WHY DO GOOD TEACHERS STAY IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS?

By

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Abstract

This dissertation contributes to the research and discussion of high rates of teacher attrition and migration from our nation's high poverty schools. This study examines a select group of suburban teachers who work in high poverty schools within one of Kansas's wealthiest and often rewarded school districts in order to better understand why they stay in high poverty teaching positions. This understanding is acquired by investigating the beliefs and values of teachers who have stayed in high poverty schools for 5 consecutive years or more. Additionally, these teachers have the penalty free option to transfer within their district to schools with low poverty student populations. The school district has been awarded on multiple occasions for organizational and educational functioning yet, their high poverty schools continue to account for over 40% of the transfer requests each year. Qualitatively exploring the beliefs and values of select quality teachers who stay provides insights into their perceptions and reactions to work place conditions and other human affective aspects of their own personal job satisfaction.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Statement of the Problem

Why do good teachers stay in high poverty schools? Research on attrition and teacher movement identifies that high poverty schools struggle greatly with teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001, Haycock 1998). Past studies have attributed teacher departures from such schools, whether moving schools or leaving the profession altogether, to a variety of factors including abusive principals, inappropriate assignments, excessive workloads, or lack of resources (Johnson, Birkeland, 2003). The problem of attrition is not isolated to our inner cities and urban schools as similar attrition rates are also seen in our wealthier suburban areas as well (Smith and Ingersoll, 2004). Yet, while high attrition and migration rates have negative impacts on our high poverty schools, some teachers remain and enjoy lengthy careers in high poverty school settings. Examining the beliefs and values of these teachers could be the key to reversing the trends of attrition and migration in our most at-risk schools.

Issues of staffing and adequacy of teachers has long been linked to school performance and frequently blamed for school failures (Ingersoll, 2001). For this reason, attrition has been a highly researched topic for decades, and studies like Ingersoll's highlight that the challenge of teachers leaving schools for other jobs, careers, family, or different school settings is seen most frequently in schools with a large population of high poverty students. What is perhaps more problematic is that teachers who leave the high poverty schools are also frequently those teachers considered to be of high quality based on their praxis scores, college grade point averages, and job performance evaluations (MacDonald, 1999). Research has explored the reasons behind high rates of attrition in education and often identified areas such as salary, work place dysfunction, and lack of

upward mobility (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003, 2004; Farber, 1991; Dworkin, 2001; Murnane 1981, 1987, 2007); however, attrition is more often studied from the perception of teachers who leave or intend to leave. In Billingsley's 2004 review of literature, she reviewed 21 different studies on attrition and retention in the field of special education, but only 3 included the perspective of teachers who stay. A small number of studies like Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) or Costigan (2005) have sought to also gain further understanding by narratively exploring teachers who stay working in high poverty environments despite the challenges they present. With this study we are seeking to expand on the qualitative research of teachers who stay in high poverty, but we are narrowing our focus on a population of teachers that have not been studied in depth.

What are the beliefs and values of quality teachers who continue working in high poverty schools? Understanding this question can provide insights to inform school leaders seeking to interrupt patterns of teacher attrition and migration from high poverty schools. Research such as Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) longitudinal study of "leavers", "movers", and "stayers" in education provided excellent data in which to understand the plight of attrition and migration in high poverty schools; however, only a small number of participants were from suburban settings and the study encompassed a variety of different organizations, districts, and schools. Specifically this study seeks to narrow the lens and examine a select group of understudied teachers in a large suburban district in Kansas that is highly decorated and recognized for its excellence in education. Over the past decade, the district being examined has been recognized for excellence in professional development, public relations, and financial management by various institutions. In addition to the multiple awards and recognitions given to individual

buildings, the district resides in Johnson County, KS which was listed in Forbes magazine in 2008 as the third best county in America to raise a family for their, "terrific schools, low cost of living, reasonably priced homes and short commute times." Yet even with its strong reputation and many accolades that would suggest a strong, well-run organization; the district's high poverty schools continue to have teacher attrition and migration rates that are similar to those found in high poverty urban and inner city settings.

This study will use interview data to explore the beliefs and values of teachers who continue to work in high poverty environments in this large suburban district. By narrowing our focus to teachers who stay working for high poverty schools within the same strong organization, we may find new or differing perspectives or understanding that goes deeper than the larger organizational challenges often noted in studies on attrition and retention. Specifically, interviews have been conducted with teachers identified as qualified educators who continue to work in high poverty buildings 5 or more consecutive years. High poverty designation will be determined by the building's status as Title I, which is determined by the school percentage of student population that receives free and reduced lunches.

The socio-economic diversity of the district combined with its neighborhood school model creates a unique situation where there are often vast differences in the poverty levels of its schools. This is seen more prevalently at the elementary level where there are a handful of schools with more than 75% of its student population receiving free and reduced lunches, and a relatively equal number of schools with less than 5%. Teachers within the district have the ability to request transfer between these different

schools without penalty or negative outcomes such as loss of income, seniority, or loss of years toward tenure. This study will provide an analysis of this understudied population of teachers whose work environments may vary greatly from high poverty settings found in urban and inner city areas, but the attrition patterns are very much the same. A qualitative analysis of teachers who elected to stay in a high poverty school rather than transfer into a low-poverty school will provide a depth of understanding from a population research has yet to explore. Qualitative analysis of this population allows us to probe for understanding that may go beyond larger organizational challenges presented by other districts and provide results that can be compared to data produced by teachers in other settings. Results will aid in understanding how the teachers have achieved satisfaction in their jobs when so many others have left or migrated to other buildings despite the organizational success of the district as a whole.

Qualitatively studying the beliefs and values of teachers who stay working with high poverty student populations will provide other successful districts who continue to struggle with attrition in their high poverty buildings with in-depth knowledge that can positively impact their ability to attract and maintain quality teachers who will work with their most needy students. Teacher beliefs about their preparation, mentorship, or training may also influence pre-service training and how districts provide supports to teachers new to the field or district who begin in high poverty settings. Beliefs about leadership and building organization can influence principals, district leaders, and prospective leaders in the way they carry out their duties and run their buildings. Seeking a deeper understanding of the primary research question, what are the beliefs and values

of quality teachers who continue to work in high poverty schools, can provide valuable knowledge to districts who serve these populations.

Researcher Background

I began my teaching career in 1998 in a Title 1 Drummond elementary school. Carver Elementary is one of Drummond's Title I elementary schools, and at the time, I knew nothing about the school or its student population. By the time of my hiring, I was desperate for employment and was somewhat impartial to where I landed. I wanted to work for a reputable school district and did not give much thought to the diversity that could exist within one district's boundaries. During my time at Carver, I fell in love with working with high poverty and at-risk students. The complexity of their backgrounds intrigued me, and I quickly learned that teaching in this environment was more complex than just dispensing knowledge and content.

During my six years at Carver Elementary, our staff experienced a high level of teacher turnover. With a staff of approximately 24 certified teachers, we were replacing almost 4 teachers a year, and each time a teacher was replaced by someone new to the district rather than a transfer from another school within our own city. At the time, I attributed the high levels of teacher movement and attrition at Carver to poor leadership and a challenging work environment; however, I eventually discovered that our situation was far from unique.

After a brief period away from education, my wife and I moved back to Drummond and resumed our careers with the Drummond Public Schools. In my second stint with the district, I worked as a teacher for a self-contained special education program that served students who were emotionally and behaviorally disturbed. In many cases these students were from low-income families. What made this situation most

interesting is that the self-contained program was housed in one of Drummond's most affluent elementary schools. My students were bussed in commonly from Title I attendance areas to a school with no breakfast program and the highest average family income in the district. During my four years there, I witnessed many differences from my time in a Title I school.

Teachers at this school had far less behavior difficulties, and a majority of the students were academically sound if not advanced. Students entered school with rich backgrounds and experiences, and all of their basic needs were met. In addition to the student differences, teachers were supported by parents in a completely different way. During holidays such as Christmas and Teacher Appreciation week, it was not uncommon for teachers to receive hundreds of dollars' worth of gifts and gift cards-the likes of which would never be seen or received from families of poverty. Attrition rates were stable during my four years there. The only teachers that left the school were leaving because of major life changes such as birth of a child or job relocation of their spouse. In my four years there, the only teachers that transferred out of the building were transferring for the opportunity to open new facilities, and in Drummond, new facilities are typically being built in the growing neighborhoods of the city where family incomes tend to be above-average and a majority of the families own their residences.

My background working with high poverty and at-risk students has truly driven my passion for working for this population. They deserve and need the best educators that we can find to help them grow and eventually break out of the cycle of poverty.

Dissertation Outline

In chapter 1 I have provided a brief overview of the study as well as provided background information about myself. In Chapter 2 I will provide relevant research based information regarding teacher attrition and movement between schools. The data and facts surrounding attrition and migration, or teacher movement from one school to another, outline the foundational problem that is behind the purpose of the study. While data is sparse to non-existent on why teachers choose to stay in high poverty schools, this chapter will provide background on some job influences that have been identified in teacher decision making on whether they stay or leave a position. The 3rd Chapter will outline the methodology of the research project and provide information about the participants, interview process, analysis, and validity of the study. Chapter 4 will discuss the results and findings of the research, and we will address implications of the findings in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

Before exploring the beliefs and values of teachers who stay in schools with high poverty populations, we must understand the negative effects of attrition and teacher movement in the professional field of education. It is the negative impact of attrition and teacher movement that makes these teachers so unique and worthy of study. If we can better understand those who are not deterred from high poverty settings, a way may be found to improve faculty stability in these locations and reverse the trends of attrition in our most needy schools.

For purposes of this study, attrition is the term representing teachers who choose to leave the professional field of teaching altogether. Movement, migration, and exit are all terms used to describe teachers who move or transfer from one building to another. Research reviewed for this study does not always clearly differentiate whether teachers who are migrating are moving within their district or changing districts.

We will also examine research on working conditions, job satisfaction, and examine Hirschman's (1970) organizational theory of Exit, Voice, and Loyalty. Working conditions are cited frequently as one of the primary causes of attrition and migration (Ingersoll, 2001; Friedman, 1991; Dworkin, 2001; Lui, Johnson, and Peske, 2004) and play a significant role in job satisfaction and teacher decisions to stay or leave a work place. Hirschman's theory applies many aspects of working conditions and job satisfaction to explain the movement of both workers and customers in the economy.

Impact of Attrition

For decades research has explored teacher attrition within the labor market. The attention to teacher turnover has perhaps been magnified by the increasing scrutiny of American public education, and it continues to be a critical concern in education as teacher attrition is often attributed to many challenges and ultimately poor student achievement. Substantial research has been conducted regarding teachers exiting the teaching profession (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2002; Murnane, 1981, 1987; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987, 1992, 1997; Heyns, 1988), and the chronic turnover in schools (Ingersoll, 2000, 2001). This phenomenon has been linked to many educational detriments such as the hiring of substandard teachers, substandard organizational efficacy in promoting student growth, and other challenges such as larger class sizes (Macdonald, 1999). The many possible negative outcomes that can result from abnormally high rates of attrition in teaching make it a viable topic for observation.

Richard Ingersoll (2003), who defines attrition as "those who leave teaching altogether" states that excessive levels of attrition can lead to serious workplace consequences that damage the school environment and negatively impact student performance. He points out that a healthy level of turnover can prevent stagnation and facilitates innovation; however, many of our urban and high poverty schools are facing attrition numbers that exceed what would be considered acceptable. These same schools are under perhaps the highest levels of scrutiny for their student attendance, dropout rates, and performance on standardized tests.

The rates of attrition are alarmingly high in the early years of many teaching professionals. As an example, the typical school in urban Chicago loses more than half its teachers within five years (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009). Nationally,

studies suggest that 40-50% of new educators leave the field in their first several years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003). This frequent turnover naturally leads to schools being home to high numbers of less-experienced teachers, and oftentimes less qualified educators as well (Macdonald, 1999). Regardless of the quality of the teachers exiting schools, frequent turnover disrupts the quality and cohesion of the school community (Ingersoll, 2004) and its ability to perform at a high level of quality. A school community with low quality and low cohesion is challenged to develop collegiality and cooperation among teachers or to establish sustainable partnerships with parents (Allensworth, 2009).

Attrition among new educators can also be exacerbated by other factors. Some factors such as intellectual abilities and intelligence can lead to teachers leaving the field for private sector jobs with larger salaries. The beginnings of young families also impacts attrition rates. Teachers who are often most at-risk for attrition and leave the classroom more quickly within their first five years include: high school math and science teachers, young women, and people with high standardized test scores (Murnane et al., 1981).

Past and current research on attrition has centered on the population of teachers serving urban schools across the country; however, the suburbs are not immune to this staffing challenge. In fact, when comparing teachers beginning their careers in high poverty suburban settings, the attrition rates of urban school teachers tend to be very similar (Smith and Ingersoll, 2004; Theobald & Laine, 2003). The crisis of attrition and migration of quality staff from high poverty goes beyond urban settings into suburban schools and districts. Ample research identifies that attrition is often most problematic for schools serving high poverty student populations regardless of their geographic location

(Boyd et al., 2005; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004; Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007); however, little focus has been given to the suburban settings where the geographic distance between high poverty and low-poverty schools can be relatively small.

Many of our countries large suburban districts contain high poverty schools that often tend to have high rates of attrition (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). The attrition rates of these buildings are often disproportionate from other neighboring schools serving more wealthy populations (Haycock, 1998). This problem is virtually ignored by current research that focuses predominantly on teachers leaving the profession from their posts in high poverty urban schools. Little attention is being paid to the suburban schools that are facing the same dilemma. It could be argued that staff stability in high poverty suburban schools is even more difficult to achieve because of the ability to transfer to wealthier schools without the burden of relocating your family, changing districts, or losing seniority that often comes with years of service. The practice of transferring between buildings, or *migrating*, has also been recognized as a challenge for high poverty schools.

Migration and Teacher Movement

Attrition or leaving the profession altogether, has a significant impact on education whether teachers are leaving through retirement or pursuing other fields. However, it is not the only challenge related to retention faced by high poverty schools. These schools are also impacted by teachers who move or *migrate* from one building to another (Ingersoll, 2001). Migration, as defined by Ingersoll, is the movement a teacher makes from one school to another. Not surprisingly, teachers who begin teaching in high poverty schools are more likely to exit their initial school and move to a school with a different student population (Boyd et al., 2005; Scafidi et al., 2007).

In a study by Johnson & Birkeland (2003) a majority of the "movers", or teachers who migrated from their original building, transferred to schools serving wealthier student populations than the original school they came from. For purposes of this study, 'Movers' are defined as those teachers who have migrated from one building to another. When comparing the free and reduced-fee lunch data from Movers' first school to their second, there was an average change of 46 percentage points. These moves have been labeled as "upward mobility" to schools with less poverty, less minorities, and higher student success rates (Freeman, Scafidi, & Sjoquist, 2002).

The practice of migration or transferring from one building to another plays a significant role in teacher turnover. Migration, voluntary transfers, and involuntary transfers account for 50% of the turnover that schools and districts experience (Ingersol, 2001). This movement from one school to another bears great importance for this study, as the teachers who will be interviewed have access within the district to transfer or migrate from high poverty buildings to schools with wealthier more affluent student populations without losing such job perks as tenure, paid years of experience, or familiarity with the organization, curriculum, textbooks, support staff, etc. District resources do not change regardless of what building you work in. This is significant because many teachers choose to leave their posts because of working conditions that include limited instructional resources, large class sizes, and inability to meet student needs (Certo, Fox, 2002). While both attrition and migration have been explored in depth, there has been little focus on the specific population of teachers working in high poverty schools with seemingly easy access to migrate to schools with higher socio-economic status. These low poverty and high poverty schools all function under the

same successful district organization which provides comparable resources to all of its teachers regardless of what building they work in.

Working conditions: The reason to leave or the reason to stay?

Suburban teachers are an understudied population, but even with the more observed and researched teachers in the urban core, there are fewer attempts to analyze why teachers stay in high poverty schools. More often research centers on factors that lead teachers to leave the profession or migrate to other schools. Liu, Johnson, and Peske (2004) studied teacher decisions to stay at or leave a school and found that the working conditions of their school environment had significant impact. Their study, along with others (Ingersoll, 2001; Friedman, 1991; Dworkin, 2001), identify negative impact of poor working conditions as one of the most common influences on attrition and migration. This influence is further complicated by the unique challenges present in high poverty schools.

High poverty schools, often found in urban settings, face challenges within the workplace such as high teacher and student absenteeism, high teacher turnover, high numbers of uncertified teachers, and inexperienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998). The conditions of high poverty schools are also affected by their surrounding environment. Students often come in with fewer basic resources such as stable living environments, breakfast, or educated parents providing support in the home (Farber, 1991). Working conditions in high poverty schools have also been largely affected by challenges resulting from legislated standardization, competency testing, and high-stakes testing with accountability (Friedman, 1991; Dworkin, 2001). Pressures to achieve high levels of student success regardless of obstacles to their learning such as home

environment and language have led to increased stress in schools where there are larger numbers of at-risk students.

Studies by Richard Ingersoll (2001) produced results that echoed common themes of school-workplace dissatisfaction. He found that 27% of teachers who left their original school and 25% of those who left teaching made the decision based on their "dissatisfaction" with many workplace factors. They cited difficulty with administrative support, student discipline problems, and lack of faculty influence in decision making.

Common themes were also found in work conducted by Johnson and Birkeland (2003) when they qualitatively studied "Movers" and "Stayers" from the Massachusetts public school system regarding their decisions to stay or move their teaching positions. Movers often stated that they were seeking positions in schools that were properly organized for success, had stable faculties, and the capacity to initiate and sustain improvement. Other identified factors included well-established norms of respect, effective discipline systems, and deliberate parental involvement. Teachers reported that they were not specifically seeking positions in schools with wealthier populations; however, the schools that they moved to were predominantly in less impoverished communities and the student populations were wealthier than their previous school.

Work place satisfaction is not the only factor commonly attributed to teacher attrition and migration. Teachers have reported struggling with personal feelings of success and ability to identify success in their work (Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004). They also report the challenge of being effective with students and struggling with student disrespect and disruption (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Outside of school there are personal issues such as culture and preparedness to work with children from

unfamiliar backgrounds or cultures (Ng & Peter, 2009). For example, many white teachers will migrate to buildings with smaller numbers of minority students, while Black teachers will on average move to schools with larger numbers of black students (Hanushek, Rivken, 2007). Additionally issues such as available housing, how far to commute, and where to raise a family can hold heavy influence over career choices (Ng & Peter, 2009).

Job satisfaction

Work environment conditions combined with other personal factors clearly lead to varying levels of teacher job satisfaction (Certo, Fox, 2002). Job satisfaction is defined as the extent in which people like or dislike their jobs, including their work conditions (Lent, 2008; Spector, 1997). There have been a number of other aspects that have been linked to teacher satisfaction with their jobs. These factors include leadership (Chittom & Sistrunk, 1990; Billingsly, 1994), salary (Kirby & Grissmer, 1993), and emotional support from colleagues (Billingsley, 1993; Odell & Ferraro, 1992) to name a few. Relationships with parents and students have also been identified as components of job satisfaction among teachers, as well as being challenged professionally (Shann, 1998; Billingsley, 1993). Job satisfaction is formed through a complex number of influences. The challenge becomes identifying what factors have the most impact on teachers in their different work settings. It is a worthwhile pursuit however, because job satisfaction has been shown to be a predictor of teacher retention, commitment, and as a result contributes to school effectiveness (Shann, 1998).

Lent and Brown, (2006) proposed a model of work satisfaction that is broken down into five different predictor variables that include (a) personality/affective traits, (b)

participation in/progress at goal-directed activities, (c) work-related self-efficacy, (d) work conditions, and (e) goal and efficacy relevant environmental supports or obstacles. In a 2009 study, Duffy and Lent applied this model to test a sample of teachers regarding their job satisfaction. Using quantitative methods they were able to identify positive correlations between each of the five components of the model and an individual's job satisfaction, albeit some had direct correlations to job satisfaction while some were in relation to other predictors. For example, Duffy and Lent (2009) identify a positive correlation between job satisfaction and self-efficacy. They suggest this data could be used for counselors working with teachers who are currently not satisfied with their jobs and feel they do not have the means or ability to meet their goals and objectives in their work.

Work by Lent, et al. (2010) expanded on the research of Duffy and Lent (2009) and found that the most reliable predictors to job satisfaction were perceived organizational support and positive affectivity. In response to their findings they suggest the promotion of a caring, cohesive environment, supervisory support, fair policies, and equitable distribution of organizational rewards (Rhoads and Eisenberger, 2002, as cited by Lent, et al. 2010). Based on their findings, it would be logical to infer that an awarded district like Drummond would not struggle with teacher retention in its schools. Yet with fair policies in place, equitable organizational recognition and rewards, and fair distribution of support and resources, the district's Title 1 schools continue to have transfer rates around 40% each year. With those facts in mind, personal aspects of job satisfaction may begin to have a greater impact when surrounded by organizational stability.

Relationships between teachers and their colleagues, students, and parents have been often recognized as significant predictors for teacher job satisfaction (Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Yee, 1990; Bloland & Selby, 1980). Relational aspects such as meeting student needs, collegial interaction and support from colleagues, and teacher collaboration lead to increased feelings of satisfaction and effectiveness (Shann, 1998; Popkewitz & Myrdal, 1991; Theobald, 1990). Dinham (1994) found it appropriate to differentiate these sources of satisfaction that he deemed "human and affective in nature" from those influences on job satisfaction that were more organizational related such as; class size, lack of resources, and policies and procedures.

Satisfaction and Loyalty

Choosing to stay or leave a particular position is not unique to education; however, the theoretical frameworks often found surrounding similar discussions in private sector business and economics are rarely directly applied to the field of education. Albert Hirschman's theory of Exit, Voice, and Loyalty (1970) is one such framework that can be seamlessly utilized in the analysis of good teachers choosing to stay in their high-poverty schools. His theoretical concepts could be summarized in the following way; exit is the departure away from a product or position for a variety of identifiable reasons, voice is the attempt to influence or bring about change, and loyalty is a concept that "holds exit at bay and activates voice".

In its simplest form, Hirschman's description of 'exit' is demonstrated by teachers who choose to leave high-poverty schools for other buildings that appear more attractive- or appear to be an improvement over their current position. Examples of exit in the private sector are seen every day in the form of professionals changing jobs for larger

salaries, better benefits, better location, or better workplace conditions-all aspects associated with job satisfaction. Changing jobs within a district like Drummond would not result in a change in salary or benefits; however, workplace conditions would vary from building to building based on student population, leadership style, teacher workload, or other faculty dynamics.

Voice, often an alternative to exit, can also work in concert with a teacher's decision to exit or became a component of their loyalty to a position. The process of voice is clearly demonstrated by teachers involved in Arthur Costigan's (2005) research of New York teachers deciding to stay or leave following their initial three years of service in urban settings. Teachers identified their inability to influence curriculum or earn autonomy through successful student performance as a frustration that was influencing their decision to possibly exit education. They had no voice to bring about change, so exit became the most attractive option.

Qualitative data gathered from Costigan's (2005) subjects also demonstrated Hirschman's concept of loyalty; however, teachers often identified their dedication to students rather than to their employer or organization. Loyalty was demonstrated in differing fashions by teachers in the study. One teacher articulated how she felt loyal to her underprivileged students, but it did not stop her from choosing to move to a wealthier suburban school. Her loyalty or dedication to these students did not prevent her exit, but she described a strong sense of guilt or feeling that she was "selling out". Another educator described a more unflappable sense of loyalty stating that he planned to continue working in the city even though his experiences have been predominantly negative over his past three years. Hirschman would state that this kind of loyalty is a

result of the member having hope or a reasoned expectation that improvement or change will take place (pg. 79). A person with this loyalty may not activate their own voice, but expect someone else to use their voice or bring about change.

Under Hirschman's theory, Loyalty would hold much significance in teachers staying in Drummond's high poverty schools instead of exiting to other low poverty schools in the district. He states that loyalty is a constructive barrier to exit when organizations are close substitutes so that a small deterioration of one of them will send customers-members scurrying to the other (pg. 81). In the case of a district like Drummond where policy and practice results in equity among schools regarding resources and support, each school could be described as close substitutes to each other. Is loyalty or voice present with teachers who stay in high poverty schools?

In this study, I conducted personal interviews with quality teachers who stay in high poverty schools to explore their beliefs and values regarding both organizational and human-affective aspects of their jobs. Each teacher works within a district that by all accounts is organizationally sound with equitable resources, policies, procedures, and supports, yet their rates of attrition and migration from their higher poverty schools continues to be troublesome. Their personal stories and perspectives will enrich our knowledge base about teachers who stay in high poverty schools and contribute to attempts to cease damaging attrition rates in our schools with needy student populations.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Introduction

What are the beliefs and values of quality teachers who continue working in high poverty schools? A qualitative approach was employed to explore these aspects of teachers within the Drummond district in an effort to learn more about their pattern of work related attitudes, perceptions, and reactions to workplace conditions and other human affective aspects of job satisfaction. This particular population of teachers is unique because they work in a setting that has been awarded and recognized for multiple years regarding their organizational and educational practices. Additionally, these teachers who stay have the penalty-free option to transfer to schools within the district that have lower-poverty student populations which often coincides with higher levels of student achievement (Hanushek, Rivkin, 2007).

Recruitment & Data Collection

The data for this study was collected through audio recorded semi-structured interviews with 17 teachers in the suburban Drummond Public Schools who met three criteria qualifying them as quality educators; 1) ratings of effective or accomplished on Drummond's educator rubric by their administration, 2) recommended by their administrator as a quality educator, and finally, 3) they must have been teaching in a Title I building for 5 years or more.

Drummond Public Schools is a Northeastern Kansas district that consists of 27,999 students, 34 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 4 high schools, and a small number of alternative education buildings and programs. As a district, 14 of the schools and 3 alternative education buildings qualify for Title I funding based on their student

populations that qualify for free and reduced-fee lunches. The largest percentage free and reduced student population is 83.4% at the elementary level. The lowest percentage school is also at the elementary level with 1.6% free and reduced. For purposes of this study, schools that qualify as Title I buildings will be identified as high poverty.

Drummond Public Schools' elementary school diversity creates an ideal setting in which to study the phenomenon of quality teachers who choose to stay in high poverty buildings. As a district, there is great socio-economic diversity in the student population. Of the 34 elementary schools, 11 qualify for Title I funding based on their student counts for reduced-fee and free lunch program. To varying degrees, the remaining elementary schools in Drummond all have lower levels of poverty among their student populations ranging from 44.8% free and reduced population to 1.6%. 7 elementary schools have less than 10% free and reduced student population. 9 schools have between 10-20%, and the remaining schools range between 20-44%. Even though the elementary schools that qualify as high poverty only represent one third of Drummond's elementary schools, their transfer request data represents nearly half of the transfer requests received by the district each year.

In data collected in 2001-2008, transfer requests to leave Title I, high poverty, schools represented the following percentages compared to requests throughout the entire district; 53.8%, 35%, 35%, 41.6%, 46.5%, and 28% in 2008. Transfer percentages were unavailable for 2006-2007, and the data did not indicate the years of service for each teacher requesting transfer. In the cases of approved transfer requests from Title I buildings, 100% of the approved transfer requests were to non-Title I schools. In summation, each teacher that was granted a transfer out of their Title I school moved to a

position in a school that was not identified as Title I. The data supports current research and literature on high percentages of teachers moving from our high poverty schools.

As a district, Drummond Public Schools is not unique. District level administrators reported that Drummond Public Schools participates in a consortium of mid-western school districts that share many commonalities such as suburban setting, size, and student diversity. Each of the schools in this consortium faces similar challenges and influences, and they are all representative of the large, suburban district that is the focus for this study. Findings from this study could be duplicated in any of these similar districts for further exploration or comparative data.

The principals of each Title I elementary were contacted in writing with explanations of the research study, the selection requirements, and request for their recommendations of quality teachers in their buildings. 7 of the 11 administrators responded with recommendations of teachers that had strong evaluations, 5 years of service or more in Title I, and that they felt were strong, quality teachers in their buildings. From there, the identified teachers were contacted in writing with requests to participate in the study. 38 teachers were contacted and asked to participate in the study, and 19 teachers replied and agreed to contribute. 2 of those teachers were omitted from the study based on my personal relationship with them that extended beyond a professional working relationship. 12 of the 17 teachers were interviewed face to face in their school setting, and the remaining 5 teachers were interviewed by phone following the completion of the school year. All interviews were recorded with an audio recording device.

Each teacher interviewed is a quality educator as evidenced by their administrative recommendation and strong rubric evaluations with Drummond District Schools that assesses teacher performance through multiple identified standards (see appendix B). All interviewees have met the highest standards of success by scoring as Effective or Accomplished in all categories of the district's evaluation rubric.

Teacher	Gender	Building	Experience
Sue	F	Carver	24
Laura	F	Carver	15
Debbie	F	Carver	30
Kate	F	Carver	13
Terry	F	Carver	6
Sandra	F	Carver	25
Taylor	F	Carver	18
Sally	F	Carver	23
Marian	F	Cripple Creek	24
Melanie	F	Cripple Creek	7
Michelle	F	Pioneer	16
Jackie	F	Pioneer	8
Mandy	F	Pioneer	5
Jill	F	Pioneer	7
Mellissa	F	Prairie	13
Nicole	F	Prairie	13
Charlotte	F	Pleasantview	21

The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was designed with the intention of exploring why they have chosen to stay by providing opportunities for open-ended

teacher responses that inform about their beliefs and values. Exploring their beliefs and values in depth will provide explanation for why they stay in a high poverty school when other positions are plentiful in the district with low-poverty schools. Questions were designed in an open-ended format to allow teachers to share their stories and perceptions of working in Title I, high poverty schools. Each question was designed to gain insight into specific realms of influence including beliefs and values regarding work place conditions and other personal, human-affective aspects. The goal of the questioning was to obtain the "secret stories" identified by Clandinin and Connelly (1996), or what teachers actually do and think about in their work in a high poverty school. This data allows us to see beyond the quantitative correlations and gain understanding of the quality teachers who work in high poverty schools that can be translated into actions, policies, and procedures that will improve staff retention in struggling buildings.

As an individual, I bring bias to this study and have background in the very factors that I am studying. As a teacher in Drummond, I spent 6 years teaching in a high poverty, Title I, elementary. In my six years, I never submitted a transfer, nor considered a move to a low poverty school. So, I carry my own preconceived notions and assumptions as to why quality teachers may choose to stay. It has often been my own perception that teachers who work with high poverty students are not unlike individuals who choose to work in fields of social service. Like teaching, the various fields of social work are often viewed as underpaid and under-appreciated; however, people continue to enter the field for reasons such as a higher calling, a desire to positively impact society, a desire to help others who are in need of assistance, and much more. It is my assumption that teachers who work with high poverty students view their jobs as having a greater

sense of purpose or impact over their peers who teach students from more affluent homes. I worked to design a question protocol that was minimally influenced by my own perspective, is open ended, and allowed for the personal perspectives of the teachers being interviewed.

In addition to my experience as an educator, the study may be influenced by my role as an administrator within the district. As the administrator of an alternative education program, I am not directly connected to the elementary school teachers that will be the focus of my study; however, my role could still impact the level of participation and responses that are received from my interviewees. Teachers may be hesitant to provide candid answers and feedback to any individual who is an administrator within their district for fear that their comments may negatively impact their career. Teachers were reassured that their input will remain confidential and that actual names of participants will not be included in the study.

Analysis

Teacher interviews were audio recorded and transcribed into written format for analysis, and I also found it informative to listen to the interview audio multiple times. Interview data was analyzed for reoccurring statements, ideas, or similar perspectives that were common among many of the interviewees. These reoccurring data gathered in the study were then classified through an inductive process and categorized. Categories were allowed to form throughout the analysis of transcript data.

Prior to beginning the interview process, the original intent of this study was to explore why quality teachers choose to stay in high poverty schools. Questions were designed to openly explore how work place conditions, personal influences, and other aspects of job satisfaction affected their decision making process in staying in a high

poverty environment. Throughout the early initial analysis of interview data, it became clear that most of the teachers participating in the study had never exercised their option of choice to move or migrate within the district. Their years of service within the high poverty school clearly identified them as "stayers"; however, most had not had to carry out an internal decision making process and choose between their current positions and alternate teaching jobs within the district. The responses from the participants did however provide clear pictures of how they felt and what they believed about themselves and their work serving high poverty students. As a result of this early analysis, the primary research question evolved from an exploration of their decisions making process, to an exploration of the beliefs and values of teachers who stay working in high poverty schools.

Steps were taken to ensure validity throughout the research process. Participants were provided copies of their interview transcripts to review for any errors or mistakes, and allowed the opportunity to add additional thoughts or elaborate on previous comments. None of the 17 teachers elected to modify or add to their interview data. Sufficient time was taken at each interview to thoroughly explain confidentiality and how identities will be protected through the use of pseudonyms for each individual and school. I also worked to maintain objectivity throughout the data collection process. A semi-structured interview format was used where each teacher was asked the same primary interview questions. Follow up questions were unique from person to person, but were delivered with the same open-ended format allowing teachers to share their own responses without influences of my own thoughts or opinions.

As an educator who has spent every year working with high poverty students, I naturally come with many preconceived notions regarding my own decision to work with this targeted population. My background and experience working both in a Title I elementary and in targeted special education programs will undoubtedly shape my interpretations of the data received.

With my significant experience and preconceived beliefs regarding the topic of this study, great care was given to ensure that the research process was influenced as little as possible by my own bias. This was challenging at times due to my familiarity with many of the schools, teachers, and administrators within the district. In my years in the district, I have been inside every elementary school, collaborated with the administrators, and conducted work in their facilities. I have also participated in professional development opportunities that would have allowed me to cross paths with many, if not all of the interviewees. Additionally, I have had professional working relationships with 6 of the teachers who elected to participate from Carver Elementary. My relationship with each of them was strictly professional in nature and somewhat limited as none of them worked with intermediate level students as I did while at Carver. However, I believe my familiarity with these teachers may have also elicited more honest responses from interviewees as they knew that I had prior and current knowledge regarding their building, staff, and climate. Throughout the interview process, I was not attempting to prove or disprove a hypothesis, rather I wanted to openly explore teacher beliefs and values that may add or enrich our understanding for their decisions to work in high poverty schools. Interview data was analyzed for reoccurring responses and then formulated into themes independent from my own personal feelings or notions.

Chapter 4 Staying in High Poverty Schools

Introduction

The job of a teacher is unique in many ways compared to professionals in other fields. The way the work is carried out can vary from state to state, city to city, classroom to classroom, and from student to student. It is a job that perhaps provides the most unusual combination of autonomy and collaboration. The way teachers are assessed and evaluated has been a much debated topic for years as well as the way in which we measure students' growth and successes. When all debates and descriptions are put aside there are simple truths that remain. Our nation's classrooms need the best teachers teaching our students.

Keeping the best teachers in the classrooms of our poor and high poverty schools and neighborhoods has been a struggle for the education system for some time. Even though many quality teachers make the decision to take their talents to other school districts and different classrooms, not every talented, effective teacher takes their career path in a direction away from high poverty student populations. What are the core beliefs and values of our quality teachers who do not follow current trends of attrition and migration in education and stay in their high poverty schools? In this chapter, I will discuss the findings and insights of teachers in the large suburban school district of Drummond, Kansas, who have chosen to work 5 years or more in high poverty buildings when there were inter-district opportunities to transfer and work in different settings with more affluent student populations. Teachers discussed openly their understanding of how poverty impacts their work as professionals, their personal and professional beliefs, and values that contribute to their job satisfaction.

Understanding the Role of Poverty

Poverty in Drummond, KS, which resides in one of the wealthiest counties of the state, may look and feel different from poverty on the surface compared to how it is seen and felt in large urban areas and inner cities across the nation. However, poverty does exist and it impacts the work of many teachers in the Drummond Public Schools. In the halls of Carver Elementary, the teachers feel the effects on a daily basis. Veteran teacher Debbie describes it as all encompassing. "It affects the totality of my job." Debbie has spent over 20 years teaching the kindergarten children of Carver Elementary, and she holds no illusions to the impact that poverty has on her children.

> Many children show up to school without having had their basic needs met for the day. They haven't eaten. They slept poorly because there was no air conditioning or they were sleeping on the floor with their siblings. Their toes are bursting out of their shoes, or they're wearing the same shirt they've worn for the past three days.

Debbie speaks passionately about how these influences from the home have a dramatic impact on the students when they arrive at school. She believes firmly that children struggle to learn when they are hungry, tired, or even uncomfortable. Continuing on, she talks about the efforts of the school system, as well as her own individual efforts, to offset the challenges that many students face. The school provides breakfast and lunch, and it's clear by the appearance of Debbie's room that she does her best to make children feel warm, safe, and appropriately stimulated in her classroom. The school is also cognizant of student clothing needs, and staff members will often bring in their own children's clothes to help out were needed.

Like, Debbie, the other teachers of Carver Elementary recognize the effects of poverty on their students. Laura, who has been the Carver librarian for 12 years, spoke to the fact that many students come in with limited experiences and backgrounds as a result of poverty:

> Each year I'm reminded when I read fairy tales to the students that many of them have never heard some of the most common stories like Rumplestiltskin or Sleeping Beauty. I will come to a word like 'siblings' and ask who has siblings. When a number of students don't raise their hand when I know they have brothers and sisters, I'm reminded to address the missing vocabulary while also providing their first exposure to what I feel are common stories that everybody knows.

Laura's library looks like any other library you would find in any Drummond elementary. There are rich samples of text covering the walls, and it is clearly evident that the library is appropriately supplied with books of all kinds. Laura talks at length about the years she has spent building and growing this library. She works diligently to make sure that the students have the opportunities to be exposed to best and most current literature. Her belief is that the students' limited backgrounds are often the result of not attending pre-school or head start programs that help to provide students with the many prerequisite skills needed to begin life at school, and that many of them have parents who did not achieve high levels of education. Before Laura began working at Carver she taught a small number of years in rural western Kansas, and she spoke of the similarities between the poverty she sees here in the suburbs with some of the challenges she experienced in rural, Western Kansas.

> I taught for 3 years in Elkhart, and really don't know if the school was considered high poverty or not. But, the town had a lot of migrant workers, so our classrooms had a lot of students who either didn't speak English, or they didn't speak it well because it wasn't spoken by their parents at home. Like I said, I don't know if the families were necessarily in poverty, but the challenges created by the language barrier and the different backgrounds and experiences from their peers who were English speaking mid-Westerners feels the same as what we face here.

Laura's assessment of the situation is accurate. In Drummond, the Title I elementary schools are also host to the highest percentages of ELL students or English Language Learners (Drummond School District Annual Budget, 2011). Her comments illustrate the fact that high poverty schools are also faced with additional challenges that go beyond resources created by dollars and cents.

Less than 3 miles way within the walls of Cripple Creek Elementary, teachers like Melanie and Marian also bring up language barriers when discussing how poverty impacts their work. After a brief interruption from a student returning to the room for his forgotten backpack, Melanie explains,

> I have three different languages in my room other than English. It makes things extra hard for the students, and I feel bad because I also know that many of them don't have the help and support at home that they need. Not because they have bad parents, but they are often struggling with the language as well. When you couple that with all the other disadvantages that come with poverty, it's easy to

see how it can consume everything we do. I don't think I ever prepare a lesson without thinking of my ELL students.

While Melanie's words help to elucidate how poverty can influence the classroom as well as its link to language challenges, what perhaps was more telling was watching her interact with the student who frantically entered the room to recover his bag. Melanie visibly lit up when interacting with this young 4th grader, and their exchange was positive and kind. It seemed very clear that Melanie, who is expecting her first child this summer, is devoted and cares about her students.

Interestingly, as the teachers discussed poverty and the various challenges it creates, each individual also spoke positively and passionately about the students in a way that was reflective of the personal interaction I witnessed in Melanie's classroom soon after school had been dismissed for the day. Marian, a veteran Reading specialist, who has taught high poverty students for more than 20 years stated, "They *want* to learn. It's as if they know you are giving them something they've never had before and they are excited and grateful to be receiving it."

Each teacher appeared to have a clear understanding of the obstacles of poverty but always seemed to gravitate toward opportunities instead of the obstacles. Teachers representing 5 different schools across the district painted similar pictures of the ways in which poverty impacts their day to day duties, but no matter what teacher I spoke with or which building they worked in; the outlook remained positive and hopeful in nature. They did not speak negatively about students, and more importantly they did not speak negatively about the families and support systems of the students. Their words and feedback led me to believe that they were aware of the challenges set before them, but

they were more enthralled with the opportunities that poverty presents. Teacher beliefs regarding poverty provide an in-depth picture of the positive personal affectivity that is often linked to teacher retention and those who stay in challenging schools. Even faced with the obstacles and challenges of poverty, these teachers appear to easily identify the silver linings in their work and understand poverty's role in what they do.

Dedicated to Making a Difference

Terry has been teaching at Carver Elementary for the past 5 years, which also happen to be the first 5 years of her professional career. Her first three years she taught sixth grade, and when sixth grade was moved to the middle schools in Drummond, she asked to be moved to another grade level in order to keep working at Carver. As a result, her last two years have been as a 4th grade teacher. Throughout her brief professional tenure, she has formed many friendships both within her building and throughout the district as a result of Drummond's many professional development opportunities that often place grade level teachers together from all the buildings in the city. As a young teacher, Terry has been pressured on many occasions by her peers and friends within the district to leave Carver and come to their schools. They tell her it's better. They tell her that the students are better behaved. They tell her that the students always pass their state assessments with high marks. Terry has heard every form of persuasion, but her dedication to the students at Carver appears unwavering:

> I want to be here. I love knowing that I'm providing those new experiences to the students. It's not always easy and the progress often comes very slowly, but I know I'm making a difference in their lives. Teaching in a Title 1 school does not mean I get an asterisk by my name, and I disagree with anyone who says we

> should get paid more for teaching in high poverty. I'm sure teachers in other more affluent schools care about their students as much as I do, but I want to be *here.* What I am doing here is important.

Terry continued to speak to the dedication and loyalty she feels towards the students and their families. She expressed that her bond to the students and school also grow stronger as she begins to have second and third siblings from some of her past families-a rarity, she says, for schools like Carver and other high poverty buildings where the population is largely transient.

As I probed further about the temptations to leave, Terry told me how many of her friends will paint the picture of their lives in other low-poverty schools. The gift cards at Christmas time, and how they typically are pulling out of the parking lot at 4 PM are but a few examples of what they share with her, but Terry is not deterred:

> I grew up in Blue Valley. I know what it's like to be around people who have a lot. I am familiar with it, but I am more comfortable working where I am needed. For some of these students I'm their only support. I have no plans of going anywhere.

At this point in her life Terry has a husband but no children. When asked if her feelings will change when she has her own children, her position still does not waver:

> The only way I'm leaving is if we ever decide to move to Colorado. My husband and I would both love to live out there. But, even if we move out there at some point, I will still try to get a teaching position in the same type of school. This is where I belong.

Down the hall back in Debbie's kindergarten room, her dedication stems from her spiritual beliefs. At this point in Debbie's career her peers aren't trying to convince her to change environments. She acknowledges that her mom has never fully understood why she chooses to work in a high poverty environment, and that she has worried about Debbie taking on too much stress, but otherwise, Debbie chooses to make Carver her home. Debbie makes a deep connection with her choice to work with high poverty students:

> I am a very religious person. I see working here as a way to fulfill one of my duties as a Christian woman. Some people might refer to it as a higher calling-I don't know. I know that I serve a purpose here. It's a mission. It's where I want to be. It's where I belong.

A handful of teachers other than Debbie referred to their dedication to high poverty students in a way that was reflective of their faith and spirituality; however, the more common them of dedication was connected strongly with the concept of being needed as a teacher.

I'm Committed Because I'm Needed

Across the courtyard from Debbie's room is the kindergarten classroom of Kate. Kate has taught Title I kindergarteners for 12 years, but she also has experience in other settings that have influenced her perspective with working in high poverty settings. Prior to her teaching assignment, Kate worked as a para-professional for 2 years in one of Drummond's most affluent elementary schools, and she also had experience in a low-poverty school in a neighboring district. Her memories and experiences from those prior

settings contributed to her feelings of dedication to Carver and its high poverty population:

> I'm not saying that teachers aren't needed at other schools with wealthier students, or that they care any less. But the fact is, those students have all the support in the world. I'm needed here you know? They need me, and I get to be a major support in their life. For a lot of these students I'm all they have during the week. Their parents work at night and are pulling extra duty on the weekends in second jobs to try to make ends meet. I'm the adult face they look at for 7 or 8 hours a day for 5 days a week.

Kate proceeds to contrast that with her experiences in schools where many children have a stay-at-home parent that is there for them after school and also happens to be educated. She also firmly believes that the students she worked with in schools with wealthier families live in safer environments that were rich with experiences that contribute positively to their learning.

The sentiment of being needed in high poverty schools was also echoed in Pioneer Elementary which resides about 4 miles North of Carver. Jackie just finished her 5th year serving the Title 1 population as a 2nd grade teacher. At Pioneer the student population is reflective of Carver Elementary, although Jackie believes they may have more stable home owners. In truth, Pioneer's percentage of free-and reduced population is 22% less than Carver's (Drummond School District Annual Budget, 2011). Like Kate, Jackie has not always worked in Title I schools. Prior to working in Drummond, Jackie worked in a middle class elementary school in Baldwin as well as a more affluent school in a neighboring district in Johnson County, Kansas. As Jackie talked about her

loyalties to the high poverty student population, it became abundantly clear how similar her perspective was to her working peers across town:

> Anyone can teach in a high-socioeconomic setting because their learning is being supported by everyone around them outside of school. What kids learn in a high poverty school, they are learning because of the teacher. I'm doing work here that isn't being done in affluent schools. I'm giving kids a chance that they may not otherwise have if it weren't for school and their teachers. I'm giving them the tools to hopefully improve their lives and live better ones than they are currently living. And the great thing is that the parents want the same thing, and I think it creates more of a partnership.

Statements like those of Jackie and Kate paint a clear picture of personal beliefs that their work as teachers is truly needed in their current positions. This knowledge could be considered universal; however, what makes their statements unique is that it also tells us that they value the importance they have to the high poverty population. If they were working under different conditions, they would not believe they were having the same level of impact. They believe their value as a teacher would be diminished. Their dedication to the population of students is tightly connected to their personal belief of importance and impact.

Do You Have What it Takes

When sitting down to interview each candidate, I gave a brief explanation of my research and talked briefly about what is known regarding attrition from our at-risk schools. Teacher responses communicated to me that it was not surprising data for anyone to hear. If you have worked for 5 years or more in a high poverty school, it is

likely that you have witnessed the departure of many staff members and the arrival of many new. Teachers understood clearly that their positions were not often favored by the masses. It was as if most of them knew their devotion was unique, and that they valued positions that many others were repelled from. While I was able to extract common themes from the participant interviews, there was one that seemed universal even before the data was analyzed. Every teacher interviewed for this study believed they work hard, appeared to take personal satisfaction in their effort, and liked the challenge of their job.

In sixteen of the interviews, the word *challenge* was used to describe their daily tasks as teachers. I feel as if many of the teachers' comments alluded to a sense of pride in their tenure at their school. They appeared to possess a pride in knowing that not every teacher is cut-out to be successful in a high poverty environment. Terry, who is now entering her sixth year as a professional educator, summed up the pride she feels for her job:

> I like the challenge of working here. If you want to work hard and be rewarded through student progress, then this is the place for you. If you became a teacher for the paycheck and summers off, then you should probably go work somewhere else.

Mellissa, who left one of Drummond's affluent schools after two years and then became enamored with teaching the high poverty population, was asked how she would help a prospective teacher decide between working in Title 1 versus a non-Title 1 school:

> I would ask them if they want challenges, don't mind working extra hours, don't need gifts to feel good or successful, and if they can be flexible. They have to have a strong work ethic and be able to work well with others. I would also want

> to know if they can handle that even though you're working harder than teachers in other buildings, the progress is often slower.

Perhaps the most poignant words came from Michelle at Pioneer who summed up her feelings by stating:

> When I plan for my day, I can't just plan one lesson for the whole class. I can't do that and be effective. The learning needs are so diverse in my room that I have to think through how this lesson will impact each individual student and plan adjustments accordingly. My room has students with different languages, different backgrounds, and different levels of functioning. I don't get to come to my room in the mornings knowing that 20 out of 22 of them have very similar background experiences, speak English, and have educated parents. I work hard every day, and I have to be *on* the whole day. But, I love the challenge. These students need the best teachers, and I am committed to being one of those teachers. This work is challenging, rewarding, and inspiring. If you want to be the best teacher you can be and truly have an impact on students' lives, then this is where you need to be.

Teachers undoubtedly valued the challenges set before them. They believe that extra effort is warranted, welcomed, and essential in order to be successful in the high poverty setting. Michelle's statements help to highlight the common belief that they are in fact working harder than other teachers and may be more effective as a result. From person to person, a web of common personal beliefs and values took shape throughout the research process. From the personal belief of devotion and importance to the valuing

of hard work and extra time commitment, there were clear connections and commonalities between what each teacher believed and valued in their position.

Speaking with each teacher, I also provided opportunities for them to share their beliefs about their workplace conditions and what they value about their chosen locations.

Maybe the Grass Isn't Greener

It was clear that many teachers felt committed to the high poverty student population and that the commitment was driven by the beliefs and values instilled in them by their faith or as Kate stated, "I'm doing the work where the work is most needed." However, Jackie's statements about the differences in low-poverty buildings led me to probe further regarding differences of working conditions with students and families in high poverty settings versus the contrary. Jackie believes that the relationships she forms with parents at Pioneer are different from those she formed at other schools with less poverty:

> I love the families here, and I feel like I make better connections with them and that the relationships are different in a good way. Like I said, it's more of a partnership. We're working together to make their child better. We both want the same things, and it always seems focused on their child. It just didn't feel like that in my other schools.

Jackie was not alone in her sentiments.

Melissa just finished 8 years working in one of Drummond's oldest Title 1 schools, Prairie Elementary. Like Kate and Jackie, she too spent her first 2 years working in a school with little to no poverty. Melissa's previous position was in one of

Drummond's more affluent elementary schools on the East side of town. After requesting a change, Mellissa landed in Prairie Elementary and immediately fell in love with the students. She was finally home in a work environment where she felt she belonged. After 8 years, her children are older, her husband took a more demanding job, and the children are more involved in sports and community activities. She needed to make a change that allowed her to be home more, but she did not divert from her love of working with high poverty. She will begin her first year in the fall working at one of Drummond's Title 1 middle schools, and although the demands of working with at-risk students will still be there, she will now have contract times that are more in line with her children and home schedule. When asked about her commitment to high poverty students, she too made comparisons to her experience working in a more affluent school:

> Here I get to make a difference by teaching students. If I were over there (at a low poverty school) I would have to spend my time people pleasing instead of teaching. I became a teacher to be a teacher. I swear there were times at my first school when I was spending more time keeping parents happy that working with their kids. It's not that everything was bad there. I really liked the school and my coworkers, but I had to put my attention on things that didn't always have to do with the students. I feel like everyone here is making decisions for the kids, not for any other reason or motivation.

It stories like these that can at times gain a life of their own and have influence on teachers who have never even experienced a working environment different from their high poverty school.

Mandy also teaches at Pioneer, but for the past 5 years she has worked only in Pioneer elementary. She's committed to staying at Pioneer and truly loves working with the students and families. She talks about common themes such as teamwork and working together with parents and staff, but she also mentions her fears and concerns of what it would be like to work in a more affluent school. She's never worked in one of Drummond's affluent elementary schools, but she has made professional and personal connections with other grade level teachers throughout the district, and through those interactions she has developed an apparent aversion to working in a school with a higher socio-economic population:

> My friends in other buildings make it sound like there is more competition rather than cooperation among their staff. The students are competitive with each other. The parents are always competing with each other. So, it ends up that the teachers compete with each other too."

Justified or not, it appears that many of the teachers I interviewed for this study truly believe the grass is greener underneath their own feet. Whether through their own past experiences or the hearsay of others, they believe there are aspects of working conditions with high poverty students that are more comfortable for them than what they would face or have already faced in different settings. While they are dedicated and committed through internal beliefs or devotions, there is also external influence that contributes to their decision to work in high poverty settings. These external influences include preference of experiences between different school settings as well as a concern over the different stressors that come with working with a population of students with

more affluent families. Another preference often mentioned by the teachers in this study was the concept of collaboration and teamwork.

There's No "I" in Team

Collaboration and teamwork can be defined and described in a variety of ways. Earlier, Jackie described her feelings that she worked in collaboration with her families to promote the betterment of their students. When asked to elaborate about her families and the parents she works with, she described many of them as doing the "best they can". Many of them have work schedules that prohibit them from always making conferences or attending field trips, but she feels that most of them clearly want the best for their students. She talks about collaboration in a way where everyone is trying hard and pushing in the same direction and for the same purpose.

Down the hall from Jackie in the 4th grade wing is veteran teacher, Michelle, and she also talks about a building and staff at Pioneer that works together toward common goals and compares them to a family unit that works to make sure no one in the family falls short of their expectation:

> Our staff feels like a family. We share ideas here, and we are constantly trying to find better ways to do things and better ways to reach these kids. If you can't work well with others, share, and work collaboratively, this probably isn't the place for you. We share work together on so many things because we all want to see these kids and their families improve.

Michelle's situation is unique in that she spent a number of years working in schools that were not high poverty, and then she became and Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT) in the district. In this role she worked with new teachers and students, and

much of her time was spent in Title 1 schools where new teachers were often being added to the certified roster. It was during these years that she developed a love of working with this population. As an Instructional Resource Teacher you are often considered a strong teacher in the delivery of curriculum and instruction and work well with others. When she chose to resume her career as a classroom teacher, she sought out a Title 1 school when it is likely she would have been an excellent candidate for any building. Her desire to work with high poverty students echoed the previously mentioned themes of dedication and wanting to work where she was needed the most, but she was heavily influenced by the way that teachers in high poverty schools work together.

The theme of collaboration was strongly supported by another teacher, Sue, who like Michelle, was an Instructional Resource Teacher for a number of years and had past responsibilities in organizing district wide trainings across Drummond's elementary schools. She stated that initially, elementary schools were grouped together randomly at district professional development to work on district wide initiatives, trainings, or when schools would gather to grade writing assessments and things of that nature. Following many of these professional development opportunities, there was much feedback from teachers in Title I schools expressing frustration in differences and lack of understanding from staff or faculty at schools that do not face the same level of high poverty clientele. In response to this feedback, she began to hand select elementary groupings during professional development days. She would purposefully group Title I elementary schools with other Title I elementary schools and avoided grouping them with other more affluent schools within the district. Interestingly, she immediately began receiving positive feedback following this change. She stated:

> I started getting feedback from the Title I elementary teachers saying "Thank you for putting us with other Title I schools. We were able to collaborate and learn from each other, and it was nice to work with other teachers who understand what we are dealing with and going through the same challenges themselves." And you know? The interesting thing was that I never really got any feedback from teachers in the more affluent schools either way. They didn't really give feedback before or after I began grouping Title I schools together.

Sue was compelled to return to teach at a Title 1 school after her time as an Instructional Resource Teacher. She stated that she loved what she called the "collaborate spirit" that is felt in high poverty buildings that she did not feel was as present in other school settings in Drummond. Her feelings were so strong that she took a position that was new to her in order to return to the Title 1 school that she had taught at prior to her time as an Instructional Resource Teacher. Her beliefs about collaboration were not only supported by her time spent as an IRT in a variety of buildings; she also had a unique family dynamic that contributed to her perspective and influence:

> My husband was an administrator for one of our most affluent schools, so I saw first-hand what things were like in those settings. It always seemed like he had to deal with so many things that had nothing to do with the instruction and teaching of students. I know administrators in all buildings have their own struggles, but it was just different. After watching what he dealt with, I would never want to be an administrator.

She stressed that she believes teachers in all settings work to be collaborative and to function as good team members, but that conflicts or things external to the classroom

that require attention can pull from time that teachers would otherwise work together in collaboration.

There was also a different presentation of collaboration presented by teachers during the study. Sally and Taylor offered a description that could be described as more emotional in nature. Sally has taught multiple grade levels throughout her veteran career of more than 23 years. She has taught inner city children in large metropolitan areas of San Antonio, Texas and St. Louis, Missouri, and since moving to Drummond in the late 90's she has worked with elementary aged high poverty students for 12 years. Her coworker and teammate, Taylor, has also served Title 1 population in the same building for 18 years. Sally described collaboration and teamwork in this way:

> It's challenging to work in these kinds of schools. You have to be surrounded by good people who help each other and share things with each other-and I don't mean just sharing teacher resources and lessons and things. People have to be able to share stories at the lunch tables and laugh together. With some of the things we deal with and see, if you don't laugh together, you will just cry. A lot of our kids have really sad stories and situations, and if you try to tackle those things alone, it's just too overwhelming.

In a separate interview, Taylor provides insight of the same ilk.

> We work hard here. Every year I have different behavior challenges. I have to spend a lot of time at the beginning of the year just rehearsing appropriate social behavior in school. But in a school like this, we're all in the same boat together. Everyone has their challenges and we all know it. It makes it easier for us to work together, support each other, and laugh together at some of the weird things

> that happen during the day. In the end, even if you don't like your coworkers, at least you know everyone wants the kids' lives to get better.

Back at Pioneer Elementary, Jackie brings up collaboration in the work place and describes it in a similar way to Michelle's description of a family:

> This building is a community in and of itself. I think there is cohesiveness here because everyone is going above and beyond. We collaborate together, share resources, and support each other. There's joy in our workplace.

As I listen to different teachers in different buildings across the city of Drummond bring up terms like collaboration, teamwork and community, it is clear that the ability to work well with others has a strong influence on an individual's decision to keep working in a high poverty environment or their satisfaction with their workplace environment. It is logical to assume that collegial collaboration would have a strong influence on longevity in any work place, but I believe the statements from teachers like Sally and Taylor highlight the important role that collaboration and cooperation with others may have in high poverty settings. When asked to expand, Sally talked about some of the stressors in high poverty environments such as worrying for students' basic needs. Can the family afford their electricity bill this month? Is my student going home to a safe environment tonight? She also mentioned the toll that dealing with behavior struggles in the classroom can have on many teachers. It appears that these teachers not only take great joy and pride in teaching high-need students, but they also carry the burden and worry that if things do not get better for their students and families that outcomes can be devastating. They believe the burdens and worries are better carried as a community rather than individuals. They value the support of their coworkers. Many, but not all,

also value leadership as an influential piece to their decision to stay in a high poverty environment.

Follow the Leader

The theme of collaboration and support was not isolated to just teachers and other staff who work with students in the buildings. Many teachers also felt that the building leadership played a role in their decision to keep working in a high poverty school. At Pioneer Elementary, 1st grade teacher, Jill, talked candidly about the influence her building principal has had on her choice to stay.

Prior to working at Pioneer, Jill had worked in a high poverty school in another district. She loved working there, and really felt she had a passion for that particular population of students. When her young family moved to the Drummond area, she sought out any teaching position she could acquire. She found out that Pioneer was Title 1 during the interview process, but it did not deter her. She already knew that she enjoyed working with high poverty student populations; however, she had some concerns. In her past experience, she knew that to be an effective teacher with at-risk students it often required that extra hours were put into the work week. She had just recently expanded her family, and she did have some reservations about the work and effort that comes with working in high poverty settings, and she did not want to take away time from her young family. After accepting the position, she soon found that her building principal had a profound effect on her willingness to stay and not seek transfer to another building that may not require the same amount of effort:

> (She) has played a big part in my decision to stay here. She understands the importance of family, and she also knows how much we put into our work here.

> She really gets the kids and their families, and also seems tuned into our families as well. She's even come in before and told me to go home!

Jill hinted that her building leadership at her previous placement was not the best, but that her love of the students and her coworkers always kept her going in spite of lacking leadership. She also admitted that she would have given thought to requesting transfer if she had not experienced such a strong principal as the one she currently has.

Back at Cripple Creek Elementary, Marian, our veteran reading specialist also spoke positively about the influence of strong building leadership, "The challenges of working in a place like this don't really seem that hard when you feel supported and appreciated from your principal." Her fellow coworker in the building, Melanie, also believed that leadership plays an important role:

> Good leadership is critical. The principal has to know where these kids are coming from. They need to understand the families and be able to connect with them. They need a lot of energy, and they need to want to be here.

Like Marian, Melanie, believes that a strong, positive leader can hold much influence when teachers are making the decision to stay in a building or to seek a transfer.

Approximately 3 miles Southwest of Cripple Creek Elementary is Pleasantview Elementary. Pleasantview boasts the largest percentage of free and reduced qualifying students. At 83.4%, they are the highest poverty school in Drummond, and like many high poverty schools have had a high attrition rate of teachers. Veteran 4th grade teacher, Charlotte, believes that current strong leadership will have a positive impact on helping more quality teachers decide to make Pleasantview their home:

> A strong, dedicated, positive principal with a lot of energy can make a difference. And, we have one now. As a veteran teacher, I'm not sure that it has the same influence on me as it did when I was younger, but I still think it's important.

Charlotte acknowledged that throughout her years of service at Pleasantview she is dedicated to the building and students so much so that it would take a lot of "negative leadership" to cause her to consider requesting transfer. She states, "When it comes to my choices, the building will always win over the leadership." However, she believes that it is a perspective developed over time, and that she still believes in the positive impact that a principal can have on the working climate of the building. For Charlotte, she believes in the impact of leadership, but it is her dedication and commitment to this population that has kept her here throughout changes in principals and coworkers.

Charlotte's resiliency to weather change in Pleasantview and stay committed is similar to a small group of teachers who valued leadership in a different way. 2 miles West, back at Carver Elementary where my research began, some shared the opinion that leadership had very little influence on their decision to stay in their current positions.

> It has no place in my decision making. It really just affects the way in which my work is accomplished. If the leadership is poor, I can just shut my door and close myself in to a degree. It doesn't mean that I become a poor teammate. I would just limit my involvement with the principal or how much I engage in conversations about it with other staff.

These were the words of veteran kindergarten teacher, Debbie. Throughout her time at Carver, Debbie has worked under two different building principals. With grace, Debbie never makes critical statements about her leaders, but she also offers no words of

support that the leadership in the building is strong or has been in the past. Debbie's grade level teammate, Kate, now in her 10th year at Carver offered similar sentiment:

> I'm here because I'm committed to the kids in this school and I like challenges. If you have a not-so-good principal, it's just another challenge to overcome and that's okay.

On the other end of the building, veteran Speech teacher, Sandra, offered her thoughts on leadership's impact on her decision to work in a high poverty school:

> The building principal has probably been the only reason I have ever thought about leaving, but it must not have that much of an impact since I've been here over 15 years. I love working with these kids. When I decide to leave it will have more to do with me wanting to change things up in my life more than any outside influence or person. I've always liked helping, and I will probably always work in some helping position no matter what I do.

Sandra's history only stands as proof of her statements regarding her future. She talked about her career before teaching working as a physical and speech therapist for the elderly. There were never any plans for Sandra to work in education, but through life's many circumstances she eventually ended up at Carver and found stability in a job that she never quite expected.

Sandra admitted to being someone who craves change. She has worked in three different professional capacities, and they have always been professions where she was helping individuals improve their skills or health. She admits that she is still shocked that she has been teaching for 22 years now, and her comments also make it easy to interpret that she has endured despite less than stellar building leadership:

> Lord knows I haven't been here this long because the principal was good. I truly enjoy working with students who need and appreciate the help that is given to them. I would also be lying if I didn't admit that I like that my caseload stays full in a school like this. Some of my coworkers who teach in other more affluent schools have to travel between 2 or more buildings each week. I know I wouldn't like that as much as being able to make myself at home in one building like I have been able to do here.

Sandra's perspective indicates that she does not value leadership in the same way as many of the other teachers interviewed, but she acknowledges that her position as a speech pathologist may influence how little she values leadership. She believes her position has resulted in less administrative contact that what a normal classroom teacher would incur. Carver's librarian identified this same belief in her statements:

> My interactions with the principal are a little different I think. As a librarian, I'm kind of in my own little world in here. My job is important, but the fact is I don't get as much attention or focus as a classroom teacher that bears most of the responsibility for state testing and things like that.

Like Sandra, Laura admitted that she evaluates her job status every year and has considered transferring in the past. She stated that the decision to consider transfer was never in response to leadership. Rather, it was a product of her position, and the thought of starting a library from scratch at a new school has always been tempting for her. To date, Laura is making no plans to leave.

Conclusion

To conclude, teachers shared their beliefs and values that form the foundations that have kept them working in high poverty school settings. Each teacher interviewed had the same opportunity within the same large suburban district to request transfer to go to other buildings that would have lower percentages of free-and-reduced lunch population that constitutes the label of Title 1. Each teacher was identified by their administrator as a quality educator with strong prior evaluations, which easily leads to the assumption that each of these teachers could have garnered high levels of interest if they were to put themselves out as available for openings in other schools. Their responses were reflective of teachers in similar studies as themes of dedication, impacting student changes, collaboration, and acceptance of challenges emerged.

Chapter 5 Implications

Overview

Districts across the nation face challenges with staffing their high poverty schools with the best teachers available. Attrition rates in schools that serve our poorest students often create the challenge of maintaining high-quality and seasoned staff members. This problem with staffing is not isolated to our urban districts and inner cities; it is also seen in our suburban and wealthier districts. All schools who serve high poverty populations, regardless of their geographic location, must be prepared to combat attrition and teacher movement through a variety of avenues. By listening to the insights and feedback of those quality teachers who stay in high poverty schools, district and building level leaders can gain a more authentic understanding of what beliefs and values must be present in high poverty educators, how to recruit and keep their best teachers, and what can be done through policy and practice in high poverty environments to improve working conditions in way that positively impacts faculty retention.

This study originally set out to explore the decision making process of teachers who choose to stay in high poverty settings rather than transfer to low poverty schools. Instead it was discovered that many of the stayers participating in the study had never elected to put themselves in situations where a choice to move or stay was necessary. They stayed in their buildings driven by beliefs and values were predominantly linked to the service of high poverty students and families. This study revealed that teachers who are choosing to stay in high poverty buildings 5 years or longer have common beliefs and values that both support and expand on prior and current research regarding attrition and job satisfaction.

Like many teachers studied before them in various different settings (Billingsley, 1993; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Lent, 2008; Spector, 1997; Gay 1995), this group of Drummond teachers highly value professional and emotional support from their colleagues and supportive positive leadership. They believe themselves to be highly devoted and loyal to the cause of teaching where it is needed most-in high poverty settings. They believe their work is valued, important, and that they are making differences in the lives of students. Research by Shann (1998) and Billingsley (1993) identified that teachers achieved job satisfaction by being challenged professionally, and this was strongly supported by each of the teachers participating in this study. They not only valued the challenges presented to them by high poverty students and families, but they also believed this made them better educators. As quality educators identified by their administrators, it was evident through their feedback that each teacher was confident in their abilities and felt successful in their duties as a teacher. Hirschman (1970) may have inferred from these beliefs and values that part of the teachers' loyalty to stay may stem from their fear that the school would deteriorate upon their exit, as well as their continued concern for the students of the school. While this may be the case, teachers were also not always attracted to other available schools in the district.

A unique outcome resulting from this study is the beliefs, perceptions, and preference that each teacher had in working in a high poverty school versus working for a low poverty school. Teachers held beliefs and perceptions that working conditions in low poverty schools of Drummond were not favorable compared to the conditions they experienced in their own schools. These beliefs took root under the unique circumstances of equality and fairness in the organization. Teachers commented often about having the

same resources and materials as their peers in other low poverty buildings. Professional development opportunities did not vary from building to building, and there is very little disparity between facilities in the district. With organizational equity in place, the teachers preferred the relationships that could be formed in high poverty settings with both students and parents, and they also preferred the importance of their role in the lives of high poverty students. With the knowledge of equitable resources and supports from the districts, the teachers feared a diminishing level of importance and impact that could be had if they were teaching in a lower poverty school. Applying these results to Hirschman's (1970) theory of Exit, Voice, and Loyalty suggests that teachers have loyalty to their school knowing that exit is an option. However, they do not find the competing options, or other schools in the district, to be more appealing. Because of this belief, loyalty may not be as impactful for these individual teachers, but Hirschman would suggest our high poverty schools would need loyalty and cohesive ideology to a greater extent than other schools (pg. 82). If accurate, this could have significant implications on how districts such as Drummond handle their high poverty schools and staffing, especially with teachers who are tempted to exit.

Teachers are devoted and loyal to high poverty students and believe the work they are doing is important, and they believe they are making a difference in the lives of others. As a result, they personally feel important in a way that would not be duplicated in a low-poverty setting. They also value the challenges put before them, and they take personal satisfaction in the hard work they do. They believe they work harder than other teachers in settings with lower poverty.

Results from this study also support past findings on teacher collaboration and satisfaction (Shann, 1998; Popkewitz & Myrdal, 1991; Theobald, 1990). Teachers believe their work place is collaborative in nature, and they value the support and cooperation of their fellow staff members. They value strong, positive leadership, and they believe it can have a strong impact on a schools ability to keep a stable staff and experience success. The value placed on collaboration leads one to infer that teachers also value their own voice in collaborative professional interaction.

Finally, teachers believe their workplace conditions are more favorable than teachers working with more affluent student populations. This perspective stems from the belief that they form more meaningful relationships and hold more value, and can have a greater impact in a high poverty environment. Other aspects such as overinvolved parents and competitive work environments were also mentioned by teachers as negative factors in low poverty schools that made exiting their current schools less appealing.

Like any other school, high poverty settings need quality teachers, effective leadership, and sound organizational practices. Findings from this study and many others before it suggest that once these quality educators are found, the ability to retain them can be impacted by many factors. A collaborative workplace, emotionally supportive leadership, and an internal sense of dedication are but a few aspects that were identified by stayers in the Drummond School District.

Implications for Schools and Recruitment

Input from teachers who choose to work in high poverty schools could prove incredibly valuable for those in charge of the recruitment and hiring practices for high poverty locations. Results from this study and others like Duffy and Lent (2010) suggest

that certain beliefs or perspectives could be properly investigated or screened through use of a personality profile when searching for good teacher fit or placement. Interview and screening tools could be selected or constructed that assist in identifying traits such as personal affectivity, work ethic, teamwork and collaboration, and self-efficacy. Many screening instruments and question banks used by school districts already assess these traits, but it would be imperative for schools and districts to weight these characteristics more heavily when considering placement in Title I schools.

Perhaps a more challenging task would be to identify a prospective teacher's motivations or beliefs about why they became a teacher or what they hope to accomplish as a teacher. There is no fault in an individual becoming a teacher because they communicate well with children and understand curriculum, but this does not mean that every teacher enters the field with a superior level of social service or spiritual devotion to their job. Is it possible to separate teachers with a strong desire to change lives and feel they are having a significant impact on families from those who just want to be an effective cog in the education system?

At the district and building level, policies and practices can be put in place to increase teacher levels of job satisfaction. In order to address the teacher valued collaboration and collegiality, policies must be implemented that ensure that ample support is in place in each of the high poverty buildings. This can be executed through mentorship programs that provide personal support to new educators or teachers who are new to the district. Support could also be provided through before or after school groups where teachers could discuss their challenges and plan collaboratively with others who face similar obstacles. Groups of this nature would not only support teachers

professionally, but it would also provide the emotional support that was frequently commented on by teachers in this study. At the building level, support can also be carried out through programs such as professional learning communities, administrative planning committees, and other building level teams.

Pre-service and professional development trainings could be designed with the intent to promote and demonstrate teacher collaboration and cooperation as well as provide support to educators. Districts could work to improve teachers' senses of self-efficacy by modeling recognition of successes beyond those made visible through state testing results. Research by Liu, Johnson, and Peske (2004) indicates that inability to identify success at work contributes mightily to attrition and migration, and the teachers in the study who had chosen to stay could clearly identify their successes and accomplishments at work. If teachers continue to be educated and instructed to only see success through standardized testing results, they will risk having lower levels of job satisfaction leading to the desire to leave their current work environment.

Even though the impact of leadership varied with some individuals, there is clear indication from teachers that supportive, understanding leadership influenced their decisions to stay in their positions. To address leadership, districts must provide adequate professional learning opportunities to their building level principals that promote effective, strong leadership. Principals must also understand the importance of the emotional support that teachers value in addition to being supported professionally. Specifically, principals must conduct their business in schools with the intention to foster the devotion and feelings of importance that teachers in this study claimed to have. By providing regular positive feedback, emphasizing the importance of the work that

teachers do in their buildings, and giving them voice in school matters; they will not only be meeting the personal needs of teachers, but they will be building loyalty that can improve the retention of staff. Hirschman (1970) described this loyalty as an intervention in which members are aware of and recoil from the consequences of their exit. If teachers believe they are important and impactful on the lives of their students they are less likely to leave not only because of the regular positive feedback, but they will also fear the possibility of their students being taught less effectively by others.

Additionally, teachers spoke to the support provided by the district as a whole in regards to curriculum, supplies, and facilities. This sentiment in alignment with data provided through Johnson and Birkeland's (2003) research that identified movers were seeking positions in schools that were properly organized for success, had stable faculties, and the capacity to initiate and sustain improvement, suggest that a centralized system of organization within a district may be preferable to avoid significant differences in workplace functionality. Teachers in Drummond were not burdened by a disparity of goods and resources between the district's high poverty and low-poverty buildings. Additionally, it could be argued that the district wide system of organization is what minimizes the negative impact of poor leadership. For example, 5 of the teachers expressed dedication to their posts even though they were not satisfied with their building principals; however, they were satisfied with their facilities, resources, and level of district support.

It is imperative that districts maintain policies that promote the equitable distribution of resources and materials among all schools regardless of their student population; however, there must be recognition that working conditions are not equitable

between high poverty and low poverty buildings regardless of these organizational conditions. Districts like Drummond may be hesitant to publicly acknowledge differences between schools in their own district, but the differences exist. Teachers identified the inequity through aspects such as; working additional hours outside of their contract time, extensive planning to meet individual needs, overcoming students' lack of experience and prior knowledge, and behavioral challenges. Recognizing these inequities and compensating for them from a district level could equalize the desirable characteristics between schools and positively impact retention and reduce the number of teachers who exit for what they perceive as more favorable working conditions.

Even with Drummond's sound organizational practices, it cannot be ignored that attrition rates have continued to be high in their high poverty buildings. Drummond and other similarly successful districts must focus at the building level and build on the aspects of job satisfaction identified in this study and other research on stayers and in education. With organizational equity in place, buildings need the best leadership in place that can work to aid and foster a strong sense of collegiality, support and cooperation in the school. Districts must acknowledge that equal distribution of resources and supports may not be enough to create true equity among their schools, and they must consider ways of incentivizing teachers who have work environments that present more challenges than their equal professional peers. Teachers new and old must also be supported and trained to recognize success in their work, understand the value of their work, and be reminded of their impact on students' lives.

Conclusion and Future Study

There are quality teachers who choose to make their careers in settings where they teach predominantly to high poverty students. Even in large suburban districts such as Drummond, KS, where there are options for teachers to work in low-poverty buildings; there are some that defy the trends of attrition and movement to stay where they are despite increased difficulties or stresses that come from their working conditions. By interviewing quality teachers who have stayed in high poverty schools, I have identified beliefs and values that can be utilized to improve staffing and retention at high poverty schools. The findings can also influence how we prepare and train our young teachers beginning their careers in high poverty schools.

Future Study

This study was conducted through the personal interviews of 17 Drummond Public School elementary teachers, and although every attempt was made to minimize the impact of researcher bias, there were unavoidable limitations. As a current administrator for Drummond Public Schools, my position may have affected the responses and feedback that I received from each Drummond teacher interviewed. To combat this issue, confidentiality and all research practices were thoroughly explained to each interviewee. Approximately three fourths of the candidates elected to conduct the interviews by phone, which was offered as a way to encourage more open and candid responses.

This study targeted a specific population of suburban teachers working in high poverty schools, and the sampling was relatively small. There are different directions that could be taken for future study. Increasing the sample size could provide more data

for analysis. Additionally, data could be collected through surveys that may elicit more candid responses as well as increased participation from teachers who may be reluctant to comment on their employer. Replicating the study in a comparable district from Drummond Public Schools' consortium may provide valuable comparative data or possibly contrasting results.

It could also prove valuable to narrow the study to one high poverty school within the district. By taking a case study approach, one could observe the working conditions at the building level and speak to all teachers whether they are stayers or future movers. This experience would allow the researcher to get a focused account of individual building level functioning. Depending on the state of attrition and retention in the building, the observer could draw connections between the workplace conditions and their positive or negative impact on the school's faculty stability.

Further exploration of the teachers that stay in high poverty schools may prove to be equally advantageous to studying those who move or leave the profession. By investigating the leavers and stayers, schools and districts can learn more effective ways to decrease exiting from their schools that struggle the most with retaining effective teachers. Students of poverty deserve the best education possible, and schooling provides the best chance for them to break the cycle. As a nation we owe it to ourselves and these children to continue to find ways to improve their educational experience and that starts with ensuring they have the best teachers possible.

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Appendix A Interview Protocol

Primary "Trunk" Questions: Open Ended

1. Tell me a little bit about you and your career path coming out of college to where you are today.

2. Research tells us that many teachers who don't leave the profession altogether, often move to schools with lower levels of poverty within their first 5 years of teaching. Can you tell me about the professional aspects of your career that keep you working in this high poverty school?

3. Talk to me about the personal influences that affect your decision to stay here.

4. If your job was to recruit teachers to join you here at this high poverty school, how would you describe the work place and working conditions?

5. What aspects of leadership have kept you here? Community?

APPENDIX B HUMAN SUBJECTS AP

STAYING IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives and decision making process of teachers who choose to work 5 years or more in high poverty schools within suburban districts that also have low-poverty schools.

PROCEDURES

You will be asked to reflect on your experience and answer questions in a 60 minute interview that will be audio recorded and transcribed by the interviewer. The recordings and notes will be used by the researchers only and stored in a locked cabinet. All recordings, notes, and transcripts will be destroyed following the completion of the research. Audio taping of the interview is optiona and not required for participation. Interviewee may decline to have their interview recorded, and the interviewee reserves the right to stop the recording at any time during the interview process.

RISKS

There are no anticipated risks.

BENEFITS

This study will discover knowledge that will aide school districts in improving staffing concerns often found in high poverty schools such as high-turnover and high rates of transfer requests.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Participants will not be paid.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or you give written permission. Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: John Laffoon at 625 N. Winwood Terrace, Gardner, KS 66030. If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION should be directed to:

John Laffoon	Dr. Jennifer Ng
Principal Investigator	Faculty Supervisor
625 N Winwood Terr.	1122 W. Campus Rd. - Joseph R. Pearson Hall
Gardner, KS 66030	Lawrence, KS 66045
(913) 475.8024	(785) 864-9660

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL) office at (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

KEEP THIS SECTION FOR YOUR RECORDS. IF YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE TEAR OFF THE FOLLOWING SECTION AND RETURN IT TO THE RESEARCHER.

STAYING IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS

HSCL #_____ (Provided by HSCL office)

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:
If you agree to participate in this study please sign where indicated, then tear off this section and return it to the investigator(s). Keep the consent information for your records.

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study and the use and disclosure of information about me for the study.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form. (Use the 18 years old disclaimer only if the study population may include participants under the age of 18. If signed by a personal representative, a description of such representative's authority to act for the individual must also be provided, e.g. parent/guardian.]

_____ _____
Type/Print Participant's Name Date

_____
Participant's Signature

_____ By initialing, I give consent for my interview to be audio recorded per procedures outlined in this document.

Appendix C Educator Rubric

USD 111 Five Educator Standards

~ General Indicators ~

EDUCATORS TEACHING FOR LEARNING

1. Standard: ***Educators Are Committed to Students and Their Learning***

Accomplished Drummond District educators are committed to students and their learning, with a focus on high expectations. They believe ALL students can learn and act upon that belief by monitoring and adjusting teaching to meet individual needs.

The Drummond District Educator…
• Demonstrates an understanding of how students develop and learn.
• Recognizes and provides for individual differences and adjusts instructional practice accordingly.
• Communicates high expectations to all learners, regardless of race, sex, ethnicity, disability, and/or socio-economic status.

2. Standard: ***Educators Know Their Subject Matter and How to Teach It***

Accomplished Drummond District educators use effective, research-based instructional practices/strategies, focused on student learning. They demonstrate instructional competencies in Content Knowledge and Instructional Practices.

The Drummond District Educator…
Content Knowledge
• Demonstrates an accurate, up-to-date, and extensive knowledge of subject(s) and effectively communicates this understanding to students.
• Demonstrates knowledge of how subject matter is organized.
• Demonstrates knowledge of how subject matter/disciplines are integrated.
Instructional Practices
• Implements the district-adopted curriculum.
• Develops long range instructional plans.
• Develops lesson plans incorporating effective lesson design.
• Maximizes available instructional time.
• Uses a variety of research-based instructional practices which support instructional goals and student needs.
• Communicates to students expectations for learning.
• Models and facilitates higher level thinking, problem solving, creativity, and flexibility.
• Adapts instruction to accommodate student needs.
• Implements instructional practices which actively engage students.
• Selects instructional practices which motivate students.
• Uses a variety of current materials and resources which support instructional goals to meet student needs.
• Routinely integrates a variety of informal and formal assessments into instruction.
• Uses a variety of informal and formal assessment data in making instructional decisions.

- Makes students aware of assessment standards/learner expectations.
- Assists students in developing self-assessment skills.
- Maintains up-to-date records of student progress.

General Indicators

3. Standard: ***Educators Create a Climate for Learning***

Accomplished Drummond District educators provide a safe, positive environment conducive to learning. They model and expect students to demonstrate honesty, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness throughout the learning environment.

The Drummond District Educator…
Management Strategies
• Treats students with dignity and respect.
• Collaboratively develops, models, and communicates clear expectations for behavior and learning.
• Collaboratively develops, models, and practices procedures and routines.
• Develops and implements appropriate behavior supports and consequences.
• Develops and implements individual plans to work with challenging student behaviors using a variety of effective strategies.
• Consistently administers the district Student Code of Conduct and school policies.
Climate
• Provides student opportunity for shared control, empowerment, and responsibility.
• Creates a positive, invitational, and safe learning environment.
• Develops positive student-educator relationships.
• Develops a climate that respects individual differences (gender, learning, physical, emotional, ethnic, cultural, SES, etc.).

EDUCATORS AS MEMBERS OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

4. Standard: ***Educators as Life-Long Learners***

Accomplished Drummond District educators demonstrate life-long learning through commitment to continued learning and reflective practice, and they regularly seek feedback from various sources.

The Drummond District Educator...
Commitment to Continued Learning
• Demonstrates commitment to the profession.
• Participates in professional growth opportunities.
• Applies knowledge gained from professional growth opportunities.
Reflective Practice
• Engages in continuous self-evaluation using a variety of methods to identify strengths and professional growth priorities.
• Provides evidence of professional growth, both learning and applying new skills.

The Drummond District Educator…
Communication with Others
• Establishes and maintains professional communication with all stakeholders which is clear, responsible, respectful, and timely.
• Maintains ongoing, timely, and positive communication with parents/guardians through formal and informal means.
• Uses a variety of verbal, nonverbal, and electronic techniques.
• Actively seeks to gain input for further understanding.
• Listens and responds appropriately to suggestions, requests, and concerns.
• Gathers input from others to set and accomplish goals.
Interactions with Others
• Collaborates to plan and implement district curriculum, instructional objectives, strategies, materials, and assessments, including differentiated instruction and individual learning plans such as IEP's and 504B plans.
• Collaborates to accomplish team, school-wide, and district-wide goals, including actively participating in Professional Learning Communities to develop and implement actions for learning goals.
• Requests assistance from appropriate personnel, as needed.
• Demonstrates a willingness to assist and learn from others.
• Collaborates to discuss and solve issues in a win-win approach with colleagues, administrators, students, and parents.
• Demonstrates flexibility in all areas (including use of space and resources) to achieve positive outcomes.
• Approaches teaching and learning in a positive manner as a team effort with students, parents, and community as important partners.

5. **<u>Standard</u>:** ***Educators Work with Various Stakeholders***

   Accomplished Drummond District educators understand the importance of teamwork, recognizing the team includes colleagues, staff members, families, students, and community members.

USD 111 Educator Standards
Rubric/Continuum – General Indicators

Five Standards, grouped in two categories, define what accomplished Drummond District Educators should know and be able to do. All Drummond District Educators work towards achieving these Standards. **District expectation: all educators will perform at the accomplished and/or effective level in all Standards and Indicators.**

Indicators and Rubric/Continuum

Indicators add further definition to the five Educator Standards. Most educators within the district use the **General Indicators** and **Rubrics**. Educators who use **Indicators** and **Rubrics** unique to their positions for guiding their professional growth include:

- **Administrator**
  - **District Leader**
  - **School Administrator**
- **Audiologist**
- **Coordinator**
- **Counselor**
- **Early Childhood**
- **Instructional Resource/Support Teacher**
- **Library Media Specialist**
- **Music Therapist**
- **Occupational/Physical Therapist**
- **School Nurse**
- **School Psychologist**
- **Social Worker**
- **Special Education Teacher**
- **Speech-Language Pathologist**

Rubric/Continuum

The Rubric/Continuum was designed to provide further detail and clarity to the Indicators, as well as to promote greater consistency in their application. The Rubrics allow educators to:

- reflect on their strengths and areas of needs.
- receive focused feedback from observations by administrators, IRTs/support facilitators, mentors, colleagues, etc. with increased inter-rater reliability.
- see a clear picture of what skills and knowledge look like when applied.

It is anticipated that the skills and knowledge of educators will fluctuate among the various levels—Accomplished, Effective, Developing, and Ineffective—on different Standards/Indicators due to transitional factors, such as new position, new curriculum, new instructional resources, and new instructional strategies. **Absent transitional factors, educators are expected to perform at the accomplished and/or effective level in all Standards/Indicators.**

Accomplished: This category defines distinguished educators who consistently exceed expectations. These educators:

- are able to serve as a resource and to teach others, either on a formal or informal basis, because of the level of their skill on that particular Standard/Indicator.
- can provide multiple model examples and feedback to others.
- deeply understand the concept conveyed by the Standard/Indicator.
- produce consistently positive student learning results across all student groups.

Accomplished educators make a contribution to the field, both within and outside their school. They operate at a qualitatively different level, able to develop a community of learners who are highly motivated and engaged and who assume considerable responsibility for their own learning.

Effective: This category defines educators who meet rigorous Drummond District expectations. These educators:

- understand the concept conveyed in the Standard/Indicator.
- consistently implement and integrate the Standard/Indicator.
- can provide models of the Standard/Indicator.
- frequently reflect on the Standard/Indicator, modifying as appropriate.
- produce consistently positive student learning results across all student groups.

Effective educators are proficient at demonstrating the Standard/Indicator.

Developing: This category defines educators who are gaining knowledge related to the concept identified in the Standard/Indicator. These educators:

- are practicing and increasing their implementation of the Standard/Indicator. Implementation is still fairly mechanical, sporadic, intermittent, and occurring in isolated situations.

- benefit from feedback and coaching from colleagues and administrators on the Standard/Indicator and will likely improve with experience.
- produce inconsistent student learning results.
- are reflecting on their development.

Individuals might be in the developing category on a Standard/Indicator because they are new to the position or implementing new curriculum, new instructional resources, or new instructional strategies.

Ineffective: This category defines educators who are not currently aware of or do not currently demonstrate understanding of the concepts underlying the Standard/Indicator, or who are not currently implementing the Standard/Indicator. Ineffective educators need support, guidance, and assistance. Student learning goals are not being accomplished.

All Standards/Indicators/Rubrics are posted in the File Library of *MyLearningPlan*.and in the District O-Zone Virtual File.

USD 111 Educator Standards

Name:

Rubric/Continuum – General Indicators

Date:

Five Standards, grouped in two categories, define what accomplished Drummond District Educators should know and be able to do. All Drummond District Educators work towards achieving these Standards. District expectation, absent transitional factors, is that all educators will perform at the accomplished and/or effective level in all Standards and Indicators. Please reference the introductory page that provides further definition regarding the Rubrics.

Rubric/Continuum

The Rubric/Continuum was designed to provide further detail and clarity to the Indicators, as well as to promote greater consistency in their application. The Rubrics allow educators to:

- reflect on their strengths and areas of needs.
- receive focused feedback from observations by administrators, IRT's/support facilitators, mentors, colleagues, etc. with increased inter-rater reliability.
- see a clear picture of what skills and knowledge look like when applied.

Standard 1: Committed to Students and Their Learning				
Indicator	**Levels of Performance**			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Demonstrates an understanding of how students develop and learn	• Displays thorough knowledge of developmental characteristics and of learning theory (ex. brain research) ☐	• Displays knowledge of developmental characteristics and of learning theory ☐	• Displays partial knowledge of developmental characteristics and of learning theory ☐	• Displays minimal knowledge of developmental characteristics and of learning theory ☐
Recognizes and provides for individual differences and adjusts instructional practice accordingly (Also see Standard 2)	• Displays thorough understanding of students' varied needs, including approaches to learning ☐	• Displays understanding of students' varied needs, including approaches to learning ☐	• Displays partial understanding of students' varied needs, including approaches to learning ☐	• Displays minimal understanding of students' varied needs, including approaches to learning ☐

Communicates high expectations to all learners, regardless of race, sex, ethnicity, disability, and/or socio-economic status	• Conveys high expectations to all learners through instructional goals and activities, interaction and the classroom environment, and engages all students in setting personal high expectations ☐	• Conveys high expectations to all learners through instructional goals and activities, interaction, and the classroom environment ☐	• Has high expectations for student learning but inconsistently conveys those expectations to all learners ☐	• Lacks high expectations for students ☐

New Educators will use these Rubrics throughout the New Educator process to reflect on their skills and to develop their Guided Growth Plan. New Educators will receive feedback on the Standards/Indicators/Rubrics from their supervisor/evaluator and their Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT).
Career Educators will use the Standards/Indicators/Rubrics to develop their Action Plan. Minimally once every three years, during Year 2 of a cycle, Career Educators will self-reflect and indicate how they perceive their skills on the Rubrics. Career Educators will then review their reflection with their supervisor/evaluator, seeking input on their skills.

Standard 2: Subject Matter and How to Teach It Component: Content Knowledge				
	Levels of Performance			
Indicator	**Accomplished**	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Demonstrates accurate, up-to-date, and extensive knowledge of subject(s) and effectively communicates this understanding to students	• Actively seeks current research and resources through professional organizations, district professional development, colleagues, or the community to improve knowledge base and enhance teaching effectiveness • Collaboratively develops new district curriculum and participates in curriculum review and revision for grade level(s)/course(s) ☐	• Accesses and uses current research and professional resources within subject area to increase knowledge, making application to teach timely and accurate content • Implements current district curriculum for grade level(s)/course(s) and participates in curriculum review/revision ☐	• Accesses a few resources to teach timely and accurate content • Inconsistently follows district curriculum guide for grade level(s)/course(s) ☐	• Teaches outdated, inaccurate, or inadequate content • Does not follow district curriculum guide ☐
Demonstrates knowledge of how subject matter is organized	• Adapts scope/sequence to enhance conceptual understanding of content • Knows content in such a thorough way to predict possible student conceptions and misconceptions of particular topics and adjusts depth of content to meet varying learning needs of students • Enhances content and applies with effective learning strategies to establish rigorous expectations which exceed district/state standards at grade level(s)/course(s) • Aligns content within own grade level(s)/course(s) to coordinate with previous/succeeding grade level(s) course(s) ☐	• Uses scope/sequence to develop course outline and for lesson planning • Identifies depth of knowledge and subset of skills essential for accomplishing instructional objectives and adjusts content to meet student needs • Incorporates content necessary to meet district/state standards at grade level(s)/courses(s) • Aligns content within own grade level(s)/course(s) with some reference to previous/succeeding grade level(s)/course(s) ☐	• Refers to scope/sequence for lesson planning • Uses content from curriculum guide and instructional resources to teach objectives but presents same content to all students • Inconsistently incorporates standards at grade level(s)/course(s) • Makes references to some content at previous/ succeeding grade level(s)/ course(s) ☐	• Displays limited awareness or application of scope/sequence • Displays limited understanding of content and student needs • Displays limited understanding of district/state standards at grade level(s)/course(s) • Displays limited or no understanding of content at own and previous/succeeding grade level(s)/course(s) ☐

Demonstrates knowledge of how subject matter/ disciplines are integrated	• Purposely creates and provides connections with other subject areas, previous/successive learning, life experiences, and future careers • Enriches content through supplemental materials using a variety of relevant examples and illustrations ☐	• Provides consistent connections and relevancy to other subject areas, previous/ successive learning, life experiences, and future careers • Presents content in relevant context using appropriate examples and illustrations ☐	• Intermittently provides connections and relevancy to other subject areas, previous/successive learning, life experiences, or future careers • Presents content using adequate examples and illustrations but inconsistently references relevant context ☐	• Infrequently provides connections or relevancy to other subject areas or life experiences • Presents content with few or inadequate examples or illustrations ☐

Standard 2: Subject Matter and How to Teach It Component: Instructional Practices				
	Levels of Performance			
Indicator	**Accomplished**	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Implements district-adopted curriculum	• States district curriculum standards clearly and assesses them in lessons • Knows student proficiencies needed to accomplish district standards for current, preceding and subsequent course(s)/grade(s), consistently selecting learning content congruent with student proficiencies ☐	• Includes district curriculum standards in lessons • Knows student proficiencies needed to accomplish district standards in course(s)/grade(s) taught, frequently selecting learning content congruent with student proficiencies ☐	• Includes district curriculum standards in planning but not clearly in implementation of lessons • Inconsistently follows district-adopted curriculum or selects learning content congruent with student proficiencies ☐	• Does not include district curriculum standards in instruction or planning • Does not follow district-adopted curriculum. Evidence of student proficiencies in lessons is not present ☐
Develops long-range instructional plans	• Develops and adapts yearly, semester, unit, monthly, and weekly plans, including topic, sequence, resources, and assessment ☐	• Develops yearly, semester, unit, monthly, and weekly plans, including topic, sequence, resources, and assessment ☐	• Develops unit, monthly, and weekly plans, referencing topic, sequence, resources, and/or assessment ☐	• Develops lessons that display little connection or progression ☐
Develops lesson plans incorporating effective lesson design	• Incorporates and adapts elements of an effective lesson design, including anticipatory set, stated and written lesson objectives, teacher's input/modeling, a variety of guided and independent practices, closure and assessment • Develops detailed, practical, adaptable plans for substitutes and emergency situations ☐	• Incorporates elements of an effective lesson design resulting in a coherent, appropriately sequenced lesson, including anticipatory set, stated and written, lesson objectives, teacher's input/modeling, guided and independent practices, closure and assessment • Develops detailed, practical plans for substitutes and emergency situations ☐	• Inconsistently incorporates elements of an effective lesson design, including some aforementioned components • Develops plans for substitutes and emergency situations which are inconsistently clear ☐	• Demonstrates little or no evidence of the elements of an effective lesson design • Develops skeleton plans for substitutes and emergency situations which are difficult to decipher and/or carry out ☐
Maximizes available instructional time	• Matches appropriate instructional time for content, incorporates appropriate pacing, has smooth transitions between activities, engages students in learning for entire time period, and modifies based on student need ☐	• Matches appropriate instructional time for content, incorporates appropriate pacing, has smooth transitions between activities, and engages students in learning for entire time period ☐	• Matches appropriate instructional time for content, but pacing is inconsistent, transitions between activities are sometimes awkward, and students are inconsistently engaged during instructional time ☐	• Inappropriately allots time for content, with pacing that is too slow or too rushed, transitions between activities that are not well planned and executed, and students frequently not engaged in the learning ☐
Uses a variety of research-based instructional practices which support instructional goals and student needs	• Utilizes a variety of instructional strategies in the before-learning, during-learning, and after-learning components which guide students to select/utilize strategies that best meet their own	• Demonstrates effective instructional strategies through before-learning, during-learning, and after-learning goals that support student needs • Uses instructional strategies that	• Inconsistently demonstrates effective instructional strategies through before-learning, during-learning, and after-learning goals that support student needs	• Does not utilize a variety of instructional strategies that support instructional goals and student needs • Uses instructional strategies that

	individual needs • Uses instructional strategies that align with instructional goals and maximizes students' abilities to select and utilize their own strategies appropriate to instructional goals ☐	consistently align with instructional goals and engages students in meaningful learning ☐	• Inconsistently uses instructional strategies that align with instructional goals, meeting the needs of some students ☐	fail to align with instructional objectives and do not address student needs ☐

Standard 2: Subject Matter and How to Teach It Component: Instructional Practices				
Indicator	**Levels of Performance**			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Communicates to students expectations for learning	• Communicates long- and short-term learning objectives so that students are able to articulate identified objectives ☐	• Clearly communicates short- and long-term objectives to students, with learning objectives at appropriate level of difficulty ☐	• Inconsistently identifies short- and long-term learning objectives ☐	• Does not communicate learning objectives to the students ☐
Models and facilitates higher-level thinking, problem solving, creativity, and flexibility	• Consistently includes strategies in lesson plans to transfer higher-level thinking to new and/or unpredictable situations • Uses questioning that is designed/reflects an appropriate ratio of beginning to higher levels of critical thinking, fostering high levels of student engagement and student-generated questions ☐	• Consistently includes strategies to promote higher-level thinking • Uses questioning to demonstrate and reflect the levels of the taxonomy of critical thinking and elicits thoughtful responses from students ☐	• Includes some strategies to promote higher-level thinking • Uses questioning that is a combination of low and high level, but may elicit thoughtful responses from only some of the students ☐	• Focuses on low-level skills, drill/practice, or following the textbook • Uses questioning that is virtually all low level critical thinking ☐
Adapts instruction to accommodate student needs	• Demonstrates and adapts appropriate and varied teaching strategies, curriculum, lesson, and techniques to meet the needs of all students ☐	• Demonstrates appropriate and varied teaching strategies, curriculum, lessons, and techniques that meet the needs of students ☐	• Inconsistently implements strategies and techniques to accommodate student needs ☐	• Uses strategies that do not meet the needs of students ☐
Implements instructional practices that actively engage students	• Presents and adapts instruction that actively engages students ☐	• Presents instruction that actively engages students (i.e. responds positively, gives feedback, stimulates creative expression, stimulates thinking, promotes active participation, utilizes appropriate wait time)☐	• Inconsistently presents instruction that actively engages students ☐	• Presents instruction that does not actively engage students ☐
Selects instructional practices which motivate students	• Presents and adapts instruction that incorporates areas of student interest and reflects real-world connections☐	• Presents instruction that incorporates areas of student interest and reflects real-world connections ☐	• Inconsistently presents instruction that motivates students ☐	• Presents instruction that does not motivate students ☐

Uses a variety of current materials and resources which support instructional goals to meet student needs	• Utilizes multiple district and community resources to enhance instruction. Makes use of "teachable moments," incorporating student interests and real-world connections. Students are guided to initiate choice, adapt, or create materials which enhance their learning ☐	• Utilizes multiple district resources that are suitable to the instructional goals and engage students ☐	• Uses resources that inconsistently connect to instructional goals or engage students ☐	• Uses limited resources, making few connections to instructional goals or student needs ☐

Standard 2: Subject Matter and How to Teach It
Component: Instructional Practices - Assessment

Indicator	Levels of Performance			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Routinely integrates a variety of informal and formal assessments into instruction	• Administers district-constructed, criterion-referenced, text-adopted testing materials, and other required assessments, as well as assessments which reflect course content and individual student needs • Consistently implements modifications for individuals as prescribed in IEP's and 504 plans, and supplements these modifications with other strategies as needed • Administers and adapts informal assessments consistently • Uses and adapts projects, anecdotal records, independent work, and tests to evaluate student performance ☐	• Administers district-constructed, criterion-referenced, text-adopted testing materials, and other required assessments • Consistently implements modifications for individuals as prescribed in IEP's and 504 plans • Administers informal assessments on a consistent basis (i.e. teacher observation, varied questioning techniques, rubrics) • Uses projects, independent work, anecdotal records, and tests to evaluate student performance ☐	• Administers district-constructed, text-adopted testing materials, and other required assessments • Inconsistently implements modifications for individuals as prescribed in IEP's and 504 plans • Administers informal assessments on an inconsistent basis • Uses independent work and tests to evaluate student performance ☐	• Inadequately administers district-constructed, text-adopted testing materials, and other required assessments • Displays little evidence of implementation of modifications for individuals as prescribed in IEP's and 504 plans • Seldom administers informal assessments • Administers few assessments of any type with little to no variety ☐
Uses a variety of informal and formal assessment data in making instructional decisions	• Uses previous assessment data to plan whole-group and individualized instruction • Modifies instruction based on thorough on-going data analysis • Makes instructional modifications based on assessment results and uses a spiraling curriculum ☐	• Uses previous assessment data to plan whole-group instruction • Modifies instruction for remedial and advanced groups based on periodic data analysis • Integrates previously taught material and reteaches as necessary ☐	• Inconsistently matches instructional strategies to prior assessment data • Modifies instructional pace and repetition based on analysis of whole-group data • Infrequently reteaches as necessary ☐	• Does not use assessment results to plan instruction • Makes little or no analysis or modifications of instruction • Continues instruction with little consideration of assessment data ☐
Makes students aware of assessment standards/learner expectations	• Provides clear performance criteria concerning performance and progress, using rubrics which are shared with students in a collaborative mode • Displays samples of outcomes and collaborates with students to determine levels of performance and to design a clearly articulated rubric • Clearly explains how instructional activities are congruent with standards and required assessments so that students can articulate the connections themselves • Provides students with timely and meaningful feedback along with the opportunity for self-assessment and goal setting ☐	• Provides clear performance criteria, using rubrics which are shared with students • Displays samples of levels of performance and provides a rubric • Clearly explains how instructional activities are congruent with standards and required assessments • Provides students with timely and meaningful feedback ☐	• Inconsistently provides performance criteria using rubrics, making the expectations sometimes confusing or vague • Provides feedback to students about performance but does not provide models in advance of assessment • Inconsistently explains connections between instructional activities and standards/assessments • Treats feedback as closure for Learning ☐	• Fails to provide students with performance criteria • Provides students with summative information but no descriptors of performance levels • Provides little to no explanation of how instructional activities are tied to standards or assessments • Seldom provides meaningful feedback ☐
Assists students in developing self-assessment skills	• Provides sample of student work and collaboratively works with students to determine performance levels; provides guidance for students to extend judgments to their own work • Guides students to consistently implement their own metacognition techniques concerning their performance, processes, and tracking of personal ☐	• Provides performance criteria to serve as a standard for students to self-assess their own work • Guides students to implement self-reflection as an instructional assessment on a frequent basis	• Provides sketchy performance criteria, causing students confusion in judgment of their own work • Inconsistently implements student self-reflection as an instructional assessment	• Provides no performance criteria on which students can judge their own work • Does not provide self-assessment opportunities

		☐	☐	☐
Maintains up-to-date records of student progress	• Maintains information on student completion of assignments, assessments, and attendance in an organized, understandable, and accessible system ☐	• Maintains information on student completion of assignments, assessments, and attendance in an organized, understandable, and accessible system ☐	• Maintains information on student completion of assignment, assessments, and attendance in a partially organized or understandable system that is sometimes inaccessible ☐	• Maintains information on student completion of assignments, assessments, and attendance in a system of disarray or non-existence ☐

Standard 3: Climate for Learning
Component: Management Strategies

Indicator	Levels of Performance			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Treats students with dignity and respect	• Consistently interacts with students in a positive manner, adapting behavior as necessary • Creates an environment which promotes genuine caring and respect among students • Refrains from personal judgment and encourages students to do same • Maintains confidentiality making every effort to deal with individual students' needs in private • Sets aside time to listen to individual students' needs and concerns, treating all students with equity in this practice • Consistently dignifies student responses both publicly and in private, as appropriate • Consistently maintains professional decorum in interactions with students ☐	• Consistently interacts with students in a positive manner • Creates an environment which promotes polite and respectful interactions and does not tolerate negative interactions • Refrains from personal judgment • Maintains confidentiality in working with students' behaviors and concerns • Listens to and acknowledges students' needs and concerns • Consistently dignifies student responses • Consistently maintains professional decorum in interactions with students ☐	• Inconsistently interacts with students in a positive manner • Establishes an environment which discourages students to negatively interact with one another • Inconsistently refrains from personal judgment • Appears to value confidentiality but occasionally makes private issues public • Listens to and acknowledges the needs and concerns of some students, ignoring others • Inconsistently dignifies student responses or dignifies the responses of only some students • Generally maintains professional decorum but occasionally loses temper or displays inappropriate behavior in student interactions ☐	• Lacks positive interaction with students • Allows negative interaction among students • Practices personal judgment to the awareness of the students • Seldom practices or displays a value of the practice of confidentiality • Fails to listen to or acknowledge individual student needs and concerns • Fails to dignify student responses • Frequently exhibits unprofessional behavior in interacting with students, leading to negative relationships ☐
Collaboratively develops, models, and communicates clear expectations for behavior and learning	• In collaboration with students, establishes positively stated standards for behavior and learning expectations • In collaboration with students, teaches and models standards and expectations, reteaching when necessary to ensure that students understand and follow them ☐	• Establishes positively stated standards for behavior and learning expectations • Teaches and models standards and expectations, rather than simply explaining what they are, so that students appear to understand and follow them ☐	• Establishes some standards for behavior and learning expectations, but has not addressed some that appear necessary • Teaches and models some standards and expectations, ignoring or simply explaining others, leading to student confusion ☐	• Establishes few standards for behavior and learning expectations or has done so in a way leading to student confusion • Has taught or modeled few, if any, standards and expectations, leading to student confusion and frequent loss of instructional time ☐
Collaboratively develops, models, and practices procedures and routines	• In collaboration with students, establishes procedures and routines that contribute to a smooth functioning instructional environment • In collaboration with students, clearly teaches and models procedures and routines, reteaching when necessary to ensure that students understand and follow them ☐	• Proactively establishes positively stated procedures and routines that contribute to a smooth functioning instructional environment • Clearly teaches and models procedures and routines rather than simply explaining or telling, leading to students' understanding and following them ☐	• Establishes some procedures and routines, but has ignored others that are necessary to a smooth functioning instructional environment • Teaches and models some procedures and routines, ignoring or simply explaining others, leading to student confusion ☐	• Has not established necessary procedures and routines, leading to student confusion and loss of instructional time • Has taught or modeled few, if any, procedures and routines, leading to student confusion and frequent loss of instructional time ☐
Develops and implements appropriate behavior supports and consequences	• In collaboration with other staff, students, and parents, develops and adapts supports for positive behavior and prevention of negative behavior with appropriate consequences ☐	• Clearly communicates standards of conduct and implements appropriate supports for positive behavior and consequences for negative behavior ☐	• Communicates some positive supports and consequences for behavior but inconsistently addresses other behavior ☐	• Fails to communicate positive behavior supports and/or reinforces negative behavior ☐
Develops and implements individual plans to work with challenging student	• Appropriately, successfully, and proactively addresses challenging student behaviors through behavior supports,	• Appropriately, successfully, and proactively addresses challenging student behaviors, applying a variety of strategies	• Inconsistently addresses challenging student behaviors leading to uneven results	• Seldom provides positive behavior supports or inappropriately provides reinforcement to negative behavior, making

behaviors using a variety of effective strategies	adapting strategies in a hierarchical manner to meet students' changing needs ☐	to take into consideration the students' individual needs ☐	☐	little to no progress toward improvement and leading to student confusion of expectations ☐
Consistently administers the district Student Code of Conduct and school policies	Effectively enforces district and school policies and incorporates them into classroom policies, as well as serves as a role model in exhibiting behavior representative of the Code of Conduct and school policies. ☐	• Consistently enforces district and school policies, as well as serves as a role model in exhibiting behavior representative of the Code of Conduct and school policies ☐	• Inconsistently enforces district and school policies ☐	• Frequently ignores district and school policies ☐

Standard 3: Climate for Learning
Component: Climate

Indicator	Levels of Performance			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Provides student opportunity for shared control, empowerment, and responsibility	• Jointly, along with students, develops classroom standards, procedures, and consequences • Creates a climate for all students to be responsible for their own learning • Collaborates with students to create a variety of relevant choices for student learning experiences ☐	• Consistently obtains student input regarding classroom standards, procedures, and consequences • Encourages students to be responsible for their own learning • Provides numerous opportunities for students to choose among a variety of relevant learning experiences ☐	• Develops classroom standards, procedures, and consequences with some student input • Provides infrequent encouragement for students to take responsibility for their own learning • Infrequently provides students with opportunities to make choices among learning experiences ☐	• Has developed classroom standards, procedures, and consequences with no student involvement • Presents most instruction in a teacher-directed manner • Provides no choices for student learning experiences ☐
Creates a positive, invitational, and safe learning environment	• Creates opportunities for students to take risks beyond the classroom requirements • Provides opportunities for all students to achieve recognition related to the classroom • Shares and encourages appropriate humor that enhances student learning • Addresses safety issues quickly and efficiently in collaboration with students ☐	• Regularly recognizes and rewards students' risk-taking • Provides consistent opportunities for students to meet with success • Incorporates and encourages appropriate humor • Addresses safety issues quickly and efficiently ☐	• Inconsistently acknowledges students' risk-taking • Infrequently designs activities that allow for student success or groups of students are overlooked in designing such activities • Uses humor in an inconsistent and sometimes confusing or inappropriate way • Inconsistently addresses safety issues, causing the students to sometimes feel uncomfortable ☐	• Makes little or no effort to encourage risk-taking • Limits opportunities for success to a minority of students • Does not use humor, or uses it in an inappropriate or unrelated way, not understood by students • Ignores safety issues ☐
Develops positive student-educator relationships	• Fosters open communication with the students both individually and in groups • Makes a persistent and conscientious effort to know each student individually both in and out of the classroom • Values and solicits differing viewpoints to enhance understanding ☐	• Encourages students to express differing viewpoints • Makes an effort to get to know students personally in the context of the classroom and occasionally outside the classroom • Is receptive to students' differing viewpoints to enhance student understanding ☐	• Occasionally encourages students to express differing viewpoints, but inconsistently is respectful of them • Acknowledges students' interests in the classroom and activities outside the classroom, but does not act on them • Infrequently acknowledges students' differing viewpoints to enhance understanding ☐	• Exhibits one-way communication with students • Shows no awareness of students' interests • Acknowledges and accepts only his/her own viewpoint during classroom activities and discussions ☐

Develops a climate that respects individual differences (gender, learning, physical, emotional, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, etc.)	• Consistently plans, adapts, and successfully carries out lessons based on diversity and student needs • Establishes positive relationships and is accepting of all students, with tolerance and respect for varying backgrounds, diversities, or needs, encouraging students to do the same • Takes proactive measures with students to prevent derogatory and harassing comments that may intimidate or create a hostile learning environment ☐	• Consistently plans and successfully carries out lessons based on diversity and student needs • Establishes positive relationships and is accepting of all students, with tolerance and respect for varying backgrounds, diversities, or needs • Does not allow students to make derogatory and harassing comments that may intimidate or create a hostile learning environment ☐	• Infrequently plans and successfully carries out lessons based on diversity and student needs • Acknowledges, to some extent, the differing backgrounds of students and displays some evidence of tolerance and respect • Is inconsistent in addressing negative, demeaning student interactions, leading toward student confusion of expectations ☐	• Makes no adaptations to lessons relating to diversity or student needs • Appears unaware of students' diverse backgrounds or abilities, which prohibits the establishment of positive relationships with and among students • Does not address negative, demeaning student interactions ☐

Standard 4: Educators as Life-Long Learners
Component: Commitment to Continued Learning

Indicator	Levels of Performance			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Demonstrates commitment to the profession	• Initiates and develops activities that contribute to the profession (ex. mentoring new educators, writing articles for publication, giving presentations, serving on professional committees, and advocating for public education and educators) ☐	• Participates with colleagues in activities that contribute to the profession (ex. assisting other educators, giving presentations, serving on professional committees) ☐	• Participates in activities that contribute to the profession ☐	• Makes no effort to participate in activities that contribute to the profession ☐
Participates in professional growth opportunities	• Initiates and develops opportunities and serves as a resource for professional growth for self and others ☐	• Seeks out professional growth opportunities and is an active participant ☐	• Attends professional growth opportunities and is an active participant ☐	• Attends required professional growth opportunities with only limited participation ☐
Applies knowledge gained from professional growth opportunities	• Systematically implements newly gained knowledge/skills from professional growth and action research through the incorporation of meaningful classroom instruction and serves as a resource to others ☐	• Consistently implements newly gained knowledge/skills as an integral part of professional repertoire ☐	• Implements newly gained knowledge/skills in a limited, mechanical way and in isolated contexts ☐	• Does not apply knowledge/skills gained from professional growth ☐

Standard 4: Educators as Life-Long Learners
Component: Reflective Practice

Indicator	Levels of Performance			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Engages in continuous self-evaluation using a variety of methods to identify strengths and professional growth priorities	• Bases self-evaluation on various feedback sources to consistently and accurately identify strengths and needs, establishing professional growth goals ☐	• Accurately self-evaluates instructional and professional effectiveness, adapting to student needs and using a variety of methods ☐	• Inconsistently self-evaluates for instructional or professional growth needs or only when prompted ☐	• Does not self-evaluate for instructional or professional growth needs ☐

Provides evidence of professional growth, both learning and applying new skills	• Consistently produces evidence, including student learning results, of learning and applying new skills while continuously refining and seeking additional effective strategies ☐	• Shows evidence, including student learning results, of learning and applying new skills (ex. lesson plans, reflection journal, professional dialogue with others) ☐	• Shows limited evidence of learning and applying new skills ☐	• Shows no evidence of learning and applying new skills ☐

Standard 5: Work with Various Stakeholders
Component: Communication with Others

Indicator	Levels of Performance			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Establishes and maintains professional communication with all stakeholders which is clear, responsible, respectful, and timely	• As a role model for others, consistently uses precise, accurate language appropriate to the situation and audience • Proactively and consistently plans appropriate timing of communication with all stakeholders ☐	• Uses language that is consistently precise, accurate, and appropriate to the situation and audience • Consistently communicates information needed by others in a timely manner ☐	• Uses language that is inconsistently precise, inaccurate, and/or inappropriate to the situation and audience (ex. educ. jargon or vague descriptions) • Inconsistently communicates information needed by others in a timely manner ☐	• Does not express ideas clearly and disregards the needs and perspective of others and/or is disrespectful • Does not provide information needed by others in a timely manner (e.g., response to email within 24 hours) ☐
Maintains ongoing, timely, and positive communication with parents/guardians through formal and informal means	• Models effective choice of tone and communication style • Plans for consistent communication of all pertinent information to parents/guardians ☐	• Consistently communicates all needed information with parents/guardians • Chooses appropriate tone and style for the situation ☐	• Communicates periodically with parents/guardians • May not include all pertinent information or choose appropriate tone/style ☐	• Neglects to communicate • Limits the type and amount of information shared with parents/guardians ☐
Uses a variety of verbal, nonverbal, and electronic techniques	• Consistently communicates, adapting to various needs, through a variety of verbal, nonverbal, and electronic techniques ☐	• Consistently communicates through a variety of verbal, nonverbal, and electronic techniques ☐	• Communicates using limited techniques ☐	• Disregards the various techniques needed to communicate effectively with others ☐
Actively seeks to gain input for further understanding	• Actively seeks input for purposes of clarification and reflection ☐	• Actively seeks input and acknowledges point of view of others ☐	• Inconsistently seeks and responds to input ☐	• Does not seek or attend to input ☐
Listens and responds appropriately to suggestions, requests, and concerns	• Actively seeks and listens to suggestions, requests, and concerns and chooses a response to match the needs of the situation ☐	• Listens to suggestions, requests, and concerns and chooses a response to match the needs of the situation ☐	• Is open to suggestions, requests, and concerns but is not always able to respond appropriately ☐	• Is not open to suggestions, requests, or concerns and responds defensively, negatively, and/or does not respond appropriately ☐
Gathers input from others to set and accomplish goals	• Elicits and welcomes input from others to set and accomplish goals ☐	• Seeks input to set and accomplish goals	• Accepts input from others but inconsistently uses the input to set goals	• Ignores input from others

		☐	☐	☐

Standard 5: Work with Various Stakeholders
Component: Interactions with Others

Indicator	Levels of Performance			
	Accomplished	**Effective**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**
Collaborates to plan and implement district curriculum, instructional objectives, strategies, materials, and assessments, including differentiated instruction and individual learning plans such as IEP's and 504B plans	• Provides leadership to ensure instructional collaboration among a variety of stakeholders ☐	• Actively collaborates with a variety of stakeholders for instructional purposes ☐	• Collaborates as requested for instructional purposes ☐	• Does not collaborate for instructional purposes ☐
Collaborates to accomplish team, school-wide, and district-wide goals, including actively participating in PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) to develop and implement actions for learning goals	▪ Makes a substantial contribution by providing leadership through collaboration with others to establish and accomplish team, school, and district goals and in PLC's ☐	• Actively collaborates to establish and accomplish team, school, and district goals and in PLC's ☐	• Participates as requested in accomplishing team, school, and district goals and in PLC's ☐	• Does not actively participate in accomplishing team, school, and district goals and in PLC's ☐
Requests assistance from appropriate personnel, as needed	• As a life-long learner, continuously seeks assistance from various sources to enhance professional skills ☐	• Recognizes needs and seeks assistance from various sources ☐	• Seeks limited assistance or inconsistently recognizes sources of assistance ☐	• Does not seek assistance ☐
Demonstrates a willingness to assist and learn from others	• Initiates assistance to and seeks ideas from others, i.e. mentoring, problem solving, and sharing ideas ☐	• Actively assists and learns from others through mentoring, problem solving, and sharing ideas ☐	• Assists or learns from others on a limited basis ☐	• Makes no effort to assist or learn from others ☐
Collaborates to discuss and solve issues in a win-win approach with colleagues, administrators, students, and parents	• Provides leadership to identify and resolve issues, and ensures all perspectives are considered, resulting in a mutually agreed upon outcome ☐	• In collaboratively solving issues, seeks others' perspectives and shares own perspective to reach a mutually agreed upon outcome ☐	• Attempts to recognize others' perspectives in solving issues ☐	• Solves issues in isolation, based solely on own perspective ☐
Demonstrates flexibility in all areas (including use of space and resources) to achieve positive outcomes	• Guides and models for others how to adapt to changing circumstances (including use of space and resources) by continually focusing on a positive outcome ☐	• Consciously adapts to changing circumstances (including use of space and resources) or change to attain a positive outcome ☐	• Attempts to adapt to changing circumstances (including use of space and resources) ☐	• Does not adapt to changing circumstances (including use of space and resources) ☐
Approaches teaching and learning in a positive manner as a team effort with students, parents, and community as important partners	• Consistently and successfully seeks opportunities to involve students, parents, and community as significant partners in the educational process ☐	• Consistently and successfully involves students, parents, and community in the educational/instructional process ☐	• Appropriately involves students, parents, and/or community in the educational/ instructional process on a limited basis ☐	• Does not appropriately involve students, parents, and/or community in the educational/instructional process ☐

Signatures indicate that the staff member after self-reflection has reviewed levels of performance in a conference with the administrator.
(Career Educator—REQUIRED in Year 2 of three year cycle)

Staff Member's Signature	Date	Administrator's Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____	_____