

PRINCIPAL PRACTICES AND THE EFFECTS ON NEW TEACHER RETENTION

by

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A Scholarly Delivery Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership

West Texas A&M University

Canyon, Texas

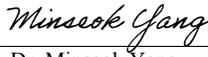
December, 2023

## Signature Page

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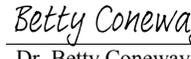
  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This final composite explores new teacher challenges and actions of school leaders regarding teacher retention. The first scholarly deliverable is a case study that could be used to educate doctoral, master's candidates, or educational leaders and analyze new teacher induction processes. The title of this article is "Missing the Forest for the Trees: New Teacher Retention Troubles." This case explores the challenges of new teachers and new teacher induction program strategies and implementation at the campus level. The final scholarly deliverable is an empirical article titled "Principal Practices and the Effects on New Teacher Retention." This empirical article investigates principal practices that can be focused on to aid in retaining new teachers.



**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS  
Letter of Approval**

April 28, 2023

Dr. Hooper:

The West Texas A & M University Institutional Review Board is pleased to inform you that upon review, proposal #2023.04.023 for your study titled, “**Principal Practices and the Effects on New Teacher Retention**” meets the requirements of the WTAMU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) No. 15.99.05.W1.01AR Institutional Review Board (Use of Human Subjects in Research). Approval is granted for one calendar year. This approval expires on **April 28, 2024**.

Principal investigators assume the following responsibilities:

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed on or before the expiration date if the research project requires more than one year for completion. A [Continuing Review form](#) along with required documents must be submitted on or before the stated deadline. Failure to do so will result in study termination and/or loss of funding.
2. **Completion Report:** At the conclusion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a [Close out form](#) must be submitted to AR-EHS.
3. **Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events:** Pursuant to [SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.13AR](#), unanticipated problems and serious adverse events must be reported to AR-EHS.
4. **Reports of Potential Non-Compliance:** Pursuant to [SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.05AR](#), potential non-compliance, including deviations from the protocol and violations, must be reported to the IRB office immediately.
5. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an [Amendment form](#) to AR-EHS for review by the IRB. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented. Amendments do not extend time granted on the initial approval
6. **Consent Forms:** When using a consent form, only the IRB approved form is allowed.
7. **Audit:** Any proposal may be subject to audit by the IRB Administrator during the life of the study. Investigators are responsible for maintaining complete and accurate records for five years and making them available for inspection upon request.
8. **Recruitment:** All recruitment materials must be approved by the IRB. Recruitment materials distributed to potential participants must use the approved text and include the study’s IRB number, approval date, and expiration dates in the following format: WTAMU IRB##-##-## Approved: ####/####/#### Expiration Date: ####/####/####.

9. **FERPA and PPRA:** Investigators conducting research with students must have appropriate approvals from the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

administrator at the institution where the research will be conducted in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) if applicable to the research being proposed. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) protects the rights of parents in students ensuring that written parental consent is required for participation in surveys, analysis, or evaluation that ask questions falling into categories of protected information.

Sixty days prior to the expiration of this proposal, you will receive a notification of the approaching expiration date at which time you will need to submit an [Amendment/Continuation/Close out](#) form.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Dr. Gary Bigham  
Chair, WTAMU IRB



Dr. Angela Spaulding  
Vice President of Research and Compliance

## **Acknowledgments**

I am honored to take this opportunity to thank Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, for providing the courage to go into my doctoral journey boldly, the strength to continue to do the work even when adversity struck, for delivering peace under great pressure and increasing my faith throughout this season of my life.

I could not have completed this journey without the support of my mother. Thank you for constantly being a source of positivity in my life. Thank you for bringing words of encouragement to my day and motivating me to continue during the difficult ones. Your example of hard work and dedication throughout my life has been a model that has driven me to be successful in many areas of life.

I had the privilege of having an amazing committee. Dr. H. H. “Buddy” Hooper Jr. has been a constant source of constant knowledge, motivation, and encouragement throughout the process. Thank you for your leadership. Dr. Irma Harper, thank you for providing endless kindness, support, and time to ensure my success. Your dedication to my success will always be remembered. To Dr. Minseok Yang, thank you for providing great feedback and questioning that was critical to the completion of this program.

To the 10 teachers who participated, this study was only possible with your input. The specific examples and real stories you provided were the highlights of this study.

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## Table of Contents

Signature Page .....	ii
Scholarly Delivery Abstract .....	iii
IRB Approval .....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	vi
Table of Contents .....	vii
Case Study Article .....	1
Abstract.....	2
Case Study .....	4
Teaching Notes .....	12
Discussion Questions.....	16
Activities.....	17
References .....	19
Empirical Article .....	22
Abstract.....	23
Conceptual Framework .....	27
Method.....	45
Findings .....	49
Discussion.....	56
References .....	66

## **Missing the Forest for the Trees: New Teacher Retention Troubles**

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## **Abstract**

The case regarding Oak Hill Independent School District demonstrates the realities and dilemmas of supporting new teachers. As decisions are made at the central administration and campus levels within this district, intended and unintended consequences arise. Many teachers are leaving the profession of education, and new teacher induction programs are a strategy utilized by administrators that attempts to retain and support those teachers. Leaders can use this case to engage in discussion of the narrative and analyze current new teacher induction processes on their campus while promoting collaboration and growth in a significant area of demand.

*Keywords:* new teachers, induction, teacher development

## **Missing the Forest for the Trees: New Teacher Retention Troubles**

There is a growing concern in education surrounding the topic of new teachers encountering extreme challenges and difficulty at the beginning of their careers. “The experiences novices encounter...[result] in creative and talented teachers finding their work frustrating, unrewarding and intolerably difficult which ultimately increases their risk of becoming a casualty of the profession” (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, p. 814). Due to this reality, induction programs have been implemented in many schools to attempt to combat the challenges and difficulties associated with being a new teacher. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) concluded that a high rate of induction plans analyzed in their study had positive effects on teacher morale, student success, and teaching effectiveness. Nasser-Abu Alhija and Fresko (2010) determined that the amount of fulfillment a teacher experiences while working on a campus can directly affect their willingness and want to continue to work on a campus, in a district, or in education altogether.

The purpose of this case study is to provide insight into the numerous challenges school districts face, specifically, the building principal, supporting new teachers. The decisions made by the campus leaders throughout the school year will have an impact on an already high-leverage and critical area in the profession of education: the retention of teachers. It is important to address the problems associated with new teachers such as educators leaving the profession, dissatisfaction with campus culture, and ineffective decision-making at the campus level. Teacher shortages and professionals being less willing to become educators prompt action by campus leaders to retain the teachers that are choosing to currently be a part of the profession. The strategies and decision-making that campus leaders utilize become the focus. This case study will explore the decisions

and strategies employed by a principal when leading an induction program while also providing insight into the realities of education and being a new teacher.

### **Case Study**

Michael Turner, principal of Forestview High School (FHS) in Oak Hill Independent School District (OHISD), patiently waits in the Professional Development Center, located at the central administration building, for a “Retention Steering” committee meeting. Michael is unsure of how this meeting will go since the committee of campus and districtwide staff is brand new. One thing he knows is that his campus lost 15 teachers, seven of them being new teachers to the profession, and he has hired 12 new teachers to the profession to become part of the staff at FHS for the upcoming year. As people start to trickle into the conference room, the conversations he hears tell a similar story across the district. This problem is confirmed as the Superintendent of Schools addresses the committee with the following statement:

OHISD has a problem. Teachers are leaving our district at a higher rate than ever before. Our exit surveys indicate that, specifically, our new teachers do not feel supported, leave dissatisfied, and are considering leaving the teaching profession altogether. As a district, we have a 40-45% turnover rate for new teachers.

Depending on the campus you serve, that percentage could be even higher! As a committee, we must determine where this feeling of lack of support stems from, why teachers are dissatisfied with their experiences in the district and on your campus and determine ways to continue to pour into our new teachers to ensure they are motivated to teach the students of our district. Before we leave today, we must prepare a plan to retain our teachers to ensure that our morale is uplifting,

and our student achievement is not negatively impacted due to teachers leaving our district. Both areas are in our control, and we must do something about it before the new school year starts in August.

As Michael processes the stories and input he hears from each campus leader and staff, he begins to reflect on his own practices as the leader of the biggest high school in OHISD. FHS has approximately 1,500 enrolled students with over just over 100 teachers. Michael loses one out of every three new teachers each year. In addition to losing new teachers, when he hires for the vacant positions a “new to teaching” educator fills the position. This will be Michael’s third year as principal of the campus, and new teacher turnover has always been a problem but has become increasingly worse this year. It seems that the actions he has taken in previous years such as volunteer mentors, occasional meetings with new teachers, special jean days, and potluck lunches are not enough to boost the morale or support the new teachers enough to retain them. Realizing that action should be taken, he fully engages in the Retention Steering Committee meeting and aids in developing a plan for the district and his own campus.

- The Retention Steering Committee formulates the following professional development plan for the district to increase retention of new teachers to be implemented and organized by district personnel to allow for new teachers to choose based on their specific needs or interests
- Monthly sessions for new teachers to gather for reflection on their experiences in the classroom and on campus

- Strategies, techniques, and resources modeled throughout classes by various district-level staff members specifically trained to assist in professional development
- Routines and procedures of the district specifically addressed and analyzed
- Designing classroom environment using best practices based on research
- Technology training and assistance provided by the OHISD Technology Department
- Specific content lesson support by the curriculum department
- Self-care lessons presented by counseling department from various campuses

As these practices begin at the district level, Michael develops a new teacher induction program on his campus to complement the district initiatives. Michael creates the following plan for FHS:

- Assign two mentor liaisons who choose, train and support mentors
- Provide six mentors on campus stipends to support new teachers in various ways throughout the year such as answering questions, observations, campus culture, developing relationships and campus experiences
- Conduct monthly “New Teacher Rallies” on campus to show support for new teachers as well as provide continuing campus-level support regarding instruction, self-care, reflection, and professional development.

Throughout the next school year, the campus and district-level initiatives to retain new teachers began showing success. Mid-year staff surveys indicated that the new programs were being well received by the new teachers. Based on these survey results, no adjustments were made to the plans. Feeling great about the progress being made on

campus, Michael continued with his plan without any adjustments. When the end-of-year survey of new teachers comes back, the data show a positive response to the new teacher induction programs of both the campus and district. However, one survey response and exit interview survey stuck with Michael. One new teacher reports extreme dissatisfaction with the campus-level supports being provided to her as a new teacher. This new teacher, Mary McElroy, a 10th-grade Chemistry teacher, was assigned a mentor that was also in the science department. The mentor had 10 years of experience as an educator and was eager to help Mary for the year. Throughout the first 2 weeks of the school year in August, the two of them attended scheduled meetings each day after school. Mary felt great about the support she was receiving, especially since she was new to the profession and was currently going through an alternative certification program and she had no previous education training. All was well until October came around. Mary began to feel disappointed because once the scheduled meetings stopped there was no time in the day that Mary saw her mentor. Because Mary was housed on the West Campus and her mentor on the East Campus of the high school, their paths never crossed to even have a brief conversation about how the day was going much less to discuss anything of substance or importance. The relationship and support that Mary thought she was going to have depleted just as her confidence in the classroom had.

Mary finished the year with occasional mandatory meetings with her mentor, but these were not enough to halt the breaking of her spirit and her confidence in the new teacher induction program. Michael scheduled a meeting with Mary as soon as he could. The next day, Michael walked to Mary's classroom during her conference to have a conversation about her dissatisfaction. "I wanted to meet with you today because of your

responses on the end-of-year survey. Can you provide me insight into how you are feeling?” Michael questioned. Mary replied, “Yes, I can, but you will most likely not like my response.” Michael responded, “I am here to try to understand what happened this year from your perspective so that we can make improvements moving forward.” Mary situated herself in a chair behind her desk and stated:

Mr. Turner, my expectations for the mentor program and being supported as a new teacher were that I would be able to have conversations, meetings, and dialogue daily. I have not received that from my so-called mentor since I never see her. I have felt like I am on an island, and no one is coming to rescue me. In my opinion, it seems like someone should have noticed that I was failing at my job, and I was not motivated to be here every day. I know you say you want to know my perspective so you can make changes for next year. However, what about me? What can be done for me now? I have wasted an entire school year in a stagnant environment with no support or growth to speak of. How do I recover from this?

“I am deeply sorry that you feel this way, and I apologize for this being the case,” pleaded Michael. “You may be sorry, but that doesn’t change the fact that I will be resigning soon and taking a new teaching position in another district. I must support myself since no one here is going to,” exclaimed Mary. Michael could not help but think that if Mary had a mentor she saw every day, there was a great possibility that she could have been supported more, and, in turn, retained for the next year. This was a wake-up call for Michael.

As Michael dove deeper into the data of the surveys and mentor/ mentee placements, he realized a trend. All the new teachers returning to the campus for next

year reported feeling success and support from their pairing with a mentor in proximity to them. In other words, they interacted daily all year long. Some of the responses from the new teachers explained how great it was to be able to talk to their mentor daily, how easy it was to approach their mentor anytime, and how much of a positive relationship they had built with their mentor over the course of the year. Armed with this data, it was time to adjust the new teacher induction program at FHS. In a meeting with his mentor liaisons, Michael stated the following:

It has become evident, through analysis of survey data and mentor placements, that one of the most important factors in the success of our new teacher induction program is the daily interactions of our new teachers and their mentors. Being able to interact daily is building relationships that not only support our goals of the new teacher program, but also benefit our student achievement through constant growth of our teachers and consistency throughout the year. As we adjust our program to meet the needs of our new teachers, daily interactions of mentor and mentee must be considered from this date forward. The positive impact is evident and high leverage. We must take advantage of it.

After one year of campus and district-level supports for new teachers, the retention rates in OHISD have increased, while new teachers leaving the district had decreased. Specifically, Michael's campus now has a 20-25% turnover rate of new teachers. While the programs are not perfect, the momentum is heading in the right direction. However, this could not be said for another high school within the district. Maple Grove High School (MGHS) has a total teacher turnover rate of 52%. New teacher turnover rate for the previous year was a staggering 70%. The end-of-year surveys from

this campus indicate that the only support that was provided to the new teachers was those outlined in the district plan. The principal of the campus did not develop a campus-specific plan as Michael did for FHS. The result of that decision has caused many teachers to feel unsupported and lacking many skills that could have been developed in their first couple of years as new educators. Given many circumstances at MGHS, the current principal has been nonrenewed for the upcoming year.

Michael has continued his dedication at FHS to the new teacher induction program throughout the month of June. He has collaborated with his leadership teams and made adjustments and additions that are anticipated to provide additional assistance and growth opportunities to the new teachers on staff. Michael comes to the office on Monday morning and notices an invitation to a meeting at 1:00 PM with the Superintendent of Schools. Usually, meetings with the superintendent are planned, well in advance so the promptness of this meeting has Michael wondering what the topic will be. He continues with his scheduled events for the day. One o'clock rolls around and he steps into the Superintendent of Schools' office for the meeting. "How are you doing today?" says the superintendent. Michael smiles and says, "I'm doing great. I have finalized my new teacher induction program for next year, and feel like it will bring even more success and growth to FHS than last year." The superintendent nods in agreement and says, "That is part of the reason I scheduled this meeting with you this afternoon. You have done such a great job with new teacher induction and teacher retention at FHS this year." Michael smiles again and says, "Thank you, sir. I am incredibly passionate about the work we are doing at FHS and want the best for my teachers, students, and staff." After this comment by Michael, the superintendent stated:

While I understand that you are invested in FHS, as the Superintendent of Schools, I must consider the entire district into my decision-making. As you know, we have a current opening at MGHS and retention of teachers is a huge area of concern at this campus. The efforts that you have been implemented at FHS could provide exactly the stability, support, and change that MGHS needs to become aligned with the progress we are making as a district in the areas of teacher retention and new teacher support.

“I can always collaborate and mentor the newly hired principal in July to ‘jump start’ their retention efforts,” replied Michael. As the superintendent looked up from his computer he explained, “I know what I am about to say is going to be difficult to digest and understand, but I am reassigning you to be the new principal at MGHS, Michael.” Surprised, Michael explained, “I am invested in my staff, and I have made so much progress. How could this possibly be the best move?” The superintendent reassured Michael that this was the “right” decision for the district. He also assured Michael that a quality leader would replace him at FHS. “We will meet later on in the week to discuss all of the details of the reassignment,” stated the superintendent. “I am not sure about this at all. I don’t know if I can agree to this decision,” exclaimed Michael as he walked out the office.

Michael returns to his office at FHS to reflect on what transpired in the meeting with the superintendent. His emotions are all over the place. He knows that he can make an impact at the new campus and is confident in his capabilities to support and retain teachers but is also frustrated that his efforts at FHS are going to be taken over by someone else. New leadership may completely put a halt to the progress at FHS. What if

Michael decides to not agree to the reassignment to MGHS? What would his course of action be? How can the superintendent convince Michael to invest in MGHS like the one he has in FHS? What happens to the momentum surrounding new teacher programs and retention if this plan by the superintendent does not work?

### **Teaching Notes**

The principal of the campus has a significant role in the outcomes of induction of new teachers through the aid they provide to new teachers. Brücknerová and Novotný (2019) stated that the level at which the principal was involved with the induction program would have great bearing on the effectiveness of the program and the perceptions of the principal by the teachers. An approach that was supportive of the teacher created greater success rates than one that provided minimal support or communication from the principal. Brücknerová and Novotný concluded that the supportive approach places importance on collaboration and achieving specific goals. A less proactive approach by the principal would leave teachers to figure out many aspects of their new careers on their own. Implementation and execution of successful induction programs on school campuses rely on the actions of the principal. The problem, therefore, lies in the varying approaches principals take and the amount of involvement principals assume in being responsible for the success of induction programs.

The principal has a significant influence on new teacher success. Specifically, the new teacher induction program's effectiveness on the campus level relies heavily on the actions and decision-making of the principal. How a principal interacts with new teachers, builds relationships, sets time aside for meetings and collaboration, and implements programs are all considerations a principal will encounter regarding new

teacher induction. Brown and Wynn (2007) emphasized, “It is a complex balancing act for principals to structure flexibility with an almost intuitive sense of treating beginning teachers as skilled professionals...” (p. 692). This confirms the idea that there must be an intentional plan, procedure, and process in place in which the principal operates, manages, and executes a new teacher induction program on campus.

Part of the process of managing and implementing an induction program is grounded in attention to supporting new teachers throughout the school year. Bickmore and Bickmore (2010a) stated, “The personal needs met through administrators tended to coalesce around concepts of competence, autonomy, and respect...” (p. 1011). Through addressing the personal needs of new teachers, a principal can begin to build relationships. Through these relationships and getting to know the teacher as a person and as an educator, the principal also develops confidence in the abilities of the teachers in the classroom and the teachers’ decision-making ability (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010a). This research is also supported by Roberson and Roberson (2009) who maintained that principals should associate with new teachers recurrently and gain deep insight into their thoughts and feelings throughout the year. Through these relationships, the partnership between teachers and campus leader will build throughout the year. This will also ensure teacher growth on campus to ensure that the vision and mission of the campus, which are established and maintained by the principal, are achieved.

Spoon et al. (2018) stated that principals should meet with new teachers occasionally to discuss any notable areas of importance based on new teacher needs and conduct coaching. Investing time into new teachers can bear great dividends over the course of the year when it comes time for new teachers to decide to return to the campus

or look for employment elsewhere. Wong (2004) indicated that effective principals are excited to work with and for new teachers. Promoting and participating in meetings with teachers about their areas of strength and areas of growth is a key component to implementing an effective new teacher induction program. Investing in the growth of new teachers through carving out time to spend with them reinforces the connection that a principal forges with intentional practices.

Bickmore and Bickmore (2010b) determined that not every interaction between a principal and a new teacher must be formal. Occasionally stopping by their classrooms to have a conversation had a positive outcome associated with the interaction. These acts provide, at the least, the perception that the principal cares about the well-being of the new teachers on campus. Cherian and Daniel (2008) claimed in their research that new teachers wanted principals to check into their rooms casually, without evaluative purposes to provide insight, coaching, and modeling based on their observations.

Kardos et al. (2001) stressed the importance of a leader that is collaborative and inclusive to all campus leaders and devotes energies towards the overall team when developing new teachers. Quinn and Andrews (2004) also stated it was effective when principals rallied staff members to support new teachers in their growth. This research is also supported by Peters and Pearce (2012) who suggested that "...early career teacher resilience is enhanced when leaders take a "humanistic" approach to mentoring..." (p. 260). The growth of new teachers on campus is a team effort, but the principal is the chief decision-maker when constructing the positive culture on campus to ensure the success of a new teacher induction program and the teachers it supports. One decision that research shows increases a sense of team on campus is the idea of "...[attending]

some of the same professional development activities as their beginning teachers to encourage dialogue and to provide support and continuity” (Cherian & Daniel, 2008, p.8). As shown by the research, being an involved and present teammate on campus shows new teachers that their leader is invested in them as people and professionals.

Facilitation, providing access to programs, people, and opportunities is also a key role of the campus leader if a new teacher induction program is to be deemed effective and productive. The principal will inevitably make decisions to place other campus leaders in direct connection with new teachers to also support new teacher development and overall success. One specific area a principal will consider when enabling a plan for new teacher induction, is the aspect of mentoring. Youngs (2007) highlighted that “...principals can promote new teachers’ professional growth in their direct interactions with them and by facilitating their work with mentors and other colleagues” (p. 126). Making decisions and choices regarding which campus leaders are paired or interacting with new teachers on a regular basis will be vital in the development of the new teacher and their future success on the campus. In Andrews and Quinn’s (2005) research, the leader choosing the mentors should stress the importance of content knowledge, educational practices, and mentor and mentee fit with one another. Zhang et al. (2019) suggested that school leaders involve new educators in the procedures associated with choosing their mentor and the methods for the choices. Youngs (2007) also determined that an effective and intentional practice utilized by principals in their research was “...[arranging] regular times for new teachers to meet with mentors...” (pp. 126-127).

Another aspect that principals consider when facilitating their vision and thoughts for a new teacher induction program is centered on teacher learning. Cherian and Daniel

(2008) emphasized that new teachers considered a principal to be helpful when they suggested and facilitated professional development opportunities. Along with professional development activities, according to Quinn and Andrews (2004), principals also need to be proficient in creating a multitude of training that educate new teachers specifically. Wood (2005) provided many suggestions for training and events that a principal could suggest and incorporate into a new teacher induction program ranging from intimate interactions, informal conversations, on and off-campus growth opportunities, and access to supplies. Cheng and Szeto's (2016) suggestions are for new teachers to have the ability to cultivate "...leadership capacity through principal-delegated...professional development opportunities" (p. 147). With the appropriate tools, new teachers can be molded and guided into being effective educators who have a tremendous influence on their respective campuses in a positive manner.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What considerations should Michael Turner make when determining his impending decision for the upcoming year? As you formulate the considerations, consider the implications and how they will affect the new teacher induction program and the district as a whole.
2. Analyze the new teacher induction plan that Michael Turner implemented at FHS. What specific strategies could Michael implement during the next year that would improve the plan?
3. What implications can school districts that recruit and hire significant numbers of new teachers determine from this case study?

4. What potential consequences, intended or unintended, of reassigning a principal to another campus after proven success could present themselves in the coming days ahead?
5. What type of leadership style would be the most successful when leading a new teacher induction program? Provide a decision matrix, framework, or theory to match a specific example of leadership style appropriate for new teacher induction programs.

### **Activities**

1. Divide the class into groups of four. Ask them to play various roles of the Retention Steering Committee: campus principal, superintendent, director of human resources, and assistant principal. Members should portray the voice of the committee member they selected. During the conversation, state your thoughts and concerns regarding the high rate of new teachers leaving the district.
2. Ask members to pair up with a partner. One member will be assigned to be the new teacher. The other will be assigned to play the role of mentor. The new teacher should express the key problems they have encountered through the first semester of the year. The mentor, in this activity, will provide suggestions for support of the new teacher. Once both members have participated, write down what feedback the mentor should present to the principal in their next meeting.
3. Ask members to get into groups of three. On a piece of chart paper, the members will write down, individually, all of the potential problems they can think of that a new teacher could encounter during the course of a school year. After three minutes, the members will discuss their lists with each other, giving

each member time to have a voice. Once this is complete, the group will come to a consensus on the “top five” problems that new teachers face. Each group will pick a representative to share their answer with the group with justification for their answers.

4. Ask members to get into partners. On a piece of chart paper, determine the pros and cons of Michael Turner’s reassignment to MGHS. As you discuss these areas, consider the perspectives of both campus staff, Michael, and the superintendent. After 5 minutes of collaboration on the task, present to the entire group, in two minutes, the decision you would make if you were Michael. Be able to justify your response with concrete examples from your discussions with your partner.

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## **Principal Practices and the Effects on New Teacher Retention**

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West Texas A&M University

Doctoral of Education in Educational Leadership

Empirical Article

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to explore the principal practices regarding new teachers' experiences and the effects those practices have on new teacher retention.

**Research Method:** A qualitative study using the case study exploratory approach was executed through interview questions with three focus groups with a total of ten new elementary teachers located in a rural school district located on the fringe of a large urban school district in Texas. **Findings:** The findings in this study indicated that principal practices that increase the retention of new teachers can be identified through the following themes: bonding, support, and intentionality. **Conclusion:** Findings suggest that to positively influence new teacher retention, principals incorporate practices such as team-building exercises, mentor programs, celebrations and recognitions, competitions, availability to interact with teachers, affirmations, and effective communication through technology and social media.

*Keywords:* new teachers, teacher retention, principal practices, elementary, educational leadership

## **Principal Practices and the Effects on New Teacher Retention**

There is a growing concern in education surrounding the topic of new teachers confronting extreme challenges and difficulties at the beginning of their careers. Fantilli and McDougall (2009) supported this by stating, "The experiences novices encounter...[result] in creative and talented teachers finding their work frustrating, unrewarding and intolerably difficult which ultimately increases their risk of becoming a casualty of the profession" (p. 814). Due to this reality, many schools have implemented induction programs to combat being a new teacher. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) concluded that a high rate of induction plans analyzed in their study positively affected teacher morale, student success, and teaching effectiveness. The amount of fulfillment a teacher experiences while working on a campus can directly affect their willingness and want to continue to work on a campus, in a district, or in education altogether. Therefore, if a teacher is provided support, the likelihood of them continuing to be a part of the school's social structure increases (Nasser-Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010).

There are numerous challenges school districts face, especially the building principal, supporting new teachers. The decisions made by the campus leaders throughout the school year will affect an already high-leverage and critical area in the education profession: the retention of teachers. It is vital to address the problems associated with new teachers, such as educators leaving the profession, dissatisfaction with campus culture, and ineffective decision-making at the campus level. Teacher shortages and professionals being less willing to become educators prompt action by campus leaders to retain the current teachers who are choosing to be a part of the profession and their

campus. The strategies and decision-making processes that campus leaders utilize become an area of exploration (Guarino et al., 2006).

### **The Problem**

Effective leadership, challenges and perceptions of new teachers, new teacher induction programs, and the decisions and strategies applied by principals when leading a new teacher induction program will be the focus of this study. The campus principal has a significant role in the outcomes of the induction of new teachers through the aid they provide to novice teachers. Therefore, it is essential also to consider what factors will aid in keeping teachers (Ingersoll, 2012). Kutsyuruba et al. (2018) determined factors that encouraged teacher retention included mentoring relationships, receiving support, encouragement, empathy, appreciation, positive feedback, and a positive school climate. Brücknerová and Novotný (2019) stated that the level at which the principal was involved with the induction program would greatly affect the program's effectiveness and the teacher's perceptions of the principal. An approach that supported the teacher created greater success rates than one that provided minimal support or communication from the principal. Implementation and execution of successful induction programs on school campuses rely on the principal's actions. The problem, therefore, lies in the varying approaches principals take and the amount of involvement principals assume in being responsible for the success of induction programs.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the principal practices regarding new teachers' experiences and the effects those practices have on new teacher retention. I examined the principal practices that promoted the retention of new teachers from 0-3

years of experience in elementary campuses in a rural school district located on the fringe of a large urban school district in Texas. Themes of principal practice specific to new teacher induction programs were investigated to provide insight into the most effective strategies a principal could utilize to retain new teachers in the education profession and at the campus level. This topic is essential to explore because of the negative state of education regarding the retention of educators.

Administrators at districts and campuses have a responsibility to comprehend the needs of new teachers and develop goals and strategies that can be implemented to ensure the success, satisfaction, and retention of new teachers in the education profession. A new teacher's satisfaction levels are directly related to their likelihood of remaining at the school they currently teach at (Wynn et al., 2007). Sullivan and Morrison (2014) argued that school administrators have the authority and duty to address new teachers' trials and provide the needed assistance throughout the school year to survive and develop appropriately as an educator. This study hopes to provide additional insight into effective principal practices and ensure that, specifically, new teachers are retained.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by one overarching research question and three sub-research questions to explore the practices administered by principals to promote the retention of new teachers through a new teacher induction program at the campus level.

#### **Overarching Research Question:**

1. What practices administered by the principal help to retain new teachers?

### **Sub-Research Questions:**

1. What organizational management practices promote the retention of new teachers?
2. What team building/climate practices promote the retention of new teachers?
3. What support and interaction practices promote the retention of new teachers?

### **Conceptual Framework**

A few concepts are central to research regarding new teacher induction programs and their subsequent implementation by principals in the field of education. Effective leadership and the needs of new teachers encompass the critical concepts that will shape the investigation and implications of further studies and practices of leaders in education as it relates to new teacher induction programs. How they are defined, and their relationships with one another will clarify how principals and their decisions link directly to the satisfaction, development, and retention of new teachers.

#### ***Effective Leadership***

Effective leadership is a significant concept that should be defined during the exploration of new teacher induction programs and the impact principals have on those programs and the new teachers that participate in them. Effective leadership could be explored from many different organizations and areas of the workplace and come from inside and outside the realm of education (Northouse, 2019). It is important to take concepts from many researched areas and apply them to the specific area of new teacher induction programs led by principals (Ingersoll, 2012). As it relates to leadership, Northouse (2019) noted, "The following four components are central to the phenomenon: leadership is a process, leadership involves influence, leadership occurs in groups, and

leadership involves common goals" (p. 5). These four factors could be considered when defining an *effective* leader. A study about leaders by Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) has shown that "they [leaders] do need to have the *right stuff* and this stuff is not equally present in all people" (p. 59). Therefore, according to Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991), certain traits of people in leadership can influence their effectiveness.

### ***Effective Principal Practices***

An area of focus for a principal in leading their campus to success in effective ways is through the management of the interior and exterior areas of the physical campus. Maximizing the space in which the employees and students must operate and learn is vitally important to accomplishing goals and objectives associated with the vision and mission of the campus. No matter how lacking their facilities are, it is the principal's responsibility to ensure the successful use of the space (Sunaengsih et al., 2019). The involvement and ability of the principal to discuss student learning with teachers is a crucial skill for principals to have as a leader (Indra et al., 2020). Discussions about how to arrange their rooms, desk placement, and use of auxiliary rooms and spaces around the campus are all necessary conversations a principal could have to enhance the instruction on campus through the management of the physical structures and parts of the campus (Indra et al., 2020; Sunaengsih et al., 2019).

Teacher perceptions of leading a campus are also important factors for principals to consider when leading their campus. Principals should be aware that teacher perception can influence how successful their time as the leader of a particular campus is; therefore, teacher discernment can significantly influence how educators feel about the effectiveness of the principal (Webster & Litchka, 2020). Therefore, regardless of the

actual effectiveness of the principal, the perception can have lasting and impactful effects on the opinions and influence of the teachers' minds. In a study of physical education teachers in Greece, Deligiannidou et al. (2020) determined that those teachers had perceptions regarding specific skills principals should possess, including authority being observed through capacity, being able to resolve disagreements, enforcing school policies and procedures, operating the physical building and resources properly, collaborates, and provides opportunities for teachers to make their own decisions. These physical education teachers also acknowledged that all those skills were only sometimes evident in all principals. Those skills were still expected to be considered an effective principal (Deligiannidou et al., 2020).

As principals consider the many decisions they make about the direction of their campus, which leadership style to utilize, and the skills they develop throughout their careers, the need for principals to reflect on their roles, responsibilities, and perceptions of those they lead is significant. Not only can it be the difference in the success of the campus, but it can also be the deciding factor in how effective the principal is as a leader (Boyd et al., 2011). The research stated earlier regarding leadership styles aligns with the actions that a principal should demonstrate as they lead their campus and new teacher induction programs. Depending on the circumstances and situations a principal is placed in each day determine how they should prepare and react. There may not be a magical equation or step-by-step process that a principal can follow to be an effective leader. However, research across a diverse sample of organizations suggests that certain styles, skills, and strategies can be implemented and executed to provide a principal with the best likelihood of being and perceived as an effective leader (Northouse, 2019). Research

by Boyd et al. (2011) supported this notion by stating that the most influential factor that contributed to teachers departing their prior or present position was the assistance provided by principals.

### ***Needs of New Teachers***

One specific area that deserves the attention of principals and leaders of schools is the employee group known as new teachers. Since new teachers have unique needs, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) supported the idea that new teachers should be placed into a distinct category where they have completed some training but have no official experience in the education profession. Therefore, prospective teachers would be considered candidates for an induction program. This group of teachers has unique trials that they endure throughout the first few years of their careers. According to Johnson and Birkeland (2003), if new teachers do not have a satisfying experience and find some sense of accomplishment in their efforts, they will most likely leave the profession.

Being a new teacher is no easy task (Ingersoll, 2012), and principals, to be effective leaders, must determine their plan of action to support those entering the profession (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). They are responsible for framing a program to aid new teachers in accomplishing goals and becoming successful educators. This also occurs through developing goals for the campus to strive to achieve (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). The research will guide the practices considered most effective and provide insight into new teachers' perceptions and preferences. Leaders of schools can invest in specific research-based strategies to ensure a high probability of success on their campus when it comes to supporting teachers and growing their professionals to be members of the educational community that ultimately contribute to the success of their

peers and their students. As new teacher challenges, perceptions, and experiences are outlined and described, the concepts of effectively leading, implementing, and executing a systematic approach to assisting throughout a fragile period in a new teacher's career will be explored (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Fantilli and McDougall (2009) affirmed through their research of new teachers that the tasks and duties of these new teachers could be experienced in copious amounts. New teachers typically find difficulty in the curriculum and instruction side of the profession as well as the community aspects of the school building (McCormack & Thomas, 2003). According to Cherian and Daniel (2008), many of these tasks and expectancies can be seen as impractical to accomplish and maintain throughout an entire school year.

In addition to the tasks and duties of a new teacher, the social component of entering a new profession can also be challenging. Finding the rhythm and ultimate purpose in education takes much work, primarily when established groups and relationships are already formed amongst employees who have been at the school for many years. Sometimes this also results in many new teachers becoming omitted from social and professional situations (Kardos et al., 2001). Jones (2002) discussed the challenges of new teachers in their first few years being focused on areas such as overloading, exams being an emphasis, and unease about their overall performance. Menon (2012) identified adapting to the school, organization of teacher procedures and processes, and the absence of assistance from others as primary complications for new teachers. To add to the research on challenges that new teachers encounter, Abu Rass (2010) determined that "...the new teacher may well face feelings of disappointment,

discouragement, and frustration as a result of dealing with a demanding job" (p. 40). Many new teachers feel that they are at the mercy of how effective the support of their colleagues is (Peters & Pearce, 2012). New teachers have conflicting opinions on the importance of obtaining an education compared to their students. This gap between the teacher and students causes those teachers to become discouraged (Curry et al., 2016). Conflicts between teachers and students can create problems with control in the classroom (McCormack & Thomas, 2003).

### **Review of Literature**

New teacher induction programs provide teachers beginning their careers with support and resources that aid in successfully managing and navigating challenges (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Many challenges that teachers face are compounded negatively or promote positivity based on the perception of the challenge by the teacher (Brücknerová & Novotný, 2019). While new teacher induction programs vary from campus to campus and are structured differently in many school districts (Scherff, 2008), the importance of the success of teachers participating in them is critical (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). These programs provide new teachers development and support in areas specific to their needs (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012). These responsibilities will contribute to whether a teacher is successful in the beginning years of service to education and ultimately determine if a new teacher is retained in their current role as a teacher (Corbell et al., 2010).

### ***New Teacher Induction Programs***

Regardless of the focus of new teacher induction programs, the mindset should be focused on providing opportunities to modify and adapt to the new environment and profession of education (Kono, 2012). Another piece of the puzzle that cripples the chances of success of new teachers is the inefficient and ineffective hiring and onboarding process. Attention to this area of induction is necessary for positive results. (Liu & Johnson, 2006). Perrone and Eddy-Spicer (2021) suggested employing new teachers with a sense of urgency in the second semester of the school year. The reality is that many school leaders know new teachers' hardships and still do not attempt to help (Scherff, 2008). When action is not taken to provide a way for new teachers to be taken care of professionally, socially, and personally, the outcome is that new teachers begin to feel that they are lonely and are left to fend for themselves in finding their way through the first few years of their new careers (Flores, 2004). Retention of teachers to the profession continues to become a steeper challenge for leaders in education to address adequately, and the result is a profession that is suffering from teacher shortages, positions going unfilled and undertrained teachers being placed in positions that are likely to lead to failure (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Flores (2004) determined that the environment where they worked and their adjustment to working there greatly affected the perception of new teachers on the effectiveness of administration. Jones (2002) concluded that the induction process has its' share of ups and downs but is beneficial to new teachers' growth as educators. Research by Quinn and Andrews (2004) suggested that if new teachers feel championed by the administration, they also feel championed by their peers. Friedman (2004) provided

research that explained that new teachers saw administration as a crucial factor in unlocking any assistance a new teacher might receive as well as establishing the processes and systems in which new teachers would grow. Many want the support to be provided by the principal (Kardos et al., 2001; Quinn & Andrews, 2004; Tillman, 2005). Others suggest that support should be from a mentor (Desimone et al., 2014; Gordon & Lowrey, 2017; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Studies also indicate that support should be a school-wide initiative (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Jones, 2002). Gordon and Lowrey (2017) utilized the term *mentoring web*, which essentially indicated that all stakeholders would be involved in the growth of new teachers (p.2). Friedman (2004) supported the idea that new teachers expected their colleagues to be understanding and helpful with their duties. Menon (2012) determined that new teachers felt justified in being provided aid by others on campus. Zhang et al. (2019) highlighted that new teachers wanted principals to come to their classrooms and provide pointers. All new teachers will have needs specific to their own experiences, but the research by Jones (2002) indicated that new teachers need support in areas such as advice, recognition of successes, partnership in goals, and opportunities to see other teachers teach. Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2012) supported the notion that mentors focus on increasing the capacity of new teachers by developing their instructional abilities. Abu Rass (2010) determined through their research of Bedouin schools that planning and preparing strategies and systems of support for new teachers are viable options for any school to utilize. Kutsyuruba (2021) explained that new teachers are grateful for their support, be it through a principal, lead teacher, or mentor. The intentional actions to support new teachers are vital to the morale of the teachers, and

when support is not present, the perception that new teachers hold becomes negative (Flores, 2004). When support is evident, and teachers are pleased with their experiences, they are more likely to continue to work in their current positions (Corbell et al., 2010). Wynn et al. (2007) concluded, "There was a significant positive correlation between school climate and teacher's decision to remain in the school district..." (p. 221). These findings by Wynn et al. (2007) indicate that how teachers feel about their work environment determines whether they stay.

New teacher induction programs are one response that school districts can undertake to attempt to aid new teachers with their transition into the education profession (Flores & Day, 2006). A proper introduction to education is a vital stage in a new teacher's career (Flores, 2004). Zhang et al. (2019) explained early years of new teachers' careers are "...a critical period in a teaching career..." (p. 72). There must be certain factors to safeguard an effective induction process that can take place in a district or on campus (Anthony et al., 2019).

New teacher induction programs are seen as a link and a means to transition from preservice to professional educator, which can be seen as an abrupt and intense process (Flores & Day, 2006) and should be implemented in a way that provides an array of supports (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) provided that a successful induction program is "a systematic process embedded in a healthy school climate that meets new teachers' personal and professional needs" (p. 1006). Similarly stated, Nasser-Abu Alhija and Fresko (2010) accepted the idea that "induction programs offer assistance, guidance, and support to new teachers" (p. 1593).

Flores and Day (2006) suggested that induction programs should emphasize providing opportunities and growth in new teachers' emerging connections between their personal beliefs and how those aspects relate to how students and other educators perceive their instruction as well as relations to improvement as a teacher. Successful new teacher induction has positive impacts on making new teachers feel comfortable working with their co-workers and becoming more effective as an educator in the classroom (Cherubini, 2010). Brücknerová and Novotný (2019) stated that induction programs could increase the probability that a teacher is pleased with their job and that they will come back to the profession the next year. Jones (2002) conducted research that suggests that, with proper support, new teachers will maintain their employment in education as teachers. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) argued the same viewpoint that career fulfillment, worth, and teachers returning to the profession would be maintained if the new teacher induction programs were executed properly.

New teacher induction programs vary from school to school, depending on the vision of the leaders (Scherff, 2008). McCormack and Thomas (2003) provided research from South Wales that indicated that typically teachers in the area were inducted through unofficial interactions with other teachers and provided support by department heads. This further establishes that the variance of programs differs widely (Scherff, 2008).

There is an array of areas that new teachers need aid in developing and most new teacher induction programs address a combination of areas simultaneously (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Principals should be aware of the exact needs of new teachers to ensure that their specific program lends itself to addressing the unique areas of concern that new teachers might have during their early career experience (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser,

2012). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) also stated that some strategies and actions could be addressed on campus to ensure teacher development and continued employment of those educators.

### ***Induction Programs and Principals***

The actions of the principal are of extreme importance to consider when implementing a new teacher induction program and supporting new teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2007). There are high-leverage areas that can be concentrated on to provide an effective and efficient experience that provides growth for new teachers on campus (Ingersoll, 2012). Providing support through various means, team building through culture and collaboration, organizational leadership strategies, and intentional interactions consistently delivered by the principal will enable the campus to support new teachers. It will also ensure growth that provides satisfaction, enhances the campus, and retains new teachers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009).

Specific and yearlong support of new teachers is a vital area that must be addressed by the principal when executing a new teacher induction program on campus, and new teachers believe that the principal should either schedule and plan assistance or deliver it themselves (Kardos et al., 2001). Cherian and Daniel (2008) expressed that the principal must be mindful of intentionally derailing any attempt or procedure that may hinder their campus culture to ensure that new teachers maintain the support they need to be effective. Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) stated that principal-provided support over a consistent course of time provided confidence in the decisions that new teachers were making during their day. The principal was also able to have increased confidence in the professional decision-making of those teachers. Support from a principal can come from

different areas and focus on specific areas of growth for teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Flores (2004) reported through research on new teacher induction programs that the most high-leverage areas to focus on to increase the knowledge of new teachers were providing a clear direction and establishing an encouraging community. A key aspect that must be considered is trust when considering the leadership aspects of a campus, specifically, a new teacher induction program, and administrators should focus on building trust between the new teacher and themselves to ensure proper measures can be taken to create a community where the new teacher can grow (Cherubini, 2010). Youngs (2007) concluded that educational support in content areas provided to new teachers should be presented in a way that follows a process and is systematized. Cherian and Daniel (2008) reported "...that principals attend some of the same professional development activities as their beginning teachers to encourage dialogue and to provide support and continuity" (p. 8). Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) identified that "the personal needs met through administrators tended to coalesce around concepts of competence, autonomy, and respect..." (p. 1011). The principal must address teachers' professional and personal needs (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Quinn & Andrews, 2004). Determining what type of support and when to provide that support is an aptitude that principals must take time to develop, think through, and perform to provide new teachers with an induction program that truly provides growth throughout the year (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Kutsyuruba (2021) mentioned in their research that new teacher interactions prompted by the principal came in the form of evaluations and walkthroughs in the teachers' room.

An effective way to accomplish those responsibilities as a principal is to empower successful teachers to steer new teachers on a path that creates habits and actions that eventually result in success as a teacher in general (Cherian & Daniel, 2008). Therefore, according to Cherian and Daniel, collaborations with other teachers and stakeholders on the campus and in the district will also contribute to the teacher's success. The caliber of those collaborations will undoubtedly correlate with the success of new teachers (Kardos et al., 2001). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) suggested that a specific and reserved time for new teachers to plan with other educators is important in new teacher development as an educator. Flores and Day (2006) commented that their research suggested that the more collaborative their interactions were, the more likely they would have a constructive outlook toward education. This further indicates that support needs to be provided to new teachers continuously throughout their induction years (Kardos et al., 2001).

Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) established that a team mentality to promote a positive culture and climate also bids well for new teachers and their success and growth in their early years of teaching. This provided insight into the principal's role in culture building and teamwork, stating that teachers' personal and professional needs can be swayed to the positive side when administrator support is prevalent. In addition to the needs of teachers, the needs of students can also be addressed by building a positive school atmosphere that provides assistance to new teachers (Correa & Wagner, 2011).

Kardos et al. (2001) determined that the essential attributes of a principal who is leading new teachers are aware of the importance of collaboration, intentionally directing their energy toward the entire team, providing continuous support, and limiting isolation when building up new teachers. To encompass all these ideas, Kardos et al. (2001)

concluded that being "present and engaged in the daily life of the school" (p. 280) is especially valuable for a campus principal and building a culture of teamwork. Walker and Kutsyuruba (2019) determined that principal commitment to supporting new teachers is a key component to the success of new teachers and their induction programs. These actions also bring about positive outcomes in teacher approval and general attitude towards education and the campus.

Principals could work alongside teachers and give them chances to lead when making decisions. Teachers being leaders on campus and promoting a team atmosphere entail working alongside new teachers to ensure their success in working through early career challenges (Stoll et al., 2006). Developing teachers and providing them with leadership opportunities can be achieved if the principal on campus is effective in frequently providing information to teachers and supporting the growth of those teachers (Szeto & Cheng, 2018). Burke et al. (2015) supported the concept of teachers communicating and cooperating about ideas, resources, and models of teaching that could be advantageous for a new teacher to become increasingly more effective in the classroom. Birkeland and Feiman-Nemser (2009) concluded that veteran teachers could also impact the success of new teachers by working alongside the new teachers regarding teaching strategies.

Another aspect to consider concerning the growth of new teachers and the campus culture is professional development. Cherian and Daniel (2008) maintained that a "professional culture of learning" (p. 9) is promoted when principals specifically suggest areas of development and growth to new teachers. Another vital aspect to consider when developing new teachers is the interactions of new teachers with other educators. Quinn

and Andrews (2004) determined that principal encouragement of all staff to support the new teachers on campus is a strategy that produces positive gains on campus. Kutsyuruba et al. (2018) stated that a positive camaraderie among staff members would promote partnerships and cooperation on campus. Wynn et al. (2007) determined that the environment in which a new teacher operates is an important aspect of the culture of the campus and if teachers continue to work on a specific campus.

Principals have a specific set of duties and responsibilities attached to the job title, allowing them to be strategic in improving a campus; the organization of the programs and activities they promote on campus show a direct reflection of their thought process and facilitating abilities (Sunaengsih et al., 2019). For new teacher induction to be successful, the principal should incorporate certain aspects of organizational leadership and facilitation into the program (Menon, 2012). Kutsyuruba (2021) expressed the reality of providing a new teacher induction program on campus will cause the principal to allocate part of the budget to the project, secure scheduled opportunities to organize the program, and develop the key stakeholders professionally to support the induction process.

Communication of a principal's expectations for new teachers is vital to the success of a new teacher induction program (Cherian & Daniel, 2008). According to Quinn and Andrews (2004), communication starts at the beginning of the year or when the new teacher is hired through orientation. Throughout the year, whenever a new teacher is evaluated on their performance, the principal should provide adequate feedback to ensure that open communication lines are achieved (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) advocated that utilizing certain funds to support new

teachers through mentorships and developmental initiatives could have positive effects on the school, district, and employees.

In addition to funding, the principal should carefully evaluate what a new teacher might face and consider if those areas go unaddressed and predicted by the administration that it could lead to tension for new teachers and have lasting negative effects (Curry et al., 2016). Determining the needs of new teachers and providing appropriate resources to aid in their success can alleviate unnecessary stressors on new teachers. (Fernet et al., 2016). Principals are responsible for assembling and systematizing the materials and supplies that new teachers will need to be effective, and this will entail the principal pre-plan throughout the school year to provide the appropriate support that new teachers will need (Sullivan & Morrison, 2014). Insight into specific areas principals can focus on to effectively manage an induction program. Principals created opportunities for new teachers to meet with other colleagues, created activities to promote confidence in each other, assess the effectiveness of the program, and aid in managing student behavior (Anthony et al., 2019).

Cherian and Daniel (2008) supported the manipulation of the schedule to incorporate time for mentors and new teachers to meet. This time, according to Cherian and Daniel, would come in the form of matching conference times. Mentor programs provide an experience for new teachers that principals should support and can be dynamic in the success of the induction program (Abu Rass, 2010; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Brücknerová & Novotný, 2019; Youngs, 2007). The principal has choices to make regarding who those mentors are and what their role is going to be and research on mentor programs suggests that principals try to pair new teachers with someone from the

same content and classification (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Kardos et al., 2001). Regardless of who or how to place a mentor with a new teacher, the decision by the principal will have a lasting effect on the outcomes of those new teachers (Gordon & Lowrey, 2017). The guidance that a new teacher receives from others will contribute to decreasing seclusion and the feeling of discouragement (Andrews & Quinn, 2005). Kutsyuruba (2021) provided insight into strategies a principal can enact to aid in mentor development. The principals in Kutsyuruba's study had frequent one-on-one meetings with the mentors on their campus to reflect on and strategize how to support new teachers. Principals should also consider the need for mentors and mentees to meet, and Youngs (2007) suggested that principals provide opportunities for specific times allotted to new teachers and their mentors to meet throughout the school year. These mentor interactions cultivate an environment that enables them to meet the individual needs of each new teacher while decreasing pressure on them and increasing their knowledge of the profession (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Due to administrators having previous practice in the classroom, new teachers expect them to pass on their knowledge (Zhang et al., 2019). Szeto and Cheng (2018) explained that by exhibiting actions that communicated clear expectations and goals, the leader of the campus was seen as an influential person and an exemplar of how to act. Abu Rass (2010) contributed to the research on mentors and determined that new teachers who had mentors assigned to them were able to communicate and interact more effectively with co-workers, parents, and students. Gordon and Lowrey (2017) argued that leaders should consider "...providing the novice teacher with a formal mentor and providing opportunities for the novice teacher to seek out informal mentors" (p. 6). Distinctive and

separate types of mentoring would allow for the opportunity for learning to take place in varying environments and through differentiated communication (Desimone et al., 2014). The principal can leverage their position to be highly involved in the process and position their role to support in a less involved way (Pogodzinski, 2015).

According to research by Cherian and Daniel (2008), new teachers want to be provided feedback. Kutsyruba (2021) determined that new teachers specifically want forms of feedback and contact from principals. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) provided research that suggests that new teachers are looking specifically for ways to increase their certainty in their effectiveness as an educator. Other stakeholders' interactions greatly influence new teachers during their first few years of teaching. Fernet et al. (2016) stated, "...teachers' autonomous motivation is determined by...a feeling of being recognized by others for their contribution..." (p. 488). Thus, based on research by Fernet et al., those interacting with new teachers, especially those with frequent interactions such as principals, mentors, or partner teachers, should consider the communication strategies utilized and have an understanding that their interactions will affect the new teachers' confidence. It should also be noted that Ingersoll (2012) stated that frequent interactions that are encouraging in nature from the principal are an effective strategy to implement with new teachers. Wood (2005) asserted that recurrent interactions between principals and new teachers are needed to promote programs that are supportive in nature. Szeto and Cheng (2018) described that administrators on campus can be effective in growing teachers and can have the feeling of being motivating and providing teachers the autonomy to lead on campus. When new teachers take on the responsibility of leading, it can be principal enacted or pursued by the teacher themselves, and the administrator will

need to establish a keen sense of which avenue to follow based on their knowledge of the new teacher and their competence (Cheng & Szeto, 2016). When administrators take ownership of their actions and intentionally focus their attentiveness on new teachers and their growth, the strength of the effectiveness of new teachers increases (Peters & Pearce, 2012).

## **Method**

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research was a qualitative study using the case study exploratory approach. A qualitative study was chosen for this research study due to the concentration on human factors and the portrayals of experiences (Maxwell, 2013). The focus on descriptions, or what people are expressing through their words, will allow their experiences to be explained through responding to discussion questions. Qualitative research methods explore the participants' viewpoints, relationships to be identified, and gather views from multiple participants (Cohen et al., 2007). Yin (2013) reinforced that exploratory case studies are utilized to provide opportunities for the researcher to gather information or data in a comprehensive and detailed way. Exploratory case studies also allow for certain patterns to be identified (Vaterlaus & Tarabochia, 2021). The exploratory case study strategy of inquiry aligns with the goals of the research study in gaining information on principal practices on campus specifically regarding new teachers and retention.

This qualitative exploratory case study provides insight into the decisions that principals make throughout a school year to promote positivity and retain new teachers on their respective campuses. By exploring the responses of the interview questions by new teachers regarding their experiences and specific principal practices they have

experienced, principals and educational leaders can be more informed and prepared for the challenges that new teachers face as they enter a new profession.

### **Participant Population**

A purposive sampling strategy (Maxwell, 2013) was utilized to gather specific information regarding research questions that new teachers can provide appropriate responses to. The study allowed for the intentional selection of individuals to be used for the research study to ensure that the goals are achieved, and research questions are answered successfully. The population of this qualitative exploratory case study was new elementary teachers ranging from 0-3 years of service in education. These teachers were currently employed by a rural school district located on the fringe of a large urban school in Texas. (TEA, 2023a). Three elementary campuses were utilized for the research study. These three elementary campuses were chosen due to the turnover rate for teachers in the chosen district being 15.5% in 2021-2022. This was lower than the average turnover rate for teachers for the state at 17.7% (TEA, 2023b). They were also chosen because they were participants in an active new teacher mentoring program. Teacher turnover is a topic of interest in the district and principals across the district are drawn to being knowledgeable of effective practices that can be implemented to retain teachers. At these three elementary, there were three focus groups formed. One focus group per campus was interviewed. The focus groups were comprised of three to four participants per focus group. When recruiting these candidates, the plans for focus groups were communicated, however, the option of individual interviews in lieu of focus groups discussions were provided to each participant. No one chose an individual interview, but it was an option. Wilkinson (2004) stated that a focus group can be utilized when a researcher's goal is to

concentrate on a specific subject matter. Focus groups also allow for a small group of individuals to have a dialogue about an issue. Krueger and Casey (2015) suggested, “The purpose of conducting a focus group is to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, idea, product, or service. Focus groups are used to gather opinions” (p. 2). The study regarding new teachers, principal practices, and retention aligned with utilizing focus groups. These groups of new teachers shared their thoughts in an environment that promoted discussion, and the information provided offered insight into their specific experiences on campus. The participants of the study are represented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Study Participant Information*

Participant Name* (Pseudonyms)	Years of Teaching Experience at Current Campus	Years of Experience at Other Campuses	Total Years of Teaching Experience
ET1	2	0	2
ET2	1	1	2
ET3	1	1	2
ET4	1	0	1
ET5	1	2	3
ET6	2	0	2
ET7	3	0	3
ET8	2	0	2
ET9	2	0	2
ET10	1	0	1

*\*Note: In the pseudonyms, ET represents elementary teacher.*

**Data Collection Procedures**

This study had multiple sources of data, which were gathered through a pre-survey and discussions with participants. The pre-survey provided information regarding the demographics of the new teachers participating in the study. The discussions were

conducted in the form of an exploratory case study with the use of focus groups. Each focus group was asked questions generated based on the three themes outlined in the sub-research questions above. Information regarding the research study was provided at a new teacher induction quarterly meeting that was provided to new teachers by the study's school district central administration. Information was also provided through an e-mail to officially invite new teachers, 0-3 years, to participate in the research study. E-mail responses were collected and organized to form the focus groups. Once focus groups were formed, an initial survey was sent to the participating new teachers to gather demographic data such as years of experience, campus, subject taught, etc. This provided insight into the teachers and their experiences prior to the interviews. This also ensured the efficiency of the process and allowed for the interview process to be focused on addressing the research questions. The survey results were collected by Qualtrics survey. The discussions allowed new teachers to provide their experiences as new teachers on a specific campus, being led by a specific principal. The practices of the principals were examined through the experiences of new teachers. Interviews were conducted by Zoom and lasted about 60 minutes. Audio recording and memos were utilized to ensure accurate coding and transcribing of the responses.

### **Data Analysis**

The primary means of data analysis focused on utilizing the Framework Method, which provided a systematized way to gather data (Gale et al., 2013). The interview responses were transcribed and coded. Transcription allowed the researcher to engage in data analysis. Validity of the data was achieved by securing that the transcripts reflected the recording of the focus group discussion. I also checked the notes I took during the

discussion to ensure they represented the interview participants' responses. The coding step of the Framework Method lends itself to thoroughly analyzing the data (Gale et al., 2013). The research questions were formulated to focus on themes already established in the literature. Through the coding process, which Maxwell (2013) determined as a distinctive element of qualitative research, additional themes were explored through the sorting process. The information was organized based on the responses of the focus groups. Focus group responses were transcribed and coded to ensure that the responses were analyzed to determine the themes of individual focus groups. Memos were also utilized to record responses. Maxwell (2013) determined that memos spark exploratory thinking about the research and responses. Once multiple coding rounds were conducted, the focus groups were compared and analyzed to determine differences and similarities in practices across campuses and campus principals.

## **Findings**

The over-arching research question was, "What practices of support administered by the principal help to retain new teachers?" In addition to this over-arching question, there were three sub-research questions regarding the practices of principals and their specific organizational management, team building and climate, and interactions and communication with new teachers on their campus. The themes surfaced from these research questions concerning principal practices that retain new teachers were bonding, support, and intentionality.

### **Theme #1: Bonding**

The first theme new teachers identified as an area their principal practiced and aided in their retention was bonding. Principals practiced bonding through many different

avenues on campus. The practices that new elementary teachers emphasized that encompassed the bonding theme were meetings, team-building exercises, celebrations and recognitions, and competitions.

Meetings were an area that new teachers focused on when describing the theme of bonding. ET1 mentioned that staff meetings were where the staff could have fun. ET4 stated that a staff meeting was where the staff could “get told what we need to get told, get to the point, and move on.” ET5 indicated that grade-level meetings occurred each Thursday, and this was a time when vital information and structure were provided to the teachers. ET5 also mentioned that at the beginning of the school year, there were activities at staff meetings where teachers could play games and get to know each other through “an icebreaker.” ET7 revealed that the principal would form a group called the “Image Committee” that would meet in the summer and was “assigned people to go help them bring their stuff in and move into their classrooms.” ET7 also stated that this was a “bunch of people who have the school’s best interest in mind, and we decide on things. It’s like if anybody has questions, they can come to us, and we can say, this is why we did this.” ET10 revealed that their principal was able to communicate effectively about the topics and timeframe of a staff meeting and that allowed them not to be “blindsided on things.” ET7 elaborated on the idea of staff meetings being a fun activity and an area of bonding when they stated:

[The principal] made it really fun where she does giveaways, and it is stuff for your classroom that you’re going to actually need. This year we all won a bunch of wobble chairs and stuff that she spent funds on for us to win and cool stuff like

that because she herself knows that sitting there during training isn't always the best time. She tries to make it as fun as she can.

ET7 also indicated that bonding occurs at these meetings and allows for “getting to know people and not just being stuck in your little group.”

Team building was another aspect that became evident through discussions with new teachers. ET2 stated, “It [team building] starts on day one. You are just thrown in and don’t have a choice.” ET4 mentioned that she appreciated that the staff could work as a team. As ET5 indicated, team building also occurred when the principal was about to delegate responsibilities to other staff members. This aided in the team coming closer together through empowered communication. ET7 shared that shared decision-making increased the staff’s ability to build a team that would ask for each other’s input before making a decision. She elaborated by saying that the principal would bring groups of teachers together to ask for their input and see what they thought.

Celebrations and recognitions were also significant aspects of bonding that presented itself through the new elementary teacher’s focus groups. ET2 noted:

Something we added this year was the growth parade. I thought it was cool because I'd never heard of a school that does this. We take our beginning and middle-of-year testing as a school, and then we celebrate all the kids' growth. We got to walk around the whole school, and they made posters. Parents were invited to come.

ET3 mentioned that the students have a bell that they can ring on campus when they have growth on their assessments. ET2 stated that their campus principal allows staff members to recognize and celebrate other staff through “shoutouts” in the newsletter. ET4 said that

their campus principal promotes a potluck to celebrate staff birthdays on campus. ET6 mentioned a celebration of student behavior that was called the “golden spatula.” She stated:

Depending on how well a class behaves in the cafeteria, whether it's just being at a certain voice level, then the teacher who is doing the lunch monitoring for that specific grade, that class is rewarded that golden spatula for showing Bulldog Barks behavior. That was a big thing, for sure.

ET8 mentioned that on their campus, gifts such as treats, games, and classroom decorations are ways the principal celebrates the staff. ET9 also mentioned that the principal would write the staff notes to recognize the good things they were doing on campus. ET10 also noted that the principal would give them things and “it was just a nice, small thing.”

The final aspect of bonding highlighted by the new elementary teachers was in the area of competitions. ET1 expressed that competition did exist on their campus at staff meetings. ET2 stated two specific events that occurred on campus that exemplified competition:

Around Christmas, our counselors will hide body decorations for ‘Olaf the snowman’ around the school, and the first team to put the puzzle together gets points. Last year, they also hid pictures for ‘Peeps for Easter,’ and the first team to find as many Peeps within a couple of days wins.

## **Theme #2: Supporting**

The second theme new teachers identified as an area that their principal practiced and aided in their retention was supporting practices. Principals practiced support by

providing a mentor to new elementary teachers, being available and having an open door, and facilitating teamwork.

Mentoring became a significant area of focus when teachers began to explain how they felt supported by the principal on campus. ET4 mentioned, “The mentor program really did help.” ET4 also stated, “She, the principal, was a leader for me, to be a leader for them.” ET5 stated:

I had a mentor, and she facilitated the opportunity for that mentor to come into my classroom whenever I needed. I could call or text her. My mentor was very available. In addition, the principal provided the initial contact between my mentor and me. She let my mentor be in the classroom with me to try to do the organization that was needed at the beginning of the year so the kids wouldn't miss much of learning.

ET5 also mentioned that the principal supports anything that will positively impact the campus. ET4 said, “She would give me ideas and guide me.” ET7 stated, “The principal is there for you. It almost makes you want to do better just having that support.” ET7 stated:

I think one of the ones that I really like is the mentorship program. When you get to campus, you're assigned a mentor that kind of shows you the ropes of the school. They meet with you every so often. They go to your classroom to see how your teaching is and give you pointers when needed. Therefore, it's kind of like someone that you can lean on in your first year of teaching.

ET8 agreed with that statement and added that it also provided a person to be an outlet when they were struggling or needed help. ET9 added that the check-ins provided by

mentors allowed for an outstanding experience as a new elementary teacher. ET10 mentioned that team leads also acted as mentors on campus by providing support and answering questions.

Being available was an area where new elementary teachers provided insight as important to supporting them as new teachers. ET1 mentioned that her principal “does have that open door, where you can go talk to her on anything professional or personal.” ET2 noted that while the principal was conducting the evaluation process for the year, the feeling she got was relaxed. They could sit and talk as colleagues about the principal's observations. ET4 mentioned that she could come to her principal anytime with any questions. She also stated, “If you need something, you can go to her and talk to her about it. She's open-minded. She's there for you. She will sit there, listen, and guide you the way you need to go.” ET5 stated, “You just go to the front office, and you see the door open. You can go in, and anything you need, she's always there.” ET6 mentioned that the principal constantly checks in on them to see how they are doing to provide support. ET9 stated, “If I call right now, she's going to pick up on the first ring. It could be any time of day. Anytime I had a question about anything, I felt more than comfortable asking her.” ET9 also added that she could not remember when the principal was unavailable through text messages or phone calls.

ET1 mentioned teamwork as an area that allows staff to “mesh well together.” ET6 mentioned that delegating responsibility to team members on campus was positive the principal implemented. ET5 mentioned that teamwork was a reason she wanted to stay because she realized “I'm not alone. I'm not the only one who has this expectation.

I'm not the only one who's trying to have the kids have the best behavior. There are other people that are enforcing that as well.”

### **Theme #3: Intentionality**

Intentionality was the third theme that new teachers identified as an area that their principal practiced and aided in their retention. Principals were intentional about their actions and plans in areas of affirmations and recognitions, availability, and communication strategies on campus. New elementary teachers highlighted these intentional acts and provided details on specific events and scenarios that detail the interactions between new elementary teachers and their principals.

Recognition and affirmation of staff was an area that was highly important when it came to new teachers. ET3 mentioned that staff and teacher monthly awards were an area that she thought was significant. ET5 mentioned that the principal would specifically come to their room to tell them statements such as “I love that you are doing this, and I love how you include your team.” ET5 stated that this made her “feel special.” ET9 stated, “I think she did a great job with affirmations.” ET5 added that those affirmations were through written notes.

ET1 mentioned that they thought the principal was purposeful in their actions each day. ET2 mentioned that their principal is intentional in the interactions that they have. She makes herself available and provides acts of service, such as printing intervention tools out for her to save her time. She always looks for ways to help. ET3 mentioned that she felt it significant when the principal sat in on training to be with her staff and spend time on the content. ET3 also stated, “I appreciate that she has tried.” ET4 related intentionality to the principal's emails stating, “She is on top of it. To have a

principal that is really trying for the student's best interest means a lot." ET8 stated, "I feel like our principal has our best interests in mind." ET7 mentioned that when the principal utilizes their time effectively, this is an intentional act that enhances the experience on campus. ET8 stated, "I feel like she always is making sure that we are using our time wisely and she is not wasting anybody's time."

Communication through social media and technology also provided new teachers with a feeling of intentionality. ET2 stated, "Whatever we are doing on campus, she is very quick to post it on our social media page." ET3 mentioned that the principal also attempts to communicate in multiple languages. ET1 said that the principal provides visuals to teachers to send out to parents that provide important information to parents. It allows teachers to provide consistent information to all stakeholders. ET2 stated their principal "sends an email out that says the 'peek of the week'. It's all the things that are going on within our school over the next two weeks." ET2 mentioned that the principal intentionally sets calendar invites to aid teachers in being organized and informed about important checkpoints or events on campus. ET5 mentioned that the newsletter sent out by the principal saved time in their day and made it more efficient. ET8 mentioned that the specific reason for staff emails being sent by the principal was to save time for the classroom.

## **Discussion**

### **Summary**

This study provided insight into the specific principal practices that aid in retaining teachers at the campus level. Experiences that teachers face are incredibly challenging and leave teachers feeling unsupported (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). It is vitally important to examine the experiences of new teachers and principal practices that

show an impact on retaining teachers from year to year. This study also aimed to investigate a rural district located on the fringe of an urban school in Texas (TEA, 2023a). The school district also had a lower-than-state average in teacher turnover (TEA, 2023b). Being on the outskirts of an urban area, this school district is experiencing high growth in school population and demographic changes. These changing demographics and increases in population create challenges on campus and in the classroom. Rural districts on the fringe of larger urban areas are an area that presents unique growth challenges that leaders in those areas must confront. The principal practices outlined are specific examples of how principals in areas such as this urban fringe area can aid in retaining new teachers and ensuring that the growth of such areas does not decrease the retention of new teachers. This study provided valuable information regarding principal practices that aid in retaining teachers as well as specific, elaborate examples of principal practices and their impact at the campus level on teacher retention. New elementary teachers provided first-hand experiences and analysis of principal practices on their campuses. This study provides evidence that principal practices at the campus level influence teacher retention.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to answer one overarching research question, “What practices of support administered by the principal help to retain new teachers?” In answering this question, I explored three SRQs that examined how principals implemented organizational management, building/climate, and support and interaction practices to retain new teachers. The themes discovered were bonding, support, and intentionality.

***Overall Research Question: What practices of support administered by the principal help to retain new teachers?***

This study found that numerous principal practices help to retain new teachers. At the campus level, the principal can influence the retention of new teachers by the practices they implement throughout the school year. New elementary teachers in this study voiced that bonding with the entire staff was an important area that principals focused on through their practices. Bonding occurred through meetings, team building exercises, celebrations and recognitions, and competitions. New teachers suggested that meetings were an event that incorporated fun activities but also honored their time and provided effective communication. Based on new elementary teacher responses, team-building activities occurred throughout the school year and provided many opportunities for all staff to interact and connect. Celebrations and recognitions were another area new teachers agreed was an important principal practice that provided positivity and the opportunity to build relationships across content and grade levels. Competition was also an area of practice that principals leveraged to connect staff members. The new teachers stated that they enjoyed the games and prizes that principals would incorporate into the events and activities on campus.

New elementary teachers also suggested that support came through mentoring, the availability of the principal, and teamwork. The practice of mentoring came through varying sources, such as mentors, teachers assigned to new teachers, team leads, and the principal themselves. New teachers expressed the availability and visibility of principals as a way that proved that the principal displayed assistance to new teachers. New teachers explained teamwork, as it related to principal practices, as an area exhibited through

planning lessons together as a team, accomplishing tasks together, and being there for one another in challenging times.

Intentionality was another central theme that surfaced through exploring new elementary teachers' responses to the research questions. According to the new teachers, a principal could demonstrate intentionality through affirmations and recognitions, availability, and communication through technology and social media. New teachers stated that principals could positively influence the campus by providing verbal or written affirmations. New teachers also indicated that being available and willing to be present and sharing experiences with new teachers is a way for principals to show that they are intentional with their actions. Finally, communication through email, newsletters, and social media was provided as important and vital ways to communicate with teachers about upcoming events, initiatives, and essential information.

Teachers determine whether they want to stay at a given campus by how they feel about their work environment (Wynn et al., 2007). Principals can affect the retention of teachers through the practices they invest in and implement on campus. It is imperative that principals develop a plan (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Many teachers suggest that they want support from the principal (Kardos et al., 2001; Quinn & Andrews, 2004; Tillman, 2005). This support can come from the organization of programs such as mentorships, which teachers also suggest they want support from (Desimone et al., 2014; Gordon & Lowrey, 2017; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). These mentorships can vary regarding the individual providing the support. It can be from an actual assigned mentor, a team lead, or the principal themselves. Jones (2002) determined that recognition of success was a practice by principals that was a need for new teachers.

Kutsyuruba (2021) indicated that teachers appreciate the support they are given, which, in turn, influences teachers to continue to work in their current positions (Corbell et al., 2010; Wynn et al., 2007). Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) concluded that a team mentality enhances the experience of new teachers and increases the likelihood of retention of those new teachers. Kardos et al. (2001) addressed the intentionality of the principal, stating that focusing on the entire team, always providing support, collaborating, and limiting isolation through bonding on campus would indicate that the principal was aware of the needs of new teachers.

**What organizational management practices promote the retention of new teachers?** This study provided evidence that organizational management practices by a principal are an area that can aid in the retention of new teachers. This particular study determined that principals could organize their campus in such a way that promotes structure throughout the school year. These organizational management practices provide new teachers with consistency and structure in areas such as meetings, planned interactions, and mentor programs. In this study, new elementary teachers explained and elaborated on each of these areas. Teachers mentioned that the principal could organize the time to be efficient, fun, and engaging in meetings such as whole staff, grade level, and PLC meetings. This allowed teachers to feel like their time was valued, they received important information, and they had a positive experience. Mentor programs, established by the principal, provided support for new teachers that promoted success.

Anthony et al. (2019) concluded that an effective new teacher induction program has a principal that purposefully creates activities to promote team building on campus and provides opportunities for new teachers to meet with other colleagues. Mentor

programs are described as being a positive leverage point for principals in providing a successful experience for new teachers on campus (Abu Rass, 2010; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Brücknerová & Novotný, 2019; Youngs, 2007).

### **What team building/climate practices promote the retention of new teachers?**

New teachers also provided evidence that team-building and climate-boosting practices by principals aided in the retention of new teachers. These practices created a sense of bonding throughout the campus. Through competitions, team activities, celebrations and recognitions, and being purposeful, it was evident that principals can leverage these practices to affect new teachers' retention positively. There are instances where teachers speak of activities where the entire staff competes for the most points, celebrations for teachers who graduate from college, and activities specifically centered on having fun, and principals intentionally connecting with staff through communication and interactions. The new elementary teacher responses in the focus group discussions support that principals who foster a climate that encourages teamwork and team building will ultimately generate a higher retention rate of new teachers.

A culture of teamwork is a byproduct of incorporating all stakeholders on campus into supporting new teachers (Kardos et al., 2001). Through this teamwork comes positivity, which increases the cooperation of each other on campus (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Bickmore and Bickmore (2010) determined that principal practices centered on the mentality of teamwork would promote a positive culture and climate that enhances the chances of growth in new teachers.). Kutsyuruba et al., 2018) mentioned that a positive school climate does encourage teacher retention. A direct correlation between

school climate and teacher retention is evident when exploring new teacher induction programs (Wynn et al., 2007).

**What communication/interaction practices promote the retention of new teachers?** The research study supports that principal practices that encourage communication and interaction between staff members and the principal can promote the retention of new teachers. Areas that new elementary teachers specifically mentioned as specific principal practices were being available and technology and social media communication. New teachers elaborated on principal actions such as coming to their rooms, seeing how their day is going in the hallways, having an “open door,” answering phone calls and text messages anytime, sending out intentional emails with important information, and posting on social media frequently.

Research indicates that walkthroughs and evaluations are the principal's primary mode of interaction (Kutsyuruba, 2021). Flores and Day (2006) concluded that collaborative interactions promote a positive outlook on education in new teachers. New teachers respond to collaboration. By opening the lines of communication, regardless of the mode, the pressure of being a new teacher can be lessened (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Ingersoll (2012) stated that frequent positive interactions are an effective strategy for principals.

### **Implications**

This study of principal practices and their impact on new teacher retention has produced several implications. The first implication to discuss is regarding policy. While mentor programs are outlined in education policies, many are optional or application-based. A school with a higher-than-average teacher turnover rate should be required to

implement a campus-based mentor program. Campus-based mentorships contribute to higher teacher retention (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) supported allocating funds to establish and maintain school mentoring programs. Policies that mandate campus-based mentor programs and drive funding towards growing and sustaining the programs will progress new teacher retention.

To address teacher attrition, it is recommended that school districts affect the practices of principals by providing avenues for principals to engage in professional development that is directly related to supporting new teachers. It is recommended that principals are aware of new teachers' specific and unique needs. Without proper knowledge and skills to implement and execute particular practices that promote teacher retention, principals will lack the structure, organization, and communication necessary to be a successful leader of new teachers that increases teacher retention at the campus level.

Being an effective leader as a campus principal is vital to the success of a new teacher induction program and, ultimately, the retention of new teachers. Deligiannidou et al. (2020) determined that specific skills must be possessed to be an effective leader as a principal. Research suggests that organizational management, team building and climate practices, and communication and interactions play a significant role in the success of a principal attempting to retain new teachers. It is important to understand that principals must be more than instructional leaders on campus to retain new teachers. Being aware of the challenges that new teachers experience throughout the first few years of their careers is essential. The themes that surfaced from this study encompass the areas of bonding, supporting practices, and intentionality by the principal in their actions.

Principals must have knowledge of these practices to effectively plan and respond to the needs of new teachers if the goal of retention of new teachers is to be attained.

Future research studies should examine quantitative methods of study. A quantitative study could be utilized to examine the attrition rates of school districts and campuses across the state. This quantitative study could focus on specific, measurable practices that principals utilize to retain teachers. Using a quantitative study would allow the study's reach to broaden and capture more data from across the state rather than in one or a few districts. In addition to this study, using a qualitative study using ethnography would benefit principals in gaining knowledge of effective principal practices. The study could magnify the specific areas and practices that genuinely retain new teachers by conducting interviews and observations over a significant amount of time in schools with high new teacher retention rates.

### **Strengths/Limitations**

Utilizing a qualitative study allowed for many strengths to surface. The use of focus group discussions allowed for in-depth dialogue by new teachers. It also allowed the new teachers to engage with one another and facilitate conversations that provided specific examples from their respective campuses regarding principal practices. Principal surveys that were incorporated into the focus group questions also ensured that the dialogue of teachers was guided in the direction that facilitated the specific actions of the principal on their particular campus. The new teachers were able to generate purposeful responses that created rich discourse amongst the participants.

There were also several limitations to this study. The timing of the study, being at the end of the school year, hindered the number of new teachers who elected to

participate. Therefore, the focus groups were smaller than initially wanted. This could have limited the amount of data that was gathered through focus group discussions. Focusing the study on only elementary campuses would also be considered a limitation. By concentrating on elementary campuses, the perspective of the elementary new teachers may differ from that of a secondary new teacher. Therefore, the data gathered may produce results focused on specific areas that secondary campus teachers may think differently about. The study is also limited due to conducting the study in a single school district. Broadening the study to multiple school districts would allow for different perspectives to be explored and potentially varying principal practices.

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