 'challenged' tenets. As had been the case with the 'safe' tenet, but with far greater frequency, participants wrote not about their physical health, but their emotional health. This finding jibes with a great deal of recent literature on teachers' work lives, most notably the recently released *2017 Educator Quality of Work Life Survey* (AFT, 2017).

The 'engaged' tenet emerged with the same frequency as had 'healthy' and 'challenged'. Teachers wrote of having decided to teach in schools that were in close proximity to their own extended families, so that child care issues would not prevent them from engaging as fully as they wanted to in the lives of their schools. Second, teachers wrote of having made decisions about staying in, or leaving, particular schools according to how professionally fulfilled they felt teaching in them. This finding jibes with findings of Seashore Louis et al. (2010), who wrote of teachers' genuine need to be involved in the process of making decisions that impact themselves, their colleagues, and their students.

Appearing with about the same frequency as 'engaged,' was the fifth tenet of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework – 'challenged'. Numerous respondents explained their decisions to move to different schools, or to stay where they were already teaching, because of the degrees of challenge that they promised. In some cases, teachers sought the challenge of moving from a paraprofessional role to a teaching position, or from classroom teaching to serving in an administrative capacity; in others, teachers were afforded opportunities to establish new programs; in still others, teachers quite simply appreciated the challenge posed by engaging their students in academically rigorous work.

The tenet that emerged with greatest frequency in participants' responses was 'supported'. Both teachers who had changed schools, and those who had remained; both those who had contemplated leaving the teaching profession; and those who had never entertained such thoughts, wrote about their need to feel supported in their work – by their school administrators, as well as by their teaching colleagues.

Conclusions

The survey data that were collected and analyzed for this exploratory study support what had been gleaned from the review of the available literature – namely, that there are various factors that, if in place, contribute to educators' decisions to remain in the teaching profession. As anticipated, these factors align with the tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner approach.

While none of the participants expressed ever having felt concerned about their physical health or safety during their experiences in the teaching profession, they did voice the need to feel emotionally healthy and – to a far greater extent – emotionally safe at school. Likewise, participating teachers wrote that they had remained in or changed schools, and that they had or had not ever contemplated leaving the teaching profession, according to how engaged and challenged they felt in their work as teachers.

Of the five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework, the 'supported' tenet emerged with greatest frequency in participants' responses to the online survey that was employed in this exploratory study. Support was felt to have been instrumental to keeping educators in the profession, or to having caused them to contemplate leaving it. Reminiscent of Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs, participating teachers expressed a desire to be engaged and challenged, but made plain that they needed to feel emotionally healthy and safe, and – above all – that they needed to feel supported in their work.

Policymakers, school board members, school- and district-level administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders should work to support the work of teachers. As was evident from participants' responses to the survey employed in this exploratory study, teachers who feel valued and respected by their administrators, the wider school

community, and their teaching colleagues are more likely to remain in the school and in the profession. In addition, those educators will be happier and healthier, which could only positively impact students. Educators who have strong, supportive administrators will sometimes even follow them to new schools because they know that they will be supported if they do.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that district- and building-level school leaders be educated in the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework, so that they may cultivate school cultures that foster the development of whole learners – of all ages. This will help building and district leaders to understand teachers' needs, and to identify when teachers may be struggling. By being familiar with the tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner, school leaders can make conscious efforts to ensure that all five tenets are being met.

It is also recommended that the mentoring program that is mandated for teachers by the Arkansas Department of Education include content on what it means to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged – not only for teachers' own benefit, but also for their students'. If teachers are made aware, both of the difficulties that may arise while teaching, and of the support that is available to them, they are more likely to remain in the profession. They also need to be made aware that it is important for them to maintain good emotional health and safety, both for themselves and for their colleagues.

Another recommendation that emerges from the findings of this study – as well as from such other surveys as the recently release *2017 Educator Quality of Work Life Survey* (AFT, 2017) – is that policymakers keep in mind those who are in the classroom when creating policies that impact them. If a policy threatens to compromise any of the

five tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner, that policy very likely needs to be revised or eliminated. Participating teachers who had considered leaving the profession identified pay and benefit packages as being far from commensurate with the increased burdens of the teacher's role. It is therefore recommended that the state legislature work to ensure that school districts have sufficient funding to pay their teachers salaries that honor the stresses and long hours that have come to characterize the teaching profession.

A final recommendation is that teacher preparation programs prepare emerging educators to engage more fully in the education profession. Teacher candidates are regularly required to create lesson plans and to teach lessons to the classes to which they are assigned, but they are not always required to experience the many other responsibilities that attend the teacher's role. It is important for future educators to be aware of what they are signing up for, so that they can be fully prepared to undertake it. No less important, teacher preparation programs should work to educate emerging teachers about how to remain healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged once they enter the field, in order to prevent the burnout that too many educators experience.

Educators are over-burdened. They work with students throughout the school day, then spend afternoons, evenings, and weekends analyzing data, grading papers, attending students' ballgames and performances, and tending to countless "other duties as assigned" in order to best help their students – all while experiencing more and more stress, and receiving less and less appreciation from policymakers (AFT, 2017). Unless these trends change, we will continue to see lists of teacher subject shortages grow, watch fewer teachers enter the profession, and witness teachers leaving the field at even higher rates.

Incorporating the tenets of the Whole Child/Whole Learner into our preparation of emerging teachers and our ongoing work with currently practicing ones can increase teacher retention, which can help reverse the teacher shortage. With more teachers available to serve in the classroom, more students will benefit from being taught by fully qualified teachers rather than by substitute teachers or teachers teaching under licensure waivers. Further, applying the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework with professional educators will yield teachers who are less stressed and healthier. Teachers who are under huge amounts of stress often experience other health problems; focusing educators on their mental and physical health can help them to feel more engaged in their work. Better physical and mental health could reduce teacher absenteeism, which could lead to decreased spending on substitute teachers and – far more important – higher student achievement.

Overall, findings from this exploratory investigation suggest that the application of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework to teachers, as well as to students, is likely to benefit everyone in the school. Ensuring that educators are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged will be to the advantage, not only of the teachers, themselves, but also of the students who are the reason why schools and educators exist in the first place.

Recommendations for Further Study

Perhaps the most valuable result of this exploratory study is that it has introduced a new lens – that of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework – through which to examine the lived experiences of those in the teaching profession. If the ongoing teacher shortage in Arkansas and across the country is to be reversed, teachers' working

conditions and job satisfaction must be improved. The Whole Child/Whole Learner framework affords scholars and practitioners a new tool to employ in future investigations.

One such investigation could focus specifically on the 'healthy' and 'safe' tenets – specifically, on teachers' physical health and physical safety. While numerous responses from participants in this study alluded to emotional health and, more commonly, safety, very few responses contained answers that pertained to physical health or safety. A closer look into these two tenets could more definitively examine teachers' experiences with physical health and safety at school.

Another recommendation for further study would be to purposefully include administrators in a study such as this one. The participation, albeit unintended, of two administrators in this study showed that administrators have valuable insights to share about the teaching profession, since they were once teachers themselves. Participating administrators in this study specifically cited the 'challenged' tenet in describing why they had elected to become administrators. Additional administrator input is likely to add valuable information about the applicability of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework to the teaching profession, as well as to those who pursue other roles within education.

Finally, given the valuable insight yielded by this exploratory study of the applicability of the Whole Child/Whole Learner framework to teachers at the secondary level, it is recommended that this study be replicated with a greater number of teachers, as well as with teachers at all grade levels.

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Appendix A:

Survey Items

- What is your gender?

- What is your age?

- Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

- What is the free/reduced lunch percentage at your school?

- What percentage of your students are of a minority background?

- How many years have you been in the teaching profession?

- In which type of teacher preparation program did you participate?

- How long have you been at your current school?

- Given the challenging nature of teaching, why do you remain in the profession?

- Have you ever changed schools?

- If you have changed schools, why did you decide to change schools?

- If you have never changed schools, what are the factors that keep you at your current school?

- Have you ever considered leaving the profession?

- What factors have made you consider leaving the profession?

- Think back to your toughest year(s) as an educator. What could have been done to help them not be as tough?

Appendix B:

Survey Responses

Given the challenging nature of teaching, why do you remain in the profession?

It is my Calling in Life

To make an impact in student's lives and prepare them for their future

I know I am called to teach long-term in Southeastern Asia. I like to teach teenagers, and though it is hard, there are those students who make it worth it.

Kids keep me young!

Because of the sense of gratification I receive from helping keep students engaged in school and learning.

Hate to sound as arrogant as a Navy Fighter Pilot but - I am the best at what I do and currently I feel like I make a difference EVERY day to someone.

I went into teaching because I wanted to create opportunities for students that otherwise would not have had any.

I want to make a difference in student's lives. I want to teach them life long skills

I am a special education teacher. I am beginning to experience "teacher burnout" for all of the usual reasons (for a special ed teacher) and would really love to have a change to either general ed or to a different occupation. I stay because I do feel like I still make a difference and also because it would be difficult to change careers at this point in my work-life.

I love being able to instill a love of lifetime learning in students.

I love to teach, and I want to make a difference in the young people that will be the future of our world.

I love my students.

I love my content. I don't think I would be good at anything else. And most of all, I love my kids. I don't think I could work with adults in the real world.

Opportunity to change lives of students

Love watching students succeed

I'm not sure...but for some CRAZY reason I miss teaching when I'm off in the summer. I still have a passion for my content and I like to share that passion in hopes to inspire a student the way my Biology teacher inspired me .

a

the students

I enjoy the kids

The students.

I enjoy it, and I have invested time into retirement.

I still like to put the right book in a kid's hand and watch him/her fall in love with reading!

I tech sped and it is very satisfying when I feel the students learn something new to them.

Because they are in sped small successes are very important.

It's a job that I truly love to do.

enjoy my content area, enjoy students, hours stink, but summers off are good

I love the impact I can have on students

Because students are more likely to succeed with my presence and skills set. I know that I make a difference because I can see the results.

Impacting students' lives, love of the subject

I love working with students and teaching literature.

I have a passion for teaching students a skill to be career/college ready.

I love teaching children Art.

It is my passion. I love seeing kids succeed. Also, I love knowing I'm helping these students prepare for the rest of their lives.

Honestly...I'm 55 years old and have taught for 18 years (I'm a late bloomer; I stayed home with my children for 10 years). At this point in my career, it would be asinine to leave now. Plus, and most importantly, I can't think of another job I would rather do.

I educate to positively impact lives

to make a difference and try to get the students to understand the importance of their school endeavors. make a platform for the students to feel that their success is desired by their instructors and to gain a can-do attitude to succeed in this rapid changing world.

I enjoy the interaction with my students. I feel I'm where I'm supposed to be.

I retired last May, after 27 years. I remained in teaching because in our area it was the best paying job that allowed me to participate in my children's lives. I did like being around the teenagers and watching them grow.

I have taken on new roles throughout my educational career.

It gives me purpose. I feel I can make a difference.

I love helping kids. Having a retirement. Summers off.

Enjoy teaching and making a difference in the lives of young people.

I enjoy working with children

It is my calling to teach and educate. I am an educational evangelist.

Truly enjoy what I am doing

Students

I love teaching students. I couldn't imagine doing anything else.

I entered the field of teaching because it is a good match for my skills and values sets. Although, my top priority is having the same schedule as my own children. My kids are why I remain in teaching at this time.

I like it!

Love kids.

If you have changed schools, why did you decide to change?

Money reasons

lack of support from administration at prior school

Moved

More ideal location.

I wanted to coach and work at my home school

I was a paraprofessional first and changed schools within the district when I received my teaching license to fill an open position.

More money and different grade level

I was working part time at a private school, so I barely got paid. I changed schools because it was a full-time position and a better opportunity.

I had a baby, and it was better for my family to be near relatives.

Better pay, more standard procedures

Moved Closer to home.

Family

Salary increase, higher performing school

I was given the rare opportunity to build a new library from scratch. The high school did not have a high school library.

My family moved

Moved to a different town.

got married and moved

To be near family

first change was due to school closing due to low numbers; second switch was because of a promotion offered at another school

Relocated due to spouse's job

I've changed three times. Once to follow an administrator I admired, once to avoid an administrator I detested, and once because my husband and I moved.

I have changed schools twice. Each time it was to get to a school closer to my home. When I first taught, I drove 45 minutes to work; my second school was 25 minutes away, and now I live about 3 minutes from school.

I decided to change schools in order to advance my career.

Moved to a different state because of husband's job.

I moved schools with in my district. I taught 23 years at Timbo, where I had graduated, but I moved to Mountain View because of the constant fear of Timbo closing. Since the beginning when the three campuses became one district there was always talk of closing the smaller schools. I had seniority, but was afraid I could not bump a younger teacher if the need arose. I was afraid I would get with in a year or two of retirement and not make it. I chose to move to Mountain View because of security.

To become a building principal

I was on a one year only contract.

I was asked to come to Joe T. Robinson 2013.

Location

I changed once in 12 years, on year 8, to become assistant principal at my alma mater.

moved closer to home

If you have never changed schools, what are the factors that keep you in your current school?

N/A (2)

The kids need teachers, and I think I'm a good one. Also, the principal and other administration make it easy to stay. I also started up the theater and drama program at my school, and without me, those kids wouldn't have anything like that.

I've just arrived at McGehee High School, but I plan on staying here for a long while. I believe it's a great school system with a very diverse set of students. I feel that my voice is listened to and appreciated, and I feel like the school system gives me what I need to be able to do my job properly.

They helped pay back student loans and for school to continue my education. This came with an extended contract. I was also more comfortable staying here, with people I new, as I learned a new job. The longer I stayed, the more attached I became to my students and the school. Now it will be harder to leave.

It's a great community of people and the school has a great reputation for high academic standards. Many of the admin and teachers are graduates of here.

location and happiness at the position

Great school with excelling students.

This is my first year teaching.

My school is the perfect package. I have wonderful administration and amazing coworkers, and I love the students. My school is doing great financially, and I believe it is the best school in the district.

Small school. I can really get to know my students.

The kids. The distance from my home.

Positive feedback from admin

We live in this district & I want to grow our community.

This is home.

What factors have made you consider leaving the profession?

Parents and weak adminstration

Lack of pay, benefits, and stress.

Low pay

Failure of Administration to "have my back" at all levels, parent intervention, budgetary, salary, benefits

Work overload, lack of administrative support, feeling lack of professional courtesy and respect from general education teachers, feeling unappreciated by parents

The SPED paperwork load and disrespect of students

The pay for one. It is hard with a single income to survive on a teaching salary. The insurance. If I had to have a spouse or my child on my insurance instead of her fathers I couldn't survive on the salary. The politics. Every year the standards are fought over and "changed" and given a new name and the test changes and we have to learn all the new rules. When its actually the same information. just a new name and a new way we are told to teach it. The accountability. The standards are not the issue. What is expected of the students is very rigorous. What is expected of the teachers however is not. There is no accountability on the facility level, administration level, or state level. Teachers do not teach and nothing happens. There are schools graduation students with third grade reading levels and nothing is happening. We are told to be better and do better and that we will be evaluated, but then what. Teachers either teach great to pass the eval, or score low and but cannot be really punished for it, even if they do not improve or attempt to. Then no one evaluates administration. They also also are not held accountable when they do not hold up their end. This allows the rigor to drop. The expectations to drop. And then the blame is somehow placed on the children. So instead of a system of accountability, the standards change. We expect more from them, without ensuring it is taught to them. It is just so much more political then I expected. Then I set through hours of PD telling me rules and regulations and what is expected of me and what will be done and how things will be done only to have none of it happen. Then I go to national or conventions and hear the same things there and the teachers complaining about the exact same things. I love my school. I do not believe this is an in house problem. I believe they have the same problems I do. Told one thing. Receiving another.

Security, time, money, what is best for my family, job opportunities.

sometimes overwhelming and feels like so much to do

The stress of all the bookkeeping bust mostly because students don't seem to want to learn anymore.

stress, work load, pay, insurance costs

unfulfilled artistically with teaching

No Break daily work!

Salary

The extras that teachers have to do. Teacher meetings while at times are necessary, I don't feel like we should need to meet every week. The TESS Evaluation system seems way overboard. If you are a good teacher you are doing what you are supposed to anyway. If you aren't a good teacher, the TESS does not seem to make a difference. Anyone can put something down in the TESS but that mean you know how to teach or manage difficult students or situations. PAPERWORK, especially in SPED.

"the other duties as assigned", lack of professional appreciation/compensation

Dealing with administrators and politicians who have no idea about the classroom; either because they have never been there or were unsuccessful in the classroom

night time duty; low pay; state regulations that do not improve education and thus become a waste of time and money

Difficult working conditions - lack of support from administrators, low pay, long hours, LOTS of time spent outside the work day, stress, student behavior

Paperwork, Expectations being lowered for student behavior and work

A desire to either teach on a one-to-one level or transition to the college ranks

Frustration with state and federal requirements adding to my workload.

I thought about it a lot before retirement. Fear of being sued, the ever growing list of responsibilities and duties that teachers have been given over the years. The involvement of government in the system. A lack of respect/support from the parents. A lack of respect from students and nothing could be done to them. The profession has changed from it being the student's responsibility to learn to blaming the teacher when the student didn't try. Parents feel that the teachers are over paid and do nothing. My children participated in rodeos for years, but the people that we saw every weekend didn't know I taught, I didn't tell because of the attitude of the public.

Working at a small school is very stressful, because you wear many more hats. We also have waivers on file with the state which allow the district to do things differently to "benefit the children". I'm not convinced that it's what's best for the children. To sum it up, we are over worked and underpaid.

Non-collaborative administrative decisions.

Stress

Lack of leadership compared to the business world that I came from. The compensation does not match the amount of time worked. Lack of accountability for performance. Lack of time to adequately plan and be a high-performing teacher.

Think back to your toughest year(s) as an educator. What could've been done to help them not be as tough?

Strong Adminstration

More support from veteran teachers and administrators

The kids' understanding and lack of focus, even though I know that's not something that can be fixed by anyone other than the student.

Simple things, like clerical assistance (copying, sorting, less paperwork, etc.) would actually relieve stress as time is the only thing we have and when we have to waste time at broken copy machines, filing, etc, it's taxing on the stress level.

Quit taking students' lack of desire to be highly driven personally.

As a non-Trad the use and MIS-use of terminology and lingo for those not trained or educated as educators was extremely discouraging - also I felt as though as a non-Trad I had more challenges

thrown my way due to the fact I was a non-Traditional teacher. I still see the eyes rolling when others find out I am a non-Trad. That does not help anyone - - especially me!!

As I'm only in my first year of teaching, I don't have a lot of experience yet. So far though, I can tell that the hardest thing I will have to do as a teacher, and make sure I continue doing, is meeting the needs of every single student. I have about 100 students, and understanding what each of them need, and making sure we're all on the same page with each is very, very difficult. You want to reach every single student, but that goal seems unobtainable at times. All you can do is make sure you come to class every day ready and willing to give your all to your students. It's also very difficult to not become discouraged when you've given your all to a lesson, and the results don't show that effort.

Not to have constant fear of doing something wrong with the principal

Last year was definitely my most difficult year. After asking out of my contract in the middle of the year because I had reached a breaking point, things did change at my school in a positive way so that I was able to continue through the end of the year. The changes made were primarily with an increase of administrative support so that I was able to have student free planning periods and lunch periods.

More support of my department

Be better at classroom management, and be more thorough as a planner

A mentor that had the time to be a mentor. Also, going the traditional route instead of through a MAT program.I should have had time in a classroom as an intern before I was given my own class and just thrown in. Instead, I had two weeks of summer training on TESS and writing lesson plans, a B.A. in English Literature, and enrolled in online courses that could not prepare me fast enough for being thrown into the lions den that is Sophomore English with class sizes up to 24.

More support from admin.

This is my first year! What has helped me are open and honest co-workers and a principal who had an open-door policy.

stricter consequences

Been more organized. Had more resources at my finger tips.

a

having more supportive friends/co-workers

To many preps and extra duties as assigned.

I would have like to see more education on how to write goals and objectives, more education on the testing procedures and how to read the results. Experience taught me all of this but, I think it would help with new teachers instead of making it overwhelming in their first year.

I like the new mentoring program, that would have helped.

I honestly have not had a tough year!

More support from administrators.

More teacher support from administration.

administrative leadership/accountability and consistency in rule enforcement

Supportive administration

I should have asked for more help. It was available but I didn't access it.

More support and understanding from administration, more individualized professional development

More time for collaboration with other English teachers; protected time to analyze data or give feedback.

Administration

This is my first year. It is tough just figuring out bloomboard and the paper work that comes with being a teacher.

Some years are just hard. I don't think we can come up with just one thing that would make them a lot better. For me, years of experience is making teaching easier. I'm not teaching the same subjects every year, but I'm more comfortable with the teacher role and everything that comes with.

A better principal would have made all the difference. He made my life miserable.

Creating a better classroom culture on the front end of the school year

Let me do my job!!!!!! Stop trying each and every year to re-invent education!! Just care and educate the students as if they were your own; for a few years they are.

More support from administration in understanding daily frustrations.

I taught vocational business. My first years the paperwork from the state department was hard because no one had explained what would be coming in the mail. It was paper at the time and I didn't know where to find the answers. The colleges didn't cover this type of information. Fundraising for FBLA which is a required club was always stressful. In the classroom having up to date software and computers along with books that match are necessary. Not having so many new responsibilities added to an already full plate would have helped. Calling parents twice a week, anything to do with Tess and the changing frameworks were all a stress overload. It felt like there was never time to do the job you had been trained for -- teaching. Teachers need more time to do prepare to teach and less extra work added to their plate. They need to know that the administration has their back and will listen to both sides of a conflict, not just side with the parent. I hope you didn 't mind me taking the survey and I know that the above comments may not be what you were looking for, but I have listened to teachers and they are becoming overwhelmed, there is no time for their families, or other activities. They feel abused by the system and that they are on a raft alone with the sharks all around.

To understand that some decisions made by others were out of my control and to focus on teaching the students I had--to not let that interfere with my effectiveness in the classroom.

Experience

Lowering the expectations of paperwork and accountability procedures would have helped, in addition to having more prep time and less preps. We also went to a flex-mod schedule which is a nightmare, in my opinion. I don't think the expectations of accountability should be lowered, just the paperwork and procedures. I believe administration should reprimand teachers who don't do what they're supposed to do rather than require more documentation from everyone to help with accountability.

Less red tape. Less stressful schedule.

Fewer students per class

More preparation. Find a mentor to pour into you.

Tough question - I think it is very important that teachers have a built in/required mentor/collaboration/support/team building structure in place. I lumped all these things into one because it should all be a part of this block. Time should be allotted for this planning type period but it also should be a requirement that it happen because it is so easy for teachers to skip or otherwise put off this very crucial element to effective teaching practices. I had this support early on but not everyone does.

Being professionally developed is a marathon not a sprint. Take deliberate steps toward being better at your craft in your selection of adult learning. Ask your leaders what do I need to be successful and truly ask yourself what your real PGP is, not what is turned into your principal.

I could have planned the year overall better.

Improved communication among colleagues & leadership. Improved culture and sense of accountability. Being rewarded or recognized for doing a good job.

My personal life and paperwork did not necessarily mix.
Teachers do not make enough,for the educati