

**DETERMINING FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG  
CERTIFICATED TEACHERS**

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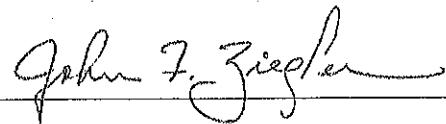
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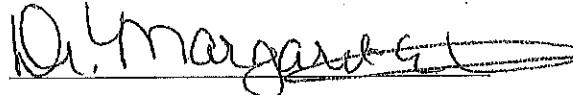
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## Abstract

This study addresses the significant challenge of teacher retention in Northeastern Pennsylvania, where the state experienced a concerning 7.7% attrition rate in 2022-2023, representing 9,587 educators leaving their positions. Teacher turnover creates serious educational disruptions by eroding established student-teacher relationships and institutional knowledge while imposing substantial financial burdens that can exceed \$20,000 per replacement teacher. Through a mixed-methods approach, this research examines retention factors across two anonymous districts within Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, guided by three central questions: (1) What perceptions do certificated professional staff identify as important for remaining within the Papillon School District as measured by the Panorama Education Survey? (2) What factors contribute to professional staff retention in the Border Collie School District as measured by an Educator Stay Survey? (3) What recruitment and retention strategies have been adopted by other districts within Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 in the past five years as measured by a District Perception Survey? The research design employs a mixed-methods approach utilizing three electronic surveys to collect quantitative and qualitative data on teacher satisfaction, institutional support, and career commitment factors. The research is expected to provide district leaders, particularly Chief Human Resources Officers, with actionable insights for creating supportive environments that enhance educational quality while reducing the operational burden of constant recruitment cycles. This study aims to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding of teacher retention and practical implementation of effective strategies.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### Background of Study

The American education system faces a significant challenge that threatens its fundamental ability to provide quality education: the increasing difficulty of retaining qualified teachers in our nation's classrooms. Teacher retention has emerged as one of the most pressing issues affecting educational institutions today, with implications that extend far beyond staffing concerns to directly impact student achievement, school culture, and educational continuity. When experienced teachers leave their positions, they take with them not only their professional expertise but also their deep understanding of the school community, established relationships with students and families, and instructional knowledge.

The urgency of addressing teacher retention has intensified in recent years as schools navigate evolving educational landscapes, increased accountability measures, and changing student needs. Educational leaders will need to move beyond simply acknowledging the problem to implementing evidence-based strategies that effectively support and retain their teaching staff.

In Northeastern Pennsylvania, school districts face unique challenges to maintain a stable teaching workforce, which places immense pressure on district leaders responsible for human capital management. As a Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO), the complex task of recruiting and retaining qualified teachers has become increasingly demanding, requiring strategic thinking and innovative approaches. The competition for talent extends beyond the immediate region, as rural and suburban

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districts must vie not only with each other but also with larger urban districts and neighboring states that often provide more lucrative compensation packages, particularly in New Jersey and New York where starting salaries significantly outpace those in Pennsylvania.

The role of a CHRO in this competitive landscape has evolved from traditional personnel management to strategic talent leadership. Each vacancy represents not just a staffing challenge, but a potential disruption to educational continuity and a substantial financial investment in recruitment and training. According to the research from Sutcher et al. (2019) noted:

A comprehensive approach to reducing attrition would effectively both lessen the demand for teacher hiring and save money that could be better spent on mentoring and other evidence-based approaches to supporting teacher development. Attrition is one of the most important aspects of demand to focus on, both because it is such a large component of demand and because it is policy malleable. (p. 26)

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provides guidance on certifications through the CSPG's (Certification Staffing Policy Guidelines). According to PDE (2024):

The CSPG's also provide clarification to educators regarding (1) the issuance of professional certificates, (2) the grade level and content scope of certificate subject areas, and (3) the appropriate certificate for staffing professional positions in public schools. In the CSPG's, you will find valuable information related to the certificate eligibility as well as the proper staffing practices that will help achieve educational excellence in the school of the Commonwealth. (para. 2)

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As part of its ongoing certification reforms, the Certification Staffing Policy Guidelines (CSPGs) underwent significant revisions regarding two foundational teaching certificates: the Elementary Education certificate (Kindergarten through 6th grade) and the Early Childhood Education certificate (Nursery through 3rd grade). The certification changes included important updates to early education credentials. While PDE stopped issuing both the Early Childhood (N-3) and Elementary (K-6) certificates after August 31, 2013, existing certificates remained valid with specific parameters. The N-3 certificate continued to be valid except for fourth grade instruction, while the K-6 certificate remained valid for its full grade range. Additionally, either the newer Pk-4 certificate, or the previous N-3 certificate became requirements for teaching in the Pre-K Counts and Early Intervention programs.

The Grades 4-8 certification is designed for educators teaching all elementary subjects to students in grades four through six. Table 1 represents the Grades 4-8 certification inclusion of a core content and a specific content area for grade seven and eight.

**Table 1**

*Grade 4-8 Certification Concentrations*

Instructional Area Code	Certificate Title
3100-01	Grades 4-8 (All subjects 4-6, Mathematics 7-8)
3100-05	Grades 4-8 (All subjects 4-6, Science 7-8)
3100-08	Grades 4-8 (All subjects 4-6, Social Studies 7-8)
3100-09	Grades 4-8 (All subjects 4-6, English Language Arts and Reading 7-8)
3100-09	Grades 4-8 (All subjects 4-6, English Language Arts and Reading 7-8)

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*Note:* Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE] (2024)

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) established the Middle Level Certification program in 2009, which initially certified teachers for grades 7 through 9 in specific content areas including English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. In July 2014, PDE modified the certification by expanding the grade range, changing it from Middle Level 7-9 to Middle Level 6-9 while maintaining the same subject areas. Later, in December 2018, PDE issued an important clarification regarding the Middle Level English certification, specifically stating that teachers holding a Middle Level English 6-9 certificate were not qualified to teach reading as a standalone subject, though they could still teach English Language Arts. The certificated professional staff subgroup information is presented in Table 2: Certification Subgroups.

**Table 2**

*Certification Subgroups*

Professional Staff Group	Certification
Elementary	K-6, N-3, Pk-4, <b>OR</b> Mid-Level 4-8 *if teaching 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> or 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Secondary	7-12, Mid-Level 7-9 <b>OR</b> Mid-Level 4-8 *if teaching 7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Related Arts	K-12
Special Education	K-12
School Counselor	K-12
School Psychologist	K-12
Speech and Language Pathologist	K-12

*Note:* Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE] (2024)

These certification changes and requirements have added complexity to an already challenging educational landscape, potentially affecting teacher satisfaction and retention. Understanding why teachers choose to stay in their current position, despite

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these pressures, has become essential for developing effective retention strategies that align with both district resources and workforce needs. This understanding impacts the CHRO's ability to design competitive benefits packages, create supportive work environments, and implement targeted retention initiatives that resonate with current staff while attracting new talent.

### **Capstone Focus**

Teacher attrition rate is a rising concern across the state of Pennsylvania. According to Fuller (2023) a study conducted by The Pennsylvania State University showed an attrition rate of 7.7% during the 2022-2023 school year for a staggering 9,587 teachers leaving their positions. "If the attrition rate has remained at the 2021-2022 level, nearly 1,900 fewer teachers would have left the profession" (Fuller, 2023, p. 1).

This researcher conducted an examination of teacher attrition patterns within the Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD), a significant educational institution serving Monroe County, Pennsylvania. The district holds a distinctive geographical position in Northeastern Pennsylvania, situated strategically among several resort destinations that shape its community dynamics and potentially influence staffing patterns. The expansive district territory spans 305 square miles, encompassing eight diverse municipalities, which creates a unique operations environment that must address the challenges of serving both concentrated and dispersed population areas.

The district's physical infrastructure reflects its comprehensive educational mission, comprising a network of nine active school buildings that serve various grade levels and student populations. Additionally, the district maintains an administrative building that houses central operations and district leadership. As a display of resource

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optimization, the district has repurposed a formerly closed school building through renovation, transforming it into a centralized hub for maintenance operations, demonstrating adaptive management of physical assets.

PMSD maintains a substantial professional workforce, employing 775 certificated professional staff members who serve the educational needs of the student population (Pocono Mountain School District, 2024). The number of educational professionals reflects the district's commitment to maintaining appropriate staffing levels across its extensive geographical footprint and diverse student population.

To establish a clear understanding of staffing stability and turnover patterns, the researcher implements a systematic document analysis approach, which involved a comprehensive review of the PMSD School Board Agendas spanning a three-year period from July 2021 through June 2024, to track and quantify two key categories of professional staff departures:

- Retirements - representing natural career conclusions
- Resignations - indicating early career transitions

The analysis of official records revealed important insights into school staffing patterns. The examination identified K-12 teaching certifications that became harder to obtain following the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) certification requirement changes. The records provided understanding of teachers' experience levels through years of service data. Additionally, this information allowed for the identification of potential patterns and cycles in teacher turnover rates. The three-year timeframe provides valuable insights into how external factors influence teacher retention decisions. This detailed analysis of PMSD serves as a foundation for understanding the broader

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implications of teacher attrition in a large, geographically diverse school district, while the systematic examination of board records provides quantifiable data to support observations about staffing stability and turnover patterns.

This research seeks to conduct an in-depth investigation into the multifaceted factors that influence retention of certificated professional teaching staff within their respective school districts. This study specifically focuses on two distinct school districts in Northeastern Pennsylvania affiliated with Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 to examine what motivates educators to maintain long-term employment commitments in the field of education.

### ***Research Questions***

At a time when educational institutions face mounting challenges in maintaining a stable and committed teaching workforce, understanding the key drivers of teacher retention has become paramount. This investigative research delves into the heart of teacher retention, exploring three interconnected responses that shed light on the complex dynamics at play in two school districts and their broader educational community.

This research will determine the factors that influence certificated professional staff to remain in their respective school district in the field of education as a teacher. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participating school districts, their identities will remain anonymous throughout this study. Two school districts located in Northeastern Pennsylvania and affiliated with Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 will be referred to as pseudonyms:

District 1: *Papillon School District*

District 2: *Border Collie School District*

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No identifying details about the specific districts will be revealed. This anonymity helps ensure that all responses and data collected can be analyzed objectively without risk of implications to the participating school districts.

Gaining insights into the key factors that inspire and motivate certificated professional teaching staff to remain in their roles at both the Papillon and Border Collie School Districts will enable district leaders to strategically plan and implement effective retention initiatives. This research begins by examining the perceptions of certificated professional staff in the Papillon School District, to uncover what they consider most important for their continued service. Moving to the Border Collie School District, the research will investigate the specific factors contributing to staff retention. Finally, to broaden the scope, the research will analyze the recruitment and retention strategies adopted by neighboring districts within Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 over the past five years.

This comprehensive approach aims to provide valuable insights into effective teacher retention practices, potentially offering a roadmap for school districts struggling with similar challenges. Findings from three research questions will be analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of teacher retention and its implications for educational quality and stability.

1. What perceptions do certificated professional staff identify as important for them to remain as teachers within the Papillon School District as measured by the Panorama Education Survey?
2. What factors contribute to the certificated professional staff staying in the Border Collie School District as measured by an Educator Stay Survey?

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3. What recruitment and retainment strategies have been adopted by other school districts within the Intermediate Unit #20 within the past five (5) years as measured by a District Perception Survey?

### **Expected Outcomes**

Through examination of the factors that influence teacher retention decisions in two specific districts within Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, this research aims to provide the Chief Human Resource Officer and other district leaders with actionable insights for creating more sustainable and supportive environments for teaching staff. The findings could provide insight into the strategic planning process in areas such as professional development programming, mentoring structures, and compensation frameworks. In addition, by developing a deep understanding of the key factors that inspire and motivate certificated professional teaching staff to maintain their positions at both the Papillon and Border Collie School Districts, this research offers the potential to move beyond reactive hiring practices to proactive retention strategies, ultimately helping to build stable, committed teaching teams that enhance educational quality and reduce operational burden of constant recruitment cycles.

This research ultimately aims to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding of teacher retention and practical implementation of effective retention strategies, potentially servicing as a model for districts facing similar challenges in maintaining high-quality teaching staff.

### **Fiscal Implications**

The financial implications of teacher turnover have reached staggering levels, creating significant budgetary challenges for school districts. The financial burden of

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teacher turnover on school districts is substantial, particularly in urban areas. Research by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) found that, "estimates exceed \$20,000 to replace each teacher who leaves an urban school district" (p. v). These costs accumulate quickly as districts invest in recruitment efforts, manage the hiring process, and provide training and professional development for new teachers. The cumulative impact of these expenses can strain district budgets, potentially diverting resources from other educational needs. This financial burden is exemplified by the Pocono Mountain School District's hiring of twenty-six new teachers from the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year. The district's investment in new teaching staff represents a significant portion of their operating budget, starting at \$58,050 for a bachelor's degree at Step 1, before factoring in comprehensive benefits packages. Using conservative estimates for replacement costs (\$20,000 per teacher), this turnover could represent an additional \$520,000 in recruitment, onboarding, and training expenses alone.

When there is turnover in staff, school districts must account for the cost of hiring and onboarding new teachers. As noted by the Society of Human Resource Management [SHRM] (2024), onboarding is defined as:

Onboarding is the process of integrating new employees into an organization. It includes the orientation process and opportunities for new hires to learn about the organization's structure, culture, vision, mission, and values. Onboarding can span one or two days of activities at some companies; others offer a more extensive series of activities spanning months. (para. 1)

According to Ronfeldt et al. (2013), "Turnover may have substantial impact on the financial and human resources in districts and schools as well. The recruiting, hiring,

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and training of new teachers requires significant financial costs" (p. 8). However, the true cost of teacher turnover extends far beyond these quantifiable monetary considerations. Students in schools with high teacher turnover rates often experience disrupted learning environments, inconsistent instructional quality, and weakened school-community relationships. Each time a teacher leaves, valuable institutional knowledge and established student-teacher relationships are lost, which require time and resources to rebuild. This instability particularly affects vulnerable student populations and underserved communities, potentially exacerbating existing educational inequities. The substantial investment to replace twenty-six teachers represents resources that could otherwise be directed toward educational programs, student support services, or enhancing existing teacher retention initiatives. When considering that these costs recur annually in districts with persistent turnover challenges, the long-term impact on educational quality and fiscal stability becomes even more concerning.

### **Summary**

The retention of qualified educators stands as one of the most formidable challenges confronting America's educational landscapes and fundamentally threatening the system's capacity to deliver consistent, high-quality instruction to students across the nation. This pressing issue extends beyond basic staffing concerns, significantly impacting student achievement, school culture and educational continuity, particularly in regions like Northeastern Pennsylvania where districts compete with neighboring states offering more competitive compensation packages.

Within Pennsylvania, the severity of this challenge manifested in the 2022-2023 school year's 7.7% attrition rate, with 9,587 teachers leaving their profession (Fuller,

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2023). The Pocono Mountain School District serves as a compelling case study, illustrating the complexities faced by large, geographically diverse educational institutions. Spanning 305 square miles, the district currently employs 775 certificated professional staff members.

To examine these challenges comprehensively, the research focuses on two anonymous districts within Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 – the Papillon School District and the Border Collie School District – through three distinct methodological lenses: the Panorama Education Survey, an Educator Stay Survey, and a District Perception Survey. The fiscal implications are substantial, as demonstrated by PMSD's experience, where replacing twenty-six teachers, plus recruitment and training costs, represents a significant financial investment that extends beyond monetary considerations to impact overall educational quality.

To fully understand the complexity of teacher retention and develop effective solutions for these challenges, a thorough examination of existing literature becomes essential. A comprehensive literature review delves into scholarly works that have investigated teacher retention from multiple perspectives, offering insights into proven approaches that have successfully addressed similar challenges in other educational settings. To better understand the relationships between key factors affecting teacher retention, three electronic surveys will assess how teacher satisfaction, institutional support, and long-term commitment to education careers align with established research and industry best practices.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Literature

The retention of qualified and experienced teachers is a critical challenge facing the educational system. Teacher attrition has significant implications for educational quality, student achievement, and the overall stability of a school's environment. This literature review aims to examine the multifaceted factors that contribute to teacher attrition, and more importantly, to identify and analyze strategies that have proven effective in reducing attrition rates among certificated teachers.

The issue of teacher attrition has gained attention from researchers, policymakers, and educational administrators due to its far-reaching consequences. High rates of teacher turnover not only disrupt the continuity of instruction, but also impose substantial financial burdens on school districts, necessitating ongoing recruitment and training efforts (Barnes et al., 2007). In addition, according to the research (Ronfeldt et al., 2013), the loss of experienced educators can lead to a decline in institutional knowledge and mentorship opportunities for novice teachers, potentially compromising the overall quality of students' education.

This review will analyze current research on teacher attrition, explore the myriad of factors influencing teachers' decisions to remain in or leave the profession. By examining all these factors, this literature review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the root causes of teacher attrition and highly evidence-based strategies for improving teacher attrition.

In an era where educational institutions increasingly struggle with teacher turnover and workforce stability, understanding factors that influence teacher retention

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has become critical to maintaining education quality and continuity. This study examines the complex dynamics of teacher retention within two anonymized school districts in Northeastern Pennsylvania – the Papillon School District and the Border Collie School District - both affiliated with Colonial Intermediate Unit #20. Through a comprehensive investigation of certificated professional staff perspectives and institutional practices, this research aims to identify key factors that motivate teachers to maintain long-term commitments to their districts.

This study employs a three-pronged approach to investigate teacher retention across multiple school districts. The first component utilizes a revised Panorama Education Survey administered in the Papillon School District. The second component analyzes data from an Educator Stay Survey conducted in the Border Collie School District. The third component examines responses from a researcher-developed District Perception Survey, administered to Human Resources administrators to evaluate recruitment and retention strategies. These strategies were implemented across neighboring school districts within the Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 over the past five years. By uncovering the specific factors that influence teacher retention decisions and examining successful retention strategies, this research seeks to provide educational leaders with actionable insights for developing effective retention initiatives.

### **Impact of Attrition and Teacher Turnover**

The attrition rate, often referred to as the churn rate in business context, is a key metric that quantifies the speed at which employees leave an organization. This measurement includes both voluntary resignations and involuntary terminations, providing a comprehensive view of employee turnover in the workplace. A pioneering

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research study from Jamal and Bucklin (2006) demonstrates how business can leverage their internal customer data to better predict and manage customer churn, potentially increasing firm value by up to 5% for every 1% improvement in retention rates.

According to Reichheld (1996), “reducing customer defections by as little as five points—from, say, 15% to 10% per year—can double profits” (p. 57).

Within the field of education, teacher turnover or teacher attrition, is defined as, “The percentage of teachers who leave their district or profession entirely” (Education Resource Strategies, 2024, para. 2). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) express, “A high rate of teacher attrition—that is, teachers leaving the profession—is a primary contributor to teacher shortages nationally” (p. 1).

While addressing the root causes of teacher attrition is vital, it is equally important to understand its consequences. Based on churn rate research within the business field from Jamal and Bucklin (2006) it was stated:

There is scope for much further research in this area. First, the type of churn—voluntary or involuntary [i.e., when the firm asks the customer to leave] - could have an impact as the failure of the two types of events could be dependent...Second, there could be possible dependencies between the acquisition and the retention process which could impact the churn rates. (pp. 27-28)

Recent innovations in marketing research methods have highlighted more efficient approaches to data collection and analysis. Jamal and Bucklin (2006) advocated for utilizing existing secondary data sources rather than relying on new surveys or experiments to measure marketing variables, arguing this approach would help managers make more efficient use of available information.

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According to Balow (2021), “In a study conducted by the National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data Education Research, about 500,000 teachers in the United States leave their school, a process that happens year over year” (para. 3). Based on the findings from Sutcher et al. (2019):

Compared to high-achieving nations like Finland, Singapore, and Ontario, Canada—where only about 3% to 4% of teachers leave in a given year—U.S. attrition rates are quite high: hovering near 8% over the last decade, and much higher for new teachers and teachers in high-poverty school districts. (p. 25)

The pervasive nature of teacher attrition extends beyond isolated incidents, affecting education systems on a national scale. Recent studies have highlighted the scope of this concern. Balow (2021) also noted compelling evidence of the widespread impact of teacher shortages and the concerning trends in teacher retention:

Findings from the 2017-2018 school year indicated almost every state in the U.S. had teacher shortages in major subject areas, and nearly 50% of teachers at that time said they were actively looking to leave the profession.

Not only are teachers *considering* leaving the field, a large number of newer teachers are *doing* just that, as about 30% of college graduates who become teachers leave the profession within five years. (para. 4-5)

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) provide a more detailed analysis of the attrition rates and their impact on the education system. Their research stresses the severity of the situation by quantifying the annual attrition rate and its contribution to teacher demand.

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The profession has a national attrition rate of about 8% annually, and research shows that the number of teachers leaving each year accounts for close to 90% of annual teacher demand. Furthermore, less than a third of national teacher attrition is due to retirement. In other words, each year schools nationwide must hire tens of thousands of teachers because of beginning and mid-career teachers leaving the profession. (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 1)

While teacher attrition and mobility have been concerns in education, recent data shows the scale of the challenge. Miller and Youngs (2021) noted:

According to a recent Alliance for Excellent Education report, roughly 13 percent of the 3.4 million public school teachers in the U.S. in 2013-14 left their schools at the end of the school year; of the 13 percent, 227,016 of them moved from one school to another and 230,122 of them exited the teaching profession. (p. 1)

The national trends in teacher attrition described by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond are not isolated findings, but rather reflective of challenges faced by individual states across the country. A key example of this can be seen in Pennsylvania, where recent data has revealed an uptick in teacher attrition rates.

A comprehensive study by Penn State University researchers, led by Fuller (2023), revealed an exodus of 9,587 teachers during the 2022-2023 academic year, representing a significant 7.7% attrition rate. This sharp increase becomes even more striking when compared to the previous year's figures - had the attrition rate remained at the 2021-2022 levels, approximately 1,900 teachers would have remained in the profession (Fuller, 2023, p. 1).

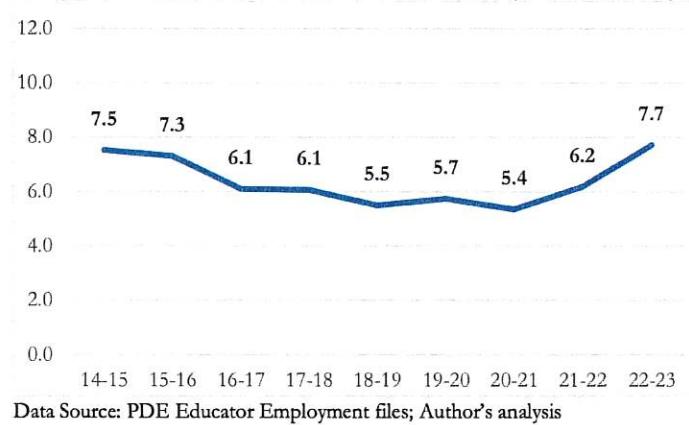
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This concerning trend gains additional context when viewed through a historical lens. Figure 1 illustrates the trajectory of teacher attrition rates across Pennsylvania from the 2014-2015 through 2022-2023 academic years, highlighting the acceleration of departures from the profession. This pattern raises serious questions about the sustainability of the state's educational workforce and the factors driving teachers to leave their positions at increasing rates.

**Figure 1**

*Annual Teacher Attrition Rates (14-15 to 22-23)*

**Figure 1: Annual Teacher Attrition Rates (14-15 to 22-23)**



The impact of teacher mobility extends beyond simple attrition from the profession. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017, p. 1) emphasized that teachers who transfer between schools ("movers") create staffing challenges similar to those who leave teaching entirely, potentially intensifying recruitment difficulties in already struggling schools. The issue of teacher turnover and its impact on schools is complex, with far reaching consequences for the educational system.

While Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond highlighted the broader effects of teacher turnover on labor market imbalances and school staffing, it's important to analyze the specific factors that drive these decisions. Building on this understanding of the

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systemic impact of teacher turnover, Aulia and Haerani (2022) conducted a more focused analysis to identify the key factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions. Their research sheds light on the following factors that play a vital role in teacher retention and turnover:

- Salary and Benefits
- Working Conditions
- School Culture
- Support and Collaboration
- Personal and Family Considerations (Aulia & Haerani, 2022).

The impact of salary and benefits on teacher retention is a key concern that has been well documented in educational research. Salary disparities between school districts can have a significant impact on retention. According to Aulia and Haerani (2022), teachers who feel they are underpaid or receive insufficient benefits are more likely to look for other employment. In addition, Aulia and Haerani (2022) also noted the direct correlation between teachers' perceptions of their compensation packages and their likelihood of seeking alternative employment, emphasizing the importance of competitive salaries in retaining qualified educators. This relationship between compensation and retention is further elaborated by Podolsky et al. (2016) who provide detailed insights into the effects of teacher salaries:

Teachers' salaries affect the supply of teachers, including distribution of teachers across districts, and the quality and quantity of individuals preparing to be teachers...Of public-school teachers who left the profession in 2012 and said they would consider returning, 67% rated an increase in salary as extremely important

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to their decision to return. Teachers in high demand fields such as mathematics and science are especially responsive to salary differences in their decisions to remain in teaching because of the opportunity costs associated with the higher-paying jobs available to them. (p. v)

Building on the significance of salary and benefits, it is important to recognize that financial compensation is one aspect of what influences teacher retention. Another factor noted in Aulia and Haerani's (2022) research that plays an important role in a teacher's decision-making process is the overall work environment. "Working conditions that are present in schools are other very important factors that dictate teacher retention. The problems revealed in this study as key concerns to the teachers including, overcrowded classes, inadequate resources, and excessive paperwork" (Aulia & Haerani, 2022, pp. 58-59).

While a positive school environment can foster teacher retention, research has shown that negative workplace conditions can have the opposite effect. Based on the findings from Aulia and Haerani (2022):

The culture of competitiveness and lack of support from their fellow teachers in school makes teachers lose morale and finally puts them off teaching...the social cost of a toxic work environment because it injures staff especially the teachers, making them thus high turnover. (p. 59)

Research has consistently shown that the school environment has a critical role in teachers' job satisfaction and their decision to remain in the field of education. Evidence indicates that school-working conditions significantly influence both student achievement and teacher retention rates. Studies have demonstrated that administrative support plays a

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key role in teacher satisfaction and turnover (Balow, 2021). According to Sutcher et al. (2019 as cited in Balow, 2021) when school leadership fails to provide adequate support, clear direction, and recognition, teacher turnover rates can increase dramatically, reaching up to 25% compared to schools with supportive administration. The research emphasizes that workplace environment and classroom conditions should be considered factors in addressing teacher attrition alongside other variables that affect educational outcomes (Ramos & Hughes, 2020, as cited in Balow, 2021).

The degree of support and collaboration among educators has a significant impact on teacher turnover and retention rates in school districts. The relationship emphasizes the importance of fostering a positive and collaborative working environment in the school setting. The study found that, “[p]romoting proper relationships and cooperation between the teachers in a school...are the major approaches for recruitment and retention of teachers” (Aulia & Haerani, 2022, p. 62). Through fostering a supportive and collaborative environment, schools can improve teacher retention rates, which can lead to more stable and effective educational institutions. As researched extensively by Balow (2021), the impact of support structures on teacher retention is well-documented in academic literature.

Further research indicates that teacher retention is strongly influenced by three main factors: administrative support, peer mentoring, and principal effectiveness. Teachers in public schools who receive strong administrative support (Boyd et al., 2011) and mentoring from qualified peers like coaches demonstrate higher retention rates (Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008; Redding & Smith, 2016). Additionally, principals who provide effective support and guidance contribute to increased teacher satisfaction and

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lower turnover rates (Grissom et al., 2012). The principal's perceived competencies play a crucial role in teachers' decisions to remain in their positions (Boyd et al., 2011; Stockard & Lehman, 2004).

Balow's findings reinforce the importance of creating supportive structures within schools, from the top-down (administrative support and effective leadership) to peer-to-peer interactions (mentoring and collaboration). These findings also highlight the multifaceted nature of teaching retention, showing that it is not only about collaboration among teachers but also the quality of leadership and the support systems in place.

Balow's research exposed the complex factors that influence teacher retention, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach that includes both administrative support and peer collaboration. This perspective on teacher retention aligns closely with more extensive research in the field. Podolsky et al. (2016) examined this issue, highlighting the importance of administrative support in teachers' career decisions. Their research reveals:

The quality of administrative support is often the top reason teachers identify for leaving or staying in the profession, often more important than salaries...Research identifies three major factors in school leadership that contribute to teachers' decisions about whether to stay in teaching. First, teachers are more likely to remain in teaching when they feel supported by administrators. Support from administrators can take many forms, including providing emotional, environmental, and instructional support. (p. 39)

The final factor determined by the research from Aulia and Haerani (2022) is that personal and family considerations also play a significant role in these decisions.

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Teachers with young children or other family responsibilities may be more likely to leave for more accommodating work hours or locations. Personal circumstances, such as relocation, can influence a teacher's decision to leave their current position. According to Aulia and Haerani (2022):

Teachers who have childcare responsibilities prefer schools that offer working conditions that are flexible so that they can be able to handle their work as well as their family responsibilities; hence if a school does not offer such conditions, then most teachers will leave, this explains why attrition rate is high among teachers with young children or other responsibilities. (p. 55)

The personal and family considerations noted in the research by Aulia and Haerani (2022) demonstrated the complexity between teachers' professional lives and their personal circumstances. While these factors are critical in understanding individual teachers' decisions to stay or leave, they also point to a broader context of community and family connections that can influence teacher retention. For instance, the study by Berry et al. (2019) found that:

Our analyses pointed to the important role that community support and parent engagement play in teacher retention as well as school performance. Among the most important survey item predicting teacher retention are those associated with parent or guardian engagement with the school – being informed by the school and teachers, being involved, and being engaged in decision making-and with community support for the teachers and the school. (p. 19)

High rates of teacher turnover, even in schools with strong family and community engagement efforts, create significant disruptions that ultimately cascade down to student

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learning. While strong family and community engagement can positively influence teacher retention through a supportive school culture, many schools will continue to struggle with teacher turnover. This persistent challenge of retaining quality teachers, despite supportive community partnerships, directly impact classroom stability and instructional continuity, which are two factors that research has consistently linked to student achievement.

### **Impact on Student Achievement**

The revolving door of educators extends far beyond impacting just teachers and school operations-it significantly affects the students left behind. When faced with constant teacher turnover, students lose opportunities to build lasting relationships with educators who understand their individual learning needs, cultural backgrounds, and academic growth trajectories. As teachers depart, they take with them institutional knowledge and instructional expertise, ultimately compromising students' educational progress and academic achievement. According to Hanushek et al. (2016), "It is widely believed that teacher turnover adversely affects the quality of instruction in urban schools serving predominately disadvantaged children, and a growing body of research investigates various components of turnover effects" (p. 132).

A study by Ronfeldt et al. (2013) provides empirical data quantifying this relationship. Their findings stress the consequences of teacher attrition. According to the authors:

This study finds some of the first empirical evidence for a direct effect of teacher turnover on student achievement. Results suggest that teacher turnover has a significant and negative impact on student achievement in both math and ELA.

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Moreover, teacher turnover is particularly harmful to the achievement of students in school with large populations of low-performing and Black students. (p. 30)

The study's findings show how teacher turnover affects student performance, specifically in math. Ronfeldt et al. (2013) quantified the impact revealing a decrease in student achievement correlation with an increased teacher turnover rate:

Student math scores are 8.2% to 10.2% of a standard deviation lower in years when there was 100% turnover as compared to years when there was no turnover at all. For a year in which turnover increases by one standard deviation (.17 for lagged attrition), this corresponds with a decrease in math achievement by approximately 2% of a standard deviation. (p. 18)

These findings are particularly concerning given the widespread teacher shortages across the United States, especially in mathematics. The shortage is highlighted in the research from Sutcher et al. (2019) which noted, "More than 40 states report shortages in several subject matter areas, such as mathematics, science, and special education, and more than 30 report shortages in a number of other fields ranging from career technical education to bilingual education" (p. 5). Specifically, in the 2017-18 school year, 47 states and DC reported mathematics teacher shortages, while 43 states reported science teacher shortages. This shortage crisis is further illustrated by the 2015-16 estimates indicating a national teacher deficit between 47,000 and 80,000 teachers, suggesting that the negative impacts on student achievement observed by Ronfeldt et al. (2013) may be widespread and persistent across many school districts.

Research provided by Hanushek et al. (2016) confirms that less effective teachers are more likely to leave schools, particularly those serving disadvantaged students, they

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also express the positive selection effect does not necessarily translate into improved educational outcomes. Their analysis reveals several items through which teacher attrition can negatively impact the quality of instructions, even when underperforming teachers are the ones leaving. As Hanushek et al. (2016) explain:

Even in the presence of negative selection out of schools, teacher departures may adversely affect the quality of instruction through a number of channels. First, turnover may reduce the amount of accumulated general and specific human capital: in the Lone Star District, roughly one third of teachers new to a school have no prior teaching experience... Third, turnover may lead to shuffling of teachers among grades, and Ost (2014) finds that movement into a grade not taught in the prior year tends to lower value-added. (p.140)

Research by Miller and Youngs (2021) highlights how high teacher turnover creates a challenging cycle in schools. When experienced educators leave, schools typically fill these positions with new, inexperienced teachers who have not yet developed the same level of instructional expertise as their veteran colleagues. This pattern means students in high-turnover schools receive consistently lower quality instruction compared to students in schools that retain their teachers longer.

The negative impact of teacher turnover extends beyond the loss of experienced educators or disruptions to grade-level assignments. The consequences for student learning can be significant when teachers leave mid-year. This point is illustrated by recent research that quantifies the amount of instructional time lost due to teacher attrition. According to Macro Learning (2018), “One Vanderbilt study found that ‘losing a teacher during the school year is linked with a loss of between 32 and 72 instructional

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days,’ which equated to one sixth to nearly half of the school year” (para. 33). The study reveals the severe educational consequences of mid-year teacher turnover, with students losing the equivalent of 32-72 days of instruction-representing between one-sixth to nearly half an academic year of learning time. The findings from Vanderbilt quantifies how disruptive teacher departures can be to student academic progress.

The consequences of teacher turnover extend beyond what many researchers initially anticipated. While it’s natural that students directly affected by teacher changes would experience negative impacts, recent studies have discovered a more prevalent effect throughout the school community itself. This far-reaching impact is highlighted by Macro Learning (2018), which notes:

The most surprising part of the study on New York elementary schools was not the direct negative effect of teacher turnover on students in grade-levels with high turnover, but the indirect effect on students who weren't in those grades.

In that line of reasoning, substituting effective teachers with effective teachers (or ineffective teachers with ineffective teachers) should not have an effect on the school at large. However, the study found that ‘there is a disruptive effect of turnover beyond changing the composition in teacher quality, thereby impacting the achievement of all students in high turnover schools. The explanation for this widespread effect lies in the burden on the teachers who stay, often called ‘bystander teachers’ or ‘stayers.’ (para. 37-38)

While the negative impacts of teacher turnover on student achievement are noted in research, there are other factors that contribute to this turnover. Some of the measures implemented to improve student performance may exacerbate the problem of teacher

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attrition. A study by Berry et al. (2019) noted the relationship between student assessment practices and teacher retention.

It is worth noting that having student assessment data available to impact instruction has a negative association with teacher retention. It may be clear that schools with a strong focus on assessment are those in which there is a significant pressure to raise scores – often in low-scoring schools that serve concentrations of students in poverty. This pressure may encourage or be coincidentally associated with higher teacher attrition. In the national Schools and Staffing Surveys, the most frequently cited reason for leaving the profession in 2012, during the No Child Left Behind Era, was dissatisfaction with student testing and accountability, cited by 25% of teachers who left. (p. 7)

The intense focus on high-stakes testing and accountability measures, particularly in schools serving students from low-income backgrounds, has created an environment where teachers feel overwhelmed by data-driven pressures rather than supported in their practice. This assessment of heavy culture, while intended to improve student outcomes, appears to be driving experienced educators from the profession. To address this challenge and better support teacher retention, schools must shift toward more balanced approaches to professional development that emphasize teacher growth and instructional effectiveness beyond test scores.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development plays a significant role in enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge, ultimately improving the quality of education. However, its impact extends beyond only improving teaching practices. Effective professional development can also

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influence teacher retention rates. As educators feel more supported and equipped to handle classroom challenges, they are more likely to remain committed to their profession. Berry et al. (2019) stated, "Professional learning, properly structured, positively influences teacher retention and the kind of collective efficacy necessary for long-term school improvement" (p. 13).

Smylie et al. (2001) reported on the Chicago Annenberg Research Project, a five-year study examining the activities and outcomes of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. Their study conceptualized professional development as a broad spectrum of learning opportunities for teachers, encompassing both structured and unstructured experiences. These ranged from formal training sessions provided by schools and districts to informal peer learning, daily classroom experiences, and independent study initiatives that teachers pursue on their own.

Based on a thorough review of Smylie et al. (2001), the document does not contain any specific analysis or discussion of the impact on "stayers" - teachers who remain at their schools long-term - as this was not a focus area of the research study. This study examined how different elements of professional development, including frequency of participation, content exposure and pedagogical quality related to teachers' instructional practices and school improvement efforts in Chicago.

The importance of professional development in supporting and retaining teachers is critical in the early stages of an educator's career. This can be addressed through a teacher induction program. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Massachusetts [DESE], 2020) notes a teacher induction program is, "To provide a systematic structure of support for beginning teachers" (para. 1). A teacher

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induction program serves as a bridge between pre-service preparation and full-time teaching, offering structured support and guidance to novice educators during their first years in the profession.

According to the Massachusetts (DESE) (2020), “A teacher induction program can help new teachers improve practice, learn professional responsibilities, and ultimately affect student learning” (para. 8). Supporting this assertion with empirical evidence, Podolsky et al. (2016), states, “The research on these programs shows that well-designed induction programs for beginning teachers lead to teachers staying in the profession at higher rates, accelerated professional growth among new teachers, and improved student learning” (p. 34).

Teacher induction programs are designed to address unique challenges faced by new teachers, providing them with resources, mentorship, and professional development opportunities. According to Miller and Youngs (2021), the multiple demands on first-year teachers (FYT) underscore the importance of comprehensive support systems:

When FYTs enter a new school, their workload can be overwhelming and impact their retention decisions (Ingersoll, 2021; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). They have to acclimate to the responsibilities of being a teacher of record, including leading a classroom, learning and implementing the school's curriculum, learning the school's processes and policies, and engaging in social and professional relationships with their teaching colleagues as well as other school personnel. (p. 7)

To address these challenges, many schools have implemented induction programs, though their comprehensiveness varies. According to Podolsky et al. (2016):

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Approximately 84% of first year teachers reported that they participated in an induction program in a 2011-12 nationally representative of teachers. However, when asked about their participation in specific elements of induction, 73% reported receiving mentoring, 78% reported receiving regular supportive communication with principals and administrators, 64% reported receiving seminars or classes for beginning teachers, 58% reported receiving common planning time with teachers in their subject, and 12% reported receiving a reduced teaching schedule. (p. 34)

According to Van Sandt Allen (2013), “[t]he advantages of strong induction programs are well documented, especially regarding teacher retention (e.g., Johnson, 2004). Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) found that the more induction components teachers received during their first year, the lower the attrition rates” (p. 77). The study’s results express the potential benefits of continued university involvement in teacher development post-graduation. Van Sandt Allen (2013) noted, “Findings suggest that university support of graduates around curriculum writing during the induction years may positively affect aspects of teacher development and retention” (p. 87).

The importance of structured support for new teachers have been recognized by educational policymakers across the country. An example of this is the policies implemented by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Acknowledging the fundamental nature of a teacher’s early years in the profession and the potential impact on both teacher retention and student outcomes, PDE has taken specific steps to ensure comprehensive support for new educators. Beginning for the 2024-2025 school year, PDE will require school districts to implement meaningful professional development

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programs through a two-year induction plan and provide on-going support to new teachers as they navigate their first few years in the field of education or those transitioning to a new district. Based on the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2023) guidelines:

A high-quality Educator Induction Plan (EIP) is an essential first step to facilitate entry into the education profession and the teaching of Pennsylvania's high academic standards. (para. 1)

Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year (SY), the length of the EIP must be a minimum of two school years; however, the school entity may choose a longer period. The regulations require that induction plans be updated every six years. (para. 6)

In addition to a minimum two-year induction program, the Educator Induction Program (EIP) should incorporate professional development activities that cover essential content. According to PDE (2023), the required professional development content and topics include:

- Develop Teacher Competency
- Increase Student Learning
- Professional Ethics Program Framework Guidelines (Chapter 49)
- Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education Competencies (Chapter 49)
- Introduction to Educator Effectiveness

One of the most significant components of an effective induction program is the assignment of mentor teachers to support new educators. According to the PDE (2023), a mentor teacher is, "a certified teacher recognized for instructional leadership and their

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ability to work collaboratively on development of job-embedded knowledge and skills" (para. 27). Research has consistently shown that mentoring can play a pivotal role in helping novice teachers navigate the challenges in their initial years. Ingersoll and Smith's (2004) research identified key support systems that significantly increased first-year teacher retention. Their findings revealed that new teachers were more likely to remain at their schools when they had subject-specific mentorship, shared planning periods with colleagues in their content area, regular collaborative opportunities with other teachers, and connections to external teaching networks. These structured support mechanisms proved to be crucial factors in reducing early-career teacher turnover. Noting the implementation of mentors to new teachers, Lee et al. (2023) expressed:

This practical and effective strategy can assist a new teacher in forming a connection with a veteran staff member. The mentor can also lessen some of the new teacher's stress by being available to answer questions about acceptable practices in the school environment. (p. 57)

Building on this understanding, Sutcher et al. (2019) confirmed that structured mentoring and induction programs not only boost teacher retention rates but also enhance new teachers' confidence, effectiveness, and pedagogical abilities in the classroom. "Research shows that mentoring and induction programs improve retention rates for new teachers, as well as their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills" (Sutcher et al. 2019, p. 28).

The impact of mentoring extends beyond individual teacher development to influence the broader school culture. Recent studies have highlighted how effective

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mentoring relationships can foster a more collaborative and supportive professional environment. As Dy and Sumayao (2024) report:

According to the research by Moor et al. (2005), mentoring connections enhanced cooperation and job happiness, resulting in a culture of professional growth and support in participating institutions. The school's culture governs the success of mentoring, and the perceived support of mentors is correlated with the support of colleagues. (p. 33)

Drawing on their research of teacher retention patterns, Miller and Youngs (2021) identified mentorship as one of several key factors that influence new teachers' success and longevity in the profession. Miller and Youngs (2021) expressed:

Principals and district administrators may want to explore ways to help teachers develop strong bonds with each other. For example, they can enact policies that promote team-building activities over the summer or during the school year that enable FYTs to develop productive relationships with their teaching colleagues (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). These activities can also include formal mentors and induction programs and in-service professional development programs (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). (p. 8)

The benefits of an induction program extend beyond supporting new teachers, offering advantages to veteran educators and the entire school community. These programs can serve as a catalyst for professional growth and collaboration across all experience levels. Macro Learning (2020) emphasized how induction programs serve multiple purposes within schools. These initiatives extend beyond just supporting new

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teachers – they create opportunities for experienced educators to examine their own practice while fostering schoolwide unity around educational improvement. Furthermore, these programs help elevate the teaching profession collectively by cultivating a collaborative environment where all educators can grow and learn together.

While a structured professional development and induction program provide essential support for teachers, more importantly those new to the profession or district, the learning process for educators is an ongoing process. Recognizing this, many school districts are electing to utilize more collaborative, sustained models of professional growth. Professional learning communities (PLCs) serve as a natural extension and enhancement of traditional professional development efforts. According to the research Burrus (2011), a professional learning community is, “An extended learning opportunity to foster collaborative learning among colleagues within a particular work environment or field. It is often used in school to organize teachers into working groups” (p. 15).

While formal professional development programs might introduce new concepts of methodologies, PLCs provide a platform for teachers to explore these ideas in depth, adapt them to their specific content, and receive real-time feedback from colleagues. According to Nevills (2003, as cited in Burrus, 2011, p. 37), "Adults tend to learn best when they practice, are engaged and interact with colleagues." The potential of PLCs as a vehicle for teacher growth and school enhancement has been recognized in educational research. Prenger et al. (2017) highlights this perspective noting, “Teacher participation in professional learning communities (PLC's) is therefore considered a promising way of providing professional development and supporting school improvement” (p. 77). This view of PLCs aligns closely with broader conceptions of effective professional

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development. The characteristics of high-quality professional learning outlined by Smylie et al. (2001) noted many of the collaborative and improvement-focused aspects of successful PLCs. In their study of Chicago Schools, Smylie and colleagues identified several features of professional development:

High quality professional development is sustained, coherently focused, and followed-up. It involves collaborative work, learning with other teachers. It relates to the needs of students and to school improvement goals. It provides teachers exposure to content related to improvement sought. Finally, it provides enough time for teachers to think carefully about, try out, and evaluate new ideas in their classrooms. (p. 59)

The parallels between these descriptions underscore how PLCs, when implemented effectively, can embrace the essential elements of high-quality professional development through on-going collaboration, a focus on student needs and school goals, along with providing teachers with opportunities to apply and reflect on new practices.

While professional learning communities provide structured collaborative opportunities, affinity groups offer another targeted approach to support teacher growth and belonging. Unlike traditional PLCs that typically focus on curriculum and instruction, affinity groups create intentional spaces for teachers who share common identities, experiences, or interests to connect, reflect, and support one another. These groups can complement existing professional development structures while addressing unique needs of specific teacher populations. According to the New York State Library (2024), “An affinity group is a group of people linked by a common purpose, ideology,

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identity. Affinity groups play a vital role in ensuring an inclusive environment where all are valued, included, and empowered to succeed" (para. 1).

While affinity groups can provide valuable support for underrepresented teachers, their effectiveness may depend on the implementation and integration within the broader school or district structure. Research on affinity groups in corporate settings offer insights that could be applied to educational contexts. Chen et al. (2024) notes:

Work on affinity groups within companies suggests that formal recognition and provision of resources to the affinity group by the organization may help affinity members feel recognized and valued broadly (Van Aken et al., 1994). In addition, individuals in an affinity group who have opportunities to work to solve problems and specific issues within the organization, identify training needs, or work to provide emotional support for their members may, 1) feel a greater sense of contributing to the broader group, and 2) have opportunities to improve the overall organization structure in ways that benefit their group. (p. 14)

Research has shown that creating dedicated spaces for teachers of color to connect and support one another can play a vital role in their professional development and wellbeing. As Scott and Proffitt (2021) explain, "Such groups are an increasingly used tool for cultivating a diverse teacher workforce, including providing support for reducing trauma and supporting teacher candidates' social, emotional, personal and professional needs" (p. 19). This insight is supported by evidence showing that, "The development of racial affinity groups has been linked to increased productivity of teacher candidates of color during their preparation programs" (Scott and Proffitt, 2021, p. 19).

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Talbert-Johnson and Tillman (1999) researched the challenges faced by minority faculty members in higher education institutions. To address these issues, one proposal included mentorship programs as a potential solution. This approach aligns with the concept of affinity groups but focused specifically on pairing junior minority faculty with more experienced colleagues. As Talbert-Johnson and Tillman (1999) suggest in their article:

We believe that, where possible, entry-level minority faculty should be paired with minority faculty in their respective departments. When this is not possible, junior faculty members should be *connected* with senior faculty in other departments, schools, or colleges within the institution. Such relationships have the potential to provide both mentor support (i.e., helping junior faculty become familiar with the institution's resources, procedures, and expectations) and the emotional challenges to one's personal and professional self-image... (p. 204)

The concept of creating multiple support structures for underrepresented groups in professional settings aligns with current research findings on effective strategies for inclusion. As Chen et al. (2024) noted:

Overall, the research on both affinity groups and counterspaces suggest that organizations may be most successful in supporting underserved members by creating multiple and varied groups, structures, and spaces that members can elect to participate in. By creating diverse structures of support and diverse affinity groups within a broader group, we may be able to increase inclusion across a professional community and strengthen belonging for individuals from a variety of backgrounds. (pp. 14-15)

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These perspectives suggest that for teacher affinity groups to be most impactful, school and district leaders should consider not only allowing these groups to form, but also actively supporting them with resources and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to school-wide initiatives. By empowering affinity group members to address organizational challenges, schools may simultaneously enhance teachers' sense of belonging and leverage diverse perspectives to drive positive change. This interconnection between teacher support structures and organizational improvement points to a broader consideration: the fundamental role of school climate in shaping both educator experiences and institutional outcomes.

### **School Climate**

School climate is significantly influenced by leadership practices, particularly those that foster collaboration and shared decision-making. According to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (2024), school climate is defined as, “[t]he quality and character of school life and is based on patterns of student, parent, and staff experiences and perceptions of school life. It also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures” (para. 1).

Effective principals fundamentally shape a positive school environment that supports both teacher growth and retention. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) presented an executive summary as a comprehensive guide to understanding the multifaceted role of effective school principals. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (n.d.) emphasizes that educational leaders play an essential role in student achievement through both direct and indirect actions. Educational leaders do this by fostering environments that are simultaneously challenging

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and supportive of student learning. Leaders impact student success through multiple channels including teacher development and support, creating positive work environments, strategic resource allocation, and developing effective organizational systems and policies. While these leadership activities occur outside the classroom, they significantly influence the quality of instruction and learning that takes place within it. The guide is organized around three fundamental pillars: Building Culture, Empowering People, and Optimizing Systems. These pillars represent the "what," "how," and "why" of effective principal leadership, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding and implementing effective school leadership practices. This executive summary provides school leaders with evidence-based strategies and practical approaches to create and maintain successful learning communities while supporting the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of both students and staff.

The concepts presented by the National Association of Elementary School Principals is also reinforced by Berry et al. (2019), who emphasize the importance of distributed leadership in creating favorable conditions for teachers. Berry et al. (2019) noted, "Our research and that of others demonstrates that principals who understand how to create conditions for distributed leadership in their schools and who value and know how to involve teachers in shared decision-making have a strong, positive impact on both teacher effectiveness and teacher retention" (p. 27).

Organizations are increasingly recognizing the far-reaching impact of employee retention on their overall success and workplace dynamics. As stated by Santhosh (2024), "Secondly, employee retention is essential for maintaining a positive company culture. When employees feel valued and secure in their roles, they tend to be more engaged and

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motivated" (para. 5). Expanding on this notion, Santhosh (2024) expressed, "A positive company culture where values align with those of employees promotes a sense of belonging and an employee engagement solution. Team-building activities, social events and open communication contribute to a thriving culture" (para. 21). This concept is further highlighted from Maurer (2024), "Employees who know what to expect from their company's culture and work environment make better decisions that are more aligned with the accepted practices of the company" (p. 2).

Balow (2021) notes that researchers have identified specific workplace conditions associated with teacher attrition. Analysis of school environments has revealed several critical factors that directly influence a teacher's decision to remain in or leave their position. These institutional elements include:

- instructional leadership
- school culture
- collegial relationships
- time for collaboration and planning
- teachers' decision-making power
- experiences with professional development
- facilities and resources
- lack of parental support or involvement (Balow, 2021, para. 78)

According to Boyd et al. (2011), whose research emphasizes the importance of administrative support in teacher retention decisions stated, "We find that teachers' perceptions of the school administration has by far the greatest influence on teacher-

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retention decisions" (p. 1). This finding is further supported by the statistical analysis in the study, which notes:

A standard deviation increase in a teacher's assessment of the administration decreases his or her likelihood of transferring by approximately 44 percent relative to staying in the same school and decreases his or her likelihood of leaving teaching in NYC by approximately 28 percent relative to staying in the same school. (pp. 14-15)

Effective leadership plays a key role in teacher retention, a key factor in maintaining a stable and high-quality educational environment. This is highlighted by the findings of Podolsky et al. (2016), who notes:

Second, teachers are more likely to remain in their school and in the profession when school leaders effectively communicate with them...The study's findings and the teachers' comments highlight the importance of principals setting explicit, high (and reasonable) expectations for teachers, and then providing positive reinforcement when teachers achieve the expectations. (p. 40)

While many factors contribute to workplace satisfaction, effective leadership stands out as a cornerstone of employee engagement and productivity. Santhosh (2024) states, "Skilled and supportive leaders foster a positive work environment. They provide clear communication, guidance, and mentorship, helping employees feel valued and motivated. Effective leaders practice transparent communication, keeping their team members informed about important decisions, changes, and company goals" (para. 10).

The most significant predictor of teacher turnover is poor administrative support. According to Balow (2021), "Teacher attrition is greatly affected by the degree and

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quality of administrative support in teachers' decisions about remaining in the classroom" (para. 43). In schools where administrators fail to encourage staff, communicate a clear vision, or manage effectively, turnover rates increase to nearly 25% - more than double the rate of schools with supportive administrators (Sutcher et al., 2019, as cited in Balow, 2021). Given these findings, Ramos and Hughes (2020, as cited in Balow, 2021) argue that classroom climate and working conditions should be more actively considered alongside other important variables in discussions about teacher attrition.

### **Social Emotional Impact on Teachers**

While much attention has been given to students' social and emotional needs in recent years, an often-overlooked aspect in education is the social and emotional well-being of the teachers themselves. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2024), Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined as:

SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (para. 1)

As the core of the educational system, teachers face unique challenges and stressors that can significantly impact their job satisfaction and, consequently, retention rates. As illustrated by Lee et al. (2023, p. 53), teacher stress and burnout lead to multiple negative consequences, including social-emotional challenges, decreased work

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performance, elevated turnover rates, and premature career exits, as documented in research by Brunsting et al. (2022).

According to Jones et al. (2013), "Studies suggest that teachers today are more stressed and unhappy than ever before and that more teachers are leaving the profession" (p. 3). This trend continues as evident in a more recent study, conducted by Lee et al. (2023) highlighted the note of teachers leaving the profession:

Yet far too many teachers experience high levels of stress and job dissatisfaction, prompting them to give up on their goals and quit the profession earlier than planned. In a recent U.S. survey, the National Education Association [NEA] (2022) reported that over half (55%) of current educators are ready to leave the profession. (p. 53)

Recent research has highlighted the growing problem of stress in the teaching profession. As the article states, "The latest MetLife Survey of the American Teacher found unprecedeted levels of stress and dissatisfaction among teachers and principals, with just over half of teachers reporting "great stress at least several days a week" (Jones et al. 2013, p. 1). Ferren (2021) notes, "Yet comprehensive SEL training for educators is currently not widely available. All states include some SEL competency training for teachers in their certification requirements." Ferren (2021) explains that teachers are expected to foster students' social-emotional learning (SEL) despite lacking adequate professional development in this area themselves. SEL instruction is fundamental to K-12 education as it enhances student conduct, academic performance, and overall school environment. The need for teachers to provide SEL support is particularly significant

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since school psychologists, who have specialized training in this domain, are currently overburdened.

While the impact of teacher stress and burnout on educators themselves is significant, it is important to recognize that these issues extend beyond the individual teacher. The effects ripple through the classroom, influencing the quality of instruction and, ultimately, student outcomes. Lee et al. (2023) highlighted findings from Herman et al.'s 2017 study demonstrating the direct relationship between teacher stress and classroom outcomes. Their research revealed that educators experiencing high stress and burnout delivered lower quality instruction, which correlated with decreased student academic performance and increased behavioral challenges. According to Jones et al. (2013 as cited in Backett et al., 2010) research, teachers' social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies play a significant role in shaping teacher-student relationships. Their findings emphasize that educators who effectively manage their emotions tend to demonstrate more positive attitudes and greater satisfaction in their work.

Teacher self-efficacy plays a vital role in education, affecting not only classroom performance but also job satisfaction and longevity in the profession. This connection between a teacher's belief in their own abilities and their overall well-being at work is supported by research. Lee et al. (2023), drawing from Heider's 2005 research, emphasized how peer coaching strengthens collegial bonds and fosters team unity among teachers. This collaborative approach enables educators to gain valuable insights into their teaching practice while enhancing their confidence and professional motivation. Looking into the factors influencing teacher retention and job satisfaction, it's important to consider the following finding by Lee et al. (2023), "For example, Savas and

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colleagues (2014) showed that self-efficacy is positively related to job satisfaction and retention and negatively correlated with teacher burnout" (p. 58).

Understanding and addressing the social and emotional needs of educators is not only crucial for their personal wellbeing but also plays a vital role in maintaining a stable and effective teaching workforce. Santhosh (2024) states, "Employee well-being is paramount" (para. 23). Employee wellbeing initiatives, including mental health support and wellness programs, create a positive work environment that boosts retention. Santhosh (2024) further notes, "These factors intersect and weave together to create an environment where employees not only feel content but are also eager to remain committed to their organization" (para. 24). When employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to stay committed to the organization and contribute to its success. This investment in employee care is both ethically sound and strategically beneficial for business growth.

According to Ronfeldt et al. (2013) consistent staff is defined as certified teachers, "who remain in the same school one year to the next" (p. 31). As the research delves deeper into the complexities of education systems, it becomes increasingly clear that the well-being of teachers is not just a personal matter, but a fundamental pillar supporting the entire educational structure. The health and satisfaction of educators have far-reaching effects that extend beyond the individual classroom, influencing the stability and effectiveness of schools. Santhosh (2024) notes, "Offering mental health support, wellness programs, and a safe comfortable work environment creates a space where employees feel valued, cared for, and more likely to stay long-term" (para. 24). This approach aligns with the broader understanding of how teachers' social and emotional

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competencies impact the educational environment. According to Lee et al. (2023), “Teacher well-being plays a critical role in establishing acceptable levels of school staffing, maintaining teacher attendance, and retaining teachers over time” (p. 54).

### **Human Resources Impact**

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the importance of effective hiring practices cannot be overstated. The educators we bring into our schools and institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the minds of future generations. As such, the process of recruiting, selecting, and retaining high-quality teachers and administrators is crucial to the success of any educational system.

Effective hiring in education encompasses much more than simply filling vacant positions. It involves a strategic approach to identify candidates who not only possess the necessary qualifications and skills but also align with the institution's values and vision. This process requires a delicate balance of assessing academic credentials, teaching experience, and the often-intangible qualities that make an exceptional educator. As explained by Andersson (2024), “Teacher hiring, as a process, can therefore be viewed as a valuable study object in better understanding how teacher quality might be constructed in educational practice” (p. 1).

Research has consistently shown that early hiring practices in education can yield significant advantages for schools and educators alike. As Papay and Qazilbash (2021) note, “When hiring is done early, students and teachers benefit. In February and March, a larger, diverse pool of strong teachers is actively applying for jobs” (p. 2). Beyond improving student outcomes, early hiring practices have been shown to have a positive impact on teacher retention. This connections between timely hiring and increased

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teacher longevity are highlighted by Papay and Qazilbash (2021) who explain that early hiring:

Increases retention rates: Hiring delays and rushed, information-poor processes are bad for teachers. In addition to being less effective in general, teachers hired without a clear job preview are less likely to find a good job match, leading them to be poor fits with their organizations. (p. 2)

This insight expressed by Papay and Qazilbash (2021) underscores the importance of thoughtful, well-timed hiring processes in creating stable and effective teacher environments.

The challenge of staffing classrooms with qualified educators extends beyond retaining current teachers. A key component of addressing teacher shortages involves actively recruiting new talent into the profession. Effective teacher recruitment strategies are essential for building a channel of educators and ensuring a steady influx of passionate, skilled professionals into the teaching workforce. According to Gusdorf (2008), recruitment is, “The process of attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers with appropriate qualifications, to apply for jobs with an organization” (p. 1). In addition, Santhosh (2024) explains recruitment:

[i]nvolves hiring the right people from the start. A thoughtful and comprehensive recruitment process ensures that candidates who align with the company’s culture and values are brought on board. By recruiting talented employees who are a good fit you increase the chance of long-term retention. (para. 13)

A report entitled, *Eight Questions on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: What Does the Research Say?* was compiled by the Education Commission of the States (ECS)

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with support from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Education. This report crafted by Allen (2005) is the second in a series of three reports focusing on teaching quality research. One area of focus within the report was to determine the impact of compensation when recruiting and retaining teachers. Allen (2005) noted, "The research provides a strong support for the conclusion that compensation plays a key role in the recruitment and retention of teachers. Not surprisingly, the research indicates that increasing compensation tends to increase the rate of teacher retention..." (p. 89).

This is further highlighted in the research from Podolsky et al. (2016), "As in every other occupation, salaries and perceived job security are factors influencing entry to teaching and the decision to remain" (p. 3). Compensation plays a critical role in attracting individuals to the teaching profession. In addition, Podolsky et al. (2016), also notes:

[h]igher salaries can expand the number of people seeking to enter teaching and those who are willing to stay. The converse is also true. Some potential teachers have been dissuaded from entering the profession because of the low status and pay. (p. 3)

Effective teacher recruitment goes beyond simply attracting candidates; it also involves implementing thorough and strategic hiring practices to ensure the right fit between educators and school districts. High-performing urban schools employ a comprehensive, multi-phase hiring process to ensure optimal teacher selection. This methodical approach includes resume screening, preliminary candidate assessment, principal interviews, classroom demonstrations with feedback sessions, and school-wide

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engagement opportunities where candidates interact with faculty and community members to evaluate mutual compatibility (Podolsky et al., 2016).

Recruiting teachers is only the first step in building a strong educational team. Once the qualified candidates are selected, the focus shifts to effective onboarding. As noted by Maurer (2024):

Onboarding is the process of integrating new employees into an organization. It includes the orientation process and opportunities for new hires to learn about the organization's structure, culture, vision, mission, and values. Onboarding can span one or two days of activities at some companies; others offer a more extensive series of activities spanning months. (para. 1)

The onboarding process ensures new teachers are smoothly integrated into the school culture and equipped with the tools they need to succeed in their roles.

According to Rockwood (2020), “An effective onboarding program is needed to transform a new hire from a nervous newbie into a fully integrated and productive team member. The best programs take considerable thought and planning” (para. 2). As noted in the research by Caldwell and Rutledge (2023) in reference to onboarding, “At many schools, the onboarding process is essentially limited to completing personnel forms and administrative paperwork” (p. 14). As noted through the recommendations by Rockwood (2020), an effective onboarding process extends well beyond the traditional completion of personnel paperwork:

For some organizations, onboarding and orientation are one and the same. But orientation is meant to be a one-time event, while onboarding is a process that should last at least 90 days. Orientation activities, such as completing new-hire

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paperwork and discussing benefits, are just a small part of what onboarding should entail. Depending on your company's size and needs, a successful onboarding program will likely include orientation, job-specific training, introductions, culture acclimation, and follow-ups. And it all starts the second a new hire commits to the job. (para. 6)

Research has demonstrated the significant impact of effective onboarding practices on employee outcomes. This was emphasized by Maurer's (2024) research noting, "Before implementing a formal onboarding program, employers should answer some key questions to attain team and upper management buy-in" (p. 1). The questions that should be examined include:

- How long will it last?
- What impression do you want new hires to walk away with at the end of the first day?
- What do new employees need to know about the culture and work environment?
- What role will HR play in the process?
- What about direct managers? Co-workers?
- What kind of goals do you want to set for new employees?
- How will you gather feedback on the program and measure its success? (Maurer, 2024, p. 1)

Research demonstrates that organizations implementing robust onboarding protocols experience significant benefits, with data showing an 82% increase in employee retention rates and a more than 70% boost in productivity levels when compared to organizations with inadequate onboarding practices (Laurano, 2015, as cited in Caldwell

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& Rutledge, 2023, p. 15). While these findings highlight the importance of onboarding in the corporate sector, similar benefits have been observed in academic settings. Research conducted by Williams-Smith (2017, as cited in Caldwell & Rutledge, 2023), for higher level educational institutions express, "[c]olleges and universities need to substantially upgrade the quality of new faculty onboarding and has noted that the failure to onboard new faculty effectively is a deterrent to faculty retention, faculty commitment, and the quality of student instruction" (p. 15).

To implement an effective onboarding process, organizations should consider a comprehensive approach that addresses various aspects of a new employee's integration. To create a tailor-made program, Osasumwen Arigbe, a Human Resources consultant, recommends that human resources professionals establish what the company can do to aid in the success of the employees. According to Rockwood (2020), Ms. Arigbe notes the list can incorporate any of the following recommendations:

- Sending a welcome e-mail and a welcome packet to a new employee before he or she starts.
- Identifying the new hire's technology needs.
- Setting up the new hire's workstation before his or her first day.
- Making a new-hire announcement to the team.
- Deciding who will greet the new hire on his or her first day.
- Selecting a buddy for the new hire.
- Identifying HR documents that need to be completed.
- Scheduling critical introductory meetings and events.

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Arranging regular check-in sessions with the new hire for at least the first three months (Rockwood, 2020, para. 9).

By implementing these comprehensive onboarding strategies, organizations can create a structured and welcoming environment for new hires, potentially increasing their chances of success and long-term retention. This systematic approach to onboarding goes beyond basic orientation and aims to fully integrate new employees into their roles and the company culture.

While effective onboarding sets the foundation for a new teacher's success, it is only the first step in a broader strategy to ensure long-term retention of quality educators. As schools and districts invest time and resources in bringing new teachers on board, they must also focus on creating an environment that encourages these professionals to remain committed to their roles and the institution.

School districts also need to implement comprehensive retention strategies to maintain and keep consistent staff. As research emphasizes from Keka HR (n.d.) a retention strategy is defined as, "A plan developed and implemented to reduce employee turnover, prevent attrition, increase retention and foster employee engagement" (para. 1). This deliberate approach to staff retention is essential for maintaining educational quality and institutional stability.

### **Teacher Retention**

Teacher retention is a critical issue facing educational institutions today, with far-reaching implications for student achievement, school stability, and resource allocation.

According to Sinha et al. (2022):

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Employee retention is a systematic effort by employers to build and maintain an atmosphere that encourages current workers to stay employed by following policies and procedures that adapt to their diverse needs. The percentage of employees who stay with the company is referred to as employee retention.

Employee retention means the practice of motivating workers to remain with the company for as late as necessary or until the job is executed. Employee retention refers to approaches and practices that organizations use to prevent employees from leaving their profession. (p. 126)

Stay interviews represent a proactive retention strategy and is defined as, "A structured discussion a leader conducts with an individual employee to learn specific actions the leader can take to strengthen the employee's engagement and retention within the organization" (Finnegan, 2018, para. 1). Within the field of education, a stay interview would be facilitated by an administrator with current teachers to understand what motivates them to remain at their school and what might cause them to leave.

According to Finnegan (2018), "The best outcomes happen when leaders are in the stay interview chair and hear directly from their employees how they wish to be managed for better engagement and retention" (para. 3).

According to McGuire (2024), "Studies have shown the benefits of a stay interview (Liu, 2021; Miles, 2023) and that they are more informative than exit interviews. Three critical aspects of stay interviews include employee motivation, concerns, and retention efforts" (p. 9). Research demonstrates that stay interviews, when properly executed, provide substantial benefits for both organizations and employees. Stay interviews serve as a powerful tool for strengthening workplace relationships and

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improving employee retention through several key mechanisms. Finnegan (2018) emphasizes that the supervisor-employee relationship fundamentally drives engagement and retention, with stay interviews providing supervisors a platform to explicitly communicate each employee's value to the organization. The approach also establishes clear accountability, as supervisors assume direct responsibility for retention and engagement outcomes, positioning them to actively drive improvements (Finnegan, 2018). The process creates meaningful dialogue where supervisors must actively listen and respond to employee input, fostering stronger connections that encourage employees to voice concerns before seeking external opportunities. Perhaps most significantly, Finnegan (2018) identifies that when supervisors demonstrate authentic listening and follow-through during stay interviews, they build trust, which he considers the most significant supervisory competency for enhancing both engagement and retention.

Additional research has identified several key components that work together to create effective teacher retention programs. Buerk (2022) presents a comprehensive framework built on five essential pillars for effective teacher retention and talent development. The first pillar emphasizes the importance of deliberate cultural design and strategic planning to ensure comprehensive teacher support throughout the school system. The second pillar focuses on establishing clear career advancement opportunities through well-structured compensation and incentive systems. Buerk (2022) further highlights that implementing evidence-based, integrated coaching systems significantly enhances job satisfaction and teacher retention. The fourth pillar centers on developing role-specific professional learning competencies, which helps streamline workloads and mitigate

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burnout. Finally, Buerk (2022) advocates for the integration of data platforms that connect teacher development initiatives with student performance and retention metrics.

Several alternative evidence-based strategies that contribute to successful teacher retention in K-12 education have emerged from research. Multiple studies have highlighted the critical role of administrative support, teacher autonomy, professional development, and comprehensive induction programs in reducing teacher attrition (Shuls & Flores, 2020).

A key finding in the literature emphasizes the essential role of school leadership. According to Shuls and Flores (2020), "As noted by Boyd et al. (2008), principals play a strong role in retention by providing recognition and support to teachers, working with staff members to meet curriculum standards, and encouraging professional collaboration" (p. 9). This administrative support is complemented by empowering teachers through shared decision-making. Based on Ingersoll's research (as cited in Shuls & Flores, 2020), schools that empower their teachers with greater autonomy and involvement in decision-making experience significantly lower teacher turnover rates. Specifically, the data showed that even a modest increase in teacher influence (one point on a six-point scale) corresponded to a 26% reduction in the likelihood of teacher departure.

Professional development and induction programs emerge as another major retention strategy. Studies noted by Grier and Holcombe (2008 as cited in Shuls and Flores, 2020) express, "teachers are more willing to engage and support the professional development and improvement process if they are tasked with helping create it" (p. 12). Research shows that new teachers who engage in comprehensive induction programs develop stronger instructional and classroom management capabilities (Sutcher et al.,

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2016, as cited in Shuls & Flores, 2020). These educators demonstrate enhanced skills across multiple teaching domains, including student engagement, lesson planning, questioning strategies, differentiated instruction, classroom climate, and behavior management.

Mentorship programs emerge as another vital component of comprehensive teacher retention efforts. Research by Shuls and Flores (2020) demonstrates that “Well-designed mentoring programs have been found to improve retention rates for new teachers, as well as their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, job satisfaction, classroom management, time management, problem-solving, and instructional skills” (p. 13). These structured mentoring relationships provide critical support during teachers’ formative early years in the profession.

Sutcher et al. (2019) examined the critical issue of teacher shortages in American education. To address this growing crisis, researchers emphasize the need for comprehensive policy reforms that target both recruitment and retention. Sutcher et al. (2019) expressed:

Productive policies could focus on both enhancing the supply of qualified teachers targeted to high-need fields and locations through training subsidies and high-retention pathways, and improving teacher retention, especially in hard-to-staff schools, through more effective mentoring, induction, working conditions, and career development. (p. 27)

Ultimately, the research suggests that successful teacher retention requires a holistic approach that creates an ecosystem of support. As Shuls and Flores (2020) conclude, “By focusing on creating a positive work environment, the district essentially

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kills two birds with one stone. They make the place more inviting for faculty and a better educational environment of students" (pp. 14-15). This finding underscores that effective retention strategies not only benefit teachers but contribute to overall school improvement and student success.

The extensive research presented in this literature review amplifies the critical nature of teacher attrition and retention in education. With national attrition rates hovering around 8% annually and approximately 500,000 teachers leaving their schools each year, the impact of teacher turnover extends far beyond individual classrooms. This widespread exodus of educators creates ripple effects throughout the educational system, affecting educational quality, student achievement, and institutional stability. Most concerning is that teacher turnover accounts for nearly 90% of annual teacher demand, with the loss of experienced educators compromising both institutional knowledge and vital mentorship opportunities for novice teachers. If attrition rates continue to increase, the number of quality mentors available in a school district may decrease. The research clearly demonstrates that teacher attrition is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including salary and benefits, working conditions, school climate, and most significantly, administrative support.

The social-emotional aspects of teaching and effective human resource practices emerge as key elements in addressing attrition. Teacher well-being directly impacts both retention and student outcomes, with high levels of stress and burnout contributing significantly to departure rates. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and affinity groups have proven effective in providing both emotional and professional support. Additionally, strategic hiring practices, comprehensive onboarding processes, and

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proactive retention tools like stay interviews allow administrators to address concerns before they lead to teacher departures. Schools that implement thorough hiring practices, including multiple steps to assess mutual fit, tend to see higher retention rates among their teachers.

The research indicates that addressing teacher attrition requires a holistic, systematic approach encompassing multiple components: compensation packages, supportive administrative leadership, comprehensive professional development opportunities, structured mentoring and induction programs, and attention to teacher well-being. Educational institutions must prioritize these evidence-based retention strategies, recognizing that investment in teacher retention yields significant returns on student achievement and overall school effectiveness. By understanding and addressing these complex factors that influence teacher attrition, educational leaders can work to foster environments that not only attract but also retain highly qualified educators, ultimately benefiting students, schools, and communities for generations to come.

This study's examination of certificated professional staff retention across two Pennsylvania school districts – Papillon and Border Collie – builds upon this established framework. Through the implementation of the Panorama Education Survey in the Papillon School District, this research will explore how teachers prioritize and perceive various retention factors, adding to our understanding of what motivates educators to maintain long-term commitments to their schools. This information will add to previous research emphasizing the importance of understanding teacher perspectives in developing effective retention strategies (Burek, 2022; Shuls & Flores, 2020).

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The Border Collie School District component of this study, utilizing the Educator Stay Survey, further develops the literature by examining specific factors that successfully retain teachers within a single school district. This granular evidence provides valuable insights into how theoretical frameworks manifest in practice, particularly within the unique context of Northeastern Pennsylvania's educational landscape.

The broader analysis of recruitment and retention strategies across Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 districts extends the existing literature by providing a regional perspective on retention approaches. This comprehensive view allows for the examination of how various districts implement and adapt retention strategies to their specific contexts, contributing to our understanding of the scalability and transferability of different retention approaches.

This research specifically addresses gaps in the literature regarding the practical implementation of retention strategies in rural and suburban Pennsylvania school districts. While previous studies have identified key components of teacher retention (Burek, 2022; Santhosh, 2024; Shuls & Flores, 2020), this study will provide a detailed examination of how these components operate within specific educational contexts. The multi-level analysis - from individual teacher perceptions to district-wide strategies to regional approaches - offers a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge on teacher retention.

This research study aims to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks of teacher retention and practical implementation strategies, providing valuable insights for educational leaders seeking to develop effective, sustainable approaches to maintaining

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their certificated professional staff. The findings from this research will contribute to the growing body of literature on teacher retention while providing practical, actionable insights for educational institutions facing similar challenges.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

The education system in Pennsylvania faces a growing crisis as teacher attrition rates continue to rise at an alarming pace. Teacher turnover generates negative effects throughout the educational system. High rates of teacher attrition often lead to an increase in inexperienced teachers within schools, which subsequently contributes to an overall decrease in teacher quality (Fuller, 2023). In addition, excessive turnover impedes the development of positive school climates and creates substantial barriers to effective teacher collaboration (Fuller, 2023).

Research conducted by Pennsylvania State University revealed that during the 2022-2023 school year, 9,587 K-12 teachers departed from their positions, representing a concerning 7.7% attrition rate across the state (Fuller, 2023). This exodus marks a significant acceleration in teacher departures as Fuller (2023) notes maintaining the previous year's attrition rate would have retained approximately 1,900 more educators in the profession. Against this backdrop of increasing instability, previous research has demonstrated that school districts must develop effective strategies to retain their certified teaching staff and identifies several key factors driving teacher turnover. Administrative support emerges particularly critical—teachers who perceive weak administrative support are more than twice likely to leave compared to those who feel strongly supported by administration (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) further note additional factors include dissatisfaction with testing and accountability pressures, limited career advancement opportunities, and challenging working conditions.

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Teacher preparation also significantly impacts retention. Teachers entering through alternative certification pathways experience 25% higher turnover rates than traditionally prepared teachers, even after controlling for school and student characteristics (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). This connection between preparation and retention highlights the importance of comprehensive teacher training.

The focus on retention directly impacts both student success and institutional stability, since maintaining a stable workforce of qualified educators creates consistency in the learning environment and reduces the costs and disruptions associated with high turnover rates. As Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) concluded in their research, "effectively retaining teachers is crucial to ensuring there are enough well-prepared and committed teachers to staff all of our nation's schools" (p. 34). By implementing targeted strategies that address key drivers of turnover, districts can strengthen their teacher workforce and ultimately improve educational outcomes for students. The literature review reinforced the importance of studying specific approaches that districts can implement to keep their teaching professionals.

When establishing a theoretical framework to guide this research, it is imperative to first operationalize the concept of teacher attrition through both quantitative and qualitative metrics that emerge from the body of empirical research. Within the field of education, teacher turnover, or teacher attrition, is defined as, "The percentage of teachers who leave their district or profession entirely" (Education Resource Strategies, 2024, para. 2). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) express, "A high rate of teacher attrition—that is, teachers leaving the profession—is a primary contributor to teacher shortages nationally" (p. 1).

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While Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond highlighted the broader effects of teacher turnover on labor market imbalances and school staffing, it's important to analyze the specific factors that drive these decisions. Building on this understanding of the systemic impact of teacher turnover, Aulia and Haerani (2022) conducted a more focused analysis to identify the key factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions. Their research sheds light on the following factors that play a vital role in teacher retention and turnover:

- Salary and Benefits
- Working Conditions
- School Culture
- Support and Collaboration
- Personal and Family Considerations (Aulia & Haerani, 2022).

Retaining school staff is an area that school districts need to prioritize, as it can lower employee turnover rates and provide a more stable, consistent educational environment for students. According to Ronfeldt et al. (2013) stated:

Where turnover is considered to have a disruptive organizational influence, all members of the school community are vulnerable, including staying teachers. In such disruptive accounts of turnover, even when leaving teachers are equally as effective as those who replace them, turnover can still impact students' achievement. (p. 7)

Based on the research from Ronfeldt et al. (2017), consistent staffing enhances student learning by fostering stable relationships, maintaining institutional knowledge, promoting efficient collaboration among teachers, minimizing classroom disruptions, and

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building stronger school-community connections. Stability of the workforce allows for more personalized instruction, continuity in educational approaches, and a supportive learning environment for students. Ronfeldt et al. (2017) expressed:

The findings indicate that turnover has a broader, harmful influence on student achievement since it can reach beyond just those students of teachers who left or those that replaced them...One possibility is that turnover negatively affects collegiality or relational trust among faculty; or perhaps turnover results in loss of institutional knowledge among faculty that is critical for supporting student learning. (p. 32)

This research study investigated the key factors that influence certified educators to maintain long-term employment within their school districts, focusing specifically on classroom teachers. The investigation examined both internal motivators, such as professional satisfaction and workplace culture, and external factors like compensation and professional development opportunities. By developing a comprehensive understanding of these retention drivers, district and school leaders can design evidence-based strategies that address teachers' core needs and professional aspirations. This targeted approach to retention enables districts to create sustainable solutions that not only keep experienced educators in the classroom but also foster an environment where high-quality teaching professionals can thrive throughout their careers.

### **Purpose**

The educational sector currently faces unprecedented challenges in maintaining a stable teaching workforce, making the study of teacher retention increasingly vital for the future of our schools. This researcher investigated the fundamental factors that influence

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teachers' decisions to remain employed in two specific Pennsylvania school districts. Through a mixed-methods investigative approach, this study examines the complex interplay of personal, professional, and institutional factors that contribute to teacher retention, while minimizing the potential biases inherent in single-method research designs.

The purpose of this study is threefold: first, to identify and analyze key factors that motivate teachers to maintain long-term employment within their current districts; second, to understand how these factors align with or differ from existing research on teacher retention; and third, to develop actionable insights that school districts can implement to strengthen their teacher retention strategies. By examining these areas through both quantitative and qualitative lenses, this research investigation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of teacher retention that bridges theoretical knowledge with practical application.

This research is particularly significant given Pennsylvania's recent surge in teacher attrition, offering timely insights that could help districts develop more effective retention strategies. The findings from this study will not only contribute to the broader body of knowledge on teacher retention but may also provide specific, implementable recommendations for educational leaders working to build and maintain stable, committed teaching teams in their schools.

### **Research Questions:**

1. What perceptions do certificated professional staff identify as important for them to remain as teachers within the Papillon School District as measured by the Panorama Education Survey?

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2. What factors contribute to the certificated professional staff staying in the Border Collie School District as measured by an Educator Stay Survey?
3. What recruitment and retention strategies have been adopted by other school districts within the Intermediate Unit #20 within the past five (5) years as measured by a District Perception Survey?

The research methodology employs three distinct but complementary questions that examine teacher retention from different angles, using specific measurement tools for each investigation. The first two questions focus on understanding retention factors within individual school districts, while the third question broadens the scope to examine successful strategies across a wider geographic region.

The first research question examines the Papillon School District through the Panorama Education Survey (Panorama Education, 2025), seeking to understand teachers' perceptions about what motivates them to stay. This question is particularly important because it focuses on current teachers' professional experiences and personal viewpoints, providing insight into the psychological and professional factors that contribute to their commitment to the district.

The second research question investigates similar themes within the Border Collie School District but uses a different measurement tool – the Educator Stay Survey (Urban Schools Human Capital Academy [USHCA], 2025). This parallel investigation allows for potential comparison between the two districts while acknowledging that different contexts might reveal different retention factors. Using a separate survey instrument might also uncover unique insights that a single survey approach might miss.

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The third research question expands the investigation beyond these two specific districts to examine successful retention practices across Colonial Intermediate Unit #20. Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, located in Northeastern Pennsylvania, serves school districts in Monroe, Northampton, and Pike Counties. This broader perspective, measured through a District Perception Survey (Appendix F), provides valuable context about what strategies have proven effective in similar geographic and demographic settings over the past five years. This wider lens helps validate or challenge the findings from the individual district investigations while potentially identifying innovative approaches that could be adapted for use in other districts.

Together, these questions create a research framework that moves from specific district-level insights to broader regional strategies, allowing for a deeper understanding of teacher retention that considers both individual perspectives and institutional approaches. The use of different survey instruments for each question helps capture various aspects of the retention challenge while potentially revealing patterns of contradictions that might not be apparent through a single measurement approach.

### **Setting and Participants**

The current study investigates the key factors that motivate certified educational professionals to maintain long-term teaching positions within their current school districts. Understanding these retention factors is important for developing effective strategies to support and retain qualified educators in the field.

To maintain research integrity and protect participant confidentiality, the identities of the participating school districts will remain confidential throughout the study. The research focuses on two school districts within Northeastern Pennsylvania that

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are affiliated with the Intermediate Unit #20. To ensure anonymity while maintaining clarity in the research narrative, the districts have been assigned the following pseudonyms:

- District 1: Papillon School District
- District 2: Border Collie School District

These pseudonyms serve purely as identifiers and carry no connection to the actual characteristics or qualities of the participating districts. As noted by Mertler (2022), “Third research participants have a right to privacy. This is essentially achieved through providing assurances of anonymity and/or confidentiality. Study participants have anonymity when their identities are kept hidden from the researcher...” (p. 55).

Identifying entities as pseudonyms demonstrates a commitment to confidentiality creates a secure environment for participants to provide candid feedback and enables the researcher to conduct an objective analysis without introducing potential bias or causing unintended consequences for the participating educational institutions. Maintaining confidentiality aligns with established best practices in educational research and ensures that the focus remains on understanding broader factors influencing teacher retention rather than on specific institutional contexts.

This research study utilized a detailed analysis of educator attrition patterns within the Papillon School District, a significant educational institution serving communities in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The district maintains a substantial infrastructure consisting of nine school buildings to serve its student population. With a workforce of 775 certificated professional staff members, which includes teachers, specialists, and other certified educators who provide direct educational services to

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students. To establish clear patterns of staff attrition, the researcher conducted a systematic review of Papillon School Board Agendas spanning from July 2021 through June 2024. This comprehensive analysis focused specifically on tracking the number of certificated staff members who either retired from their positions or submitted resignations during the three-year period. Table 3 presents a comprehensive analysis of certified staff departures from the Papillon School District over a three-year period.

**Table 3**

*Papillon School District Attrition Rate*

School Year	Resignation	Retirement	Total # Received	Attrition %
2021-2022	8	40	48	16%
2022-2023	10	25	35	22%
2023-2024	16	23	39	19%

*Note.* Data adapted from "Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes (2021-2024)" by the Papillon School District Board of Education. In the Board Docs database. The school district's name has been changed to protect confidentiality.

The table titled Papillon School District Attrition Rate provides baseline data for comparing the district's retention patterns with regional and national trends and for developing targeted strategies to enhance teacher retention in the future.

The comparison school district is the Border Collie School District, situated in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley region, serves a diverse community across approximately 87 square miles of suburban and rural landscape. Operating five strategically located school buildings, the district provides comprehensive educational services to a population of approximately 20,000 residents spanning multiple municipalities, reflecting the

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region's rich cultural and economic diversity (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2025).

The district staffing model includes 197.65 certificated professional staff for the 2022-2023 academic year NCES (2025). This staffing allocation enables the district to maintain a student-to-teacher ratio of 14:1, positioning it favorably below the national average of 15.3 (Brown, 2025, para. 5), allowing for more individualized attention to student needs. The Border Collie School district also employs five full-time counselors to address students' social-emotional development and academic planning needs.

Demographic data from the NCES (2025) reveals the district's student population composition, with white students constituting 82.8% and Hispanic/Latino students representing 9.1% of the student body. The remaining student population also includes 1.7% Black students, 1.1% American Indian or Alaska Native students, 0.7% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 4.5% students identifying with two or more races. Notably, 30.8% of the student population qualifies for federal free and reduced-price meal programs, indicating a significant portion of families may face economic challenges that the district must consider in its educational planning and resource allocation.

Table 4 captures the systematic documentation of professionally certificated staff who departed the school district through retirements, and resignations within the Border Collie School District, tracking these workforce changes over the same three-year period as the Papillon School District from July 2021 through June 2024.

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**Table 4**

### *Border Collie School District Attrition Rate*

School Year	Resignation	Retirement	Total # Received	Attrition %
2021-2022	7	9	16	8%
2022-2023	17	8	25	13%
2023-2024	16	3	19	10%

*Note.* Data adapted from "Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes (2021-2024)" by the Border Collie District Board of Education. In the Board Docs database. The school district's name has been changed to protect confidentiality.

Understanding these attrition patterns holds particular significance for educational planning and policy development. By examining the rate at which certified professionals leave their teaching positions over time, district administrators can better anticipate staffing needs, develop targeted intervention strategies, and ensure continuity in educational services for students. This data also provides a foundation for comparing the district's retention patterns with regional and national benchmarks, helping to contextualize local trends within a broader educational workforce dynamic. All certificated teachers from the Papillon and Border Collie School Districts were invited to participate in the study, creating a comprehensive sample of educators from these institutions.

The Papillon School District had 775 certificated staff members eligible to participate. These staff members received a survey cover letter (Appendix B) which contained participant consent information and procedures for opting out of the research. Staff members were asked to complete the Panorama Education Survey through Google

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Forms (Appendix C) which also included these same consent and opt-out details for reinforcement. From the total eligible population of 775 certificated staff members, 98 individuals completed the research survey, representing a response rate of approximately 12.6%.

The Border Collie School District had 197 certificated staff members eligible to participate. These staff members received a different survey cover letter (Appendix B) which mirrored the same contained participant consent information and procedures for opting out of the research. Staff members were asked to complete the Educator Stay Survey through Google Forms (Appendix D) which also included these same consent and opt-out details for reinforcement. From the eligible population of 197 certificated staff members, 14 individuals completed the research survey, representing a response rate of approximately 7.1%.

As noted by Wu et al. (2022), "The average online survey response rate is 44.1%" (p. 1). These response rates, while low, are common for voluntary survey research in education settings. According to Mertler (2022), when researchers are working with a relatively small population, specifically one with fewer than 100 participants, sampling becomes unnecessary and potentially counterproductive. In these cases, Mertler advises that researchers include the entire population in their study rather than attempting to select a representative sample. This approach ensures that the research captures a complete picture of the population being studied, rather than risking missing important insights through sampling. This guideline reflects the understanding that with such small populations, every participant's data can meaningfully contribute to the research findings, and excluding any portion through sampling could limit the comprehensiveness of the

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results. The total potential participant pool across both districts was 972 certificated staff members, with a combined total of 112 completed surveys, yielding an overall response rate of approximately 11.5%.

The researcher developed an assessment tool called the District Perception Survey to identify research-based strategies for teacher retention. To establish the validity of this instrument, three experienced Central Office Administrators from neighboring school districts, not affiliated with either Papillon or Border Collie School Districts, conducted a thorough review and evaluation. These validators included a Superintendent, an Assistant Superintendent, and a Chief Human Resources Officer, each bringing more than 25 years of educational experience spanning both school-level and district-level administration. Their extensive backgrounds in education lent significant credibility to their evaluation, and their detailed feedback was carefully incorporated to strengthen the survey's validity and ensure its relevance to the research objectives.

In addition to surveying certificated staff members, this study also sought input from Human Resources Personnel within Intermediate Unit #20, the educational agency that serves the Papillon and Border Collie School Districts. These Human Resource professionals received a survey cover letter (Appendix B) which mirrored the same contained participant consent information and procedures for opting out of the research. The Human Resources personnel were asked to complete the District Perception Survey through Google Forms (Appendix E) which also included these same consent and opt-out details for reinforcement. From the pool of four eligible Human Resources participants, two completed the survey, representing a 50% response rate from this specialized group of education professionals.

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### Research Plan

This current research study aims to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks of teacher retention and practical implementation strategies, providing insights for educational leaders to develop effective, sustainable approaches to maintaining their certificated professional staff.

Teaching excellence stands at the heart of educational success, yet schools across the nation struggle to keep their most capable educators in the classroom. Balow (2021) noted compelling evidence of the widespread impact of teacher shortages and the concerning trends in teacher retention:

Findings from the 2017-2018 school year indicated almost every state in the U.S. had teacher shortages in major subject areas, and nearly 50% of teachers at that time said they were actively looking to leave the profession.

Not only are teachers *considering* leaving the field, a large number of newer teachers are *doing* just that, as about 30% of college graduates who become teachers leave the profession within five years. (Balow, 2021, para. 4-5)

When experienced teachers leave the profession, their departure creates a ripple effect that touches every aspect of education, from the quality of instruction students receive to the culture and stability of the school community. Research by Miller and Youngs (2021) highlights how high teacher turnover creates a challenging cycle in schools. When experienced educators leave, schools typically fill these positions with new, inexperienced teachers who have not yet developed the same level of instructional expertise as their veteran colleagues. This pattern means students in high-turnover

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schools receive consistently lower quality instruction compared to students in schools that retain their teachers longer.

The negative impact of teacher turnover extends beyond the loss of experienced educators or disruptions to grade-level assignments. The consequences for student learning can be significant when teachers leave mid-year. This point is illustrated by recent research that quantifies the amount of instructional time lost due to teacher attrition. According to Macro Learning (2018), “One Vanderbilt study found that ‘losing a teacher during the school year is linked with a loss of between 32 and 72 instructional days,’ which equated to one sixth to nearly half of the school year” (para. 33). The study reveals the severe educational consequences of mid-year teacher turnover, with students losing the equivalent of 32-72 days of instruction-representing between one-sixth to nearly half an academic year of learning time. The findings from Vanderbilt quantifies how disruptive teacher departures can be to student academic progress.

While addressing the root causes of teacher attrition is vital, it is equally important to understand its consequences. Based on churn rate research within the business field from Jamal and Bucklin (2006) it was stated:

There is scope for much further research in this area. First, the type of churn-voluntary or involuntary [i.e., when the firm asks the customer to leave] could have an impact as the failure of the two types of events could be dependent...Second, there could be possible dependencies between the acquisition and the retention process which could impact the churn rates. (pp. 27-28)

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Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) provide a more detailed analysis of the attrition rates and their impact on the education system. Their research stresses the severity of the situation by quantifying the annual attrition rate and its contribution to teacher demand. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) also noted:

The profession has a national attrition rate of about 8% annually, and research shows that the number of teachers leaving each year accounts for close to 90% of annual teacher demand. Furthermore, less than a third of national teacher attrition is due to retirement. In other words, each year schools nationwide must hire tens of thousands of teachers because of beginning and mid-career teachers leaving the profession. (p. 1)

While Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond highlighted the broader effects of teacher turnover on labor market imbalances and school staffing, it is important to analyze the specific factors that drive these decisions. These factors will be addressed through key questions asked of certificated teachers from the Papillon and Border Collie school districts. By gathering firsthand insights from educators in these specific districts through the Panorama Education Survey and an Educator Stay Survey, a better understanding of the localized conditions and personal motivations that influence retention and turnover patterns allows for more targeted and effective interventions that address the root causes of staffing challenges. Aulia and Haerani (2022) conducted a more focused analysis to identify the key factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay or leave their positions. Their research sheds light on the following factors that play a vital role in teacher retention and turnover:

- Salary and Benefits

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- Working Conditions
- School Culture
- Support and Collaboration
- Personal and Family Considerations (Aulia & Haerani, 2022).

Understanding the factors noted by Aulia and Haerani provides a foundation for addressing teacher turnover challenges. By examining how these elements manifest, specifically within the Papillon and Border Collie school districts through targeted questioning of certificated teachers, this research investigated to develop contextualized solutions to respond to local needs and contribute to retention strategies that can be adapted across diverse educational environments.

The impact of salary and benefits on teacher retention is a key concern that has been well-documented in educational research. Salary disparities between school districts can have a significant impact on retention. According to Aulia and Herani (2022), teachers who feel they are underpaid or receive insufficient benefits are more likely to look for other employment. In addition, Aulia and Haerani (2022) found that compensation and benefits emerged as “one of the most significant factors influencing the issue of teacher retention” (p. 57). Their research documented Indonesian teachers expressing inadequate pay led many to leave the profession, with one participant stating, “most of our colleagues, including myself, have shifted from teacher to other well-paid careers” (p. 57). The study corroborated existing literature showing a “positive relationship between teacher pay and retention” (p. 58) and noted that countries with lower comparative teacher salaries consistently experience higher turnover rates.

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This research specifically addresses gaps in the literature regarding the practical implementation of retention strategies in rural and suburban Pennsylvania school districts. While previous studies have identified key components of teacher retention (Burek, 2022; Santhosh, 2024; Shuls & Flores, 2020), this study provided a detailed examination of how these components operate within specific educational contexts.

This research study also bridged the gap between theoretical frameworks of teacher retention and practical implementation strategies, providing valuable insights for educational leaders seeking to develop effective, sustainable approaches to maintaining their certificated professional staff. The findings from this research contributed to the growing body of literature on teacher retention while providing practical, actionable insights for educational institutions facing similar challenges. To systematically investigate these factors and generate reliable findings, a comprehensive and methodologically sound approach guided by every aspect of this study will be shared in the next section.

### **Research Design, Methods, and Data Collection**

The development and design of this research project employed a mixed methods approach designed to reduce the potential biases that may have occurred in a single method study. The research was conducted using convergent parallel design, which is used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently. According to Mertler (2022):

In a convergent parallel design, the researcher collects quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, and typically with perspectives and research questions. The data collection methods are prioritized in an equal manner; that is one type of data

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is not given priority, or greater importance, over the other. Quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed independently, but then the results are mixed to achieve an overall interpretation. (p. 145)

The quantitative component will include responses from certificated teachers in the Papillon School District through the Panorama Education Survey. Respondents will rate their level of agreement with statements using a 5-point Likert scale:

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Disagree

Additional quantitative data will include feedback from Human Resources administrators using a 5-point Likert Scale on the District Perception Survey. Furthermore, the study will incorporate qualitative data gathered from an Educator Stay Survey administered to certificated teachers in the Border Collie School District. This survey will include constructed response questions, allowing teachers to provide detailed, open-ended feedback.

This approach will triangulate both quantitative and qualitative data from two participating school districts and administrators in the Human Resources Department to explain in greater depth the reasons why certificated professional staff members remain in their current school districts and develop recommendations for retention strategies tailored to school districts to aid in reducing the turnover rate.

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The research approval process began with the submission of a detailed Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol on August 8, 2024. This initial submission outlined the comprehensive data collection procedures and research methodology. The IRB committee responded with a request for additional details regarding the following aspects: survey administration procedures and communication, proposed analytical methods, and permissions granted. On August 29, 2024, a complete response was submitted to address these inquiries, providing thorough documentation. After reviewing the supplemental information, the IRB granted final approval for the research project on September 6, 2024 (Appendix A).

Three distinct surveys were developed in July 2024 using the Google Forms platform: the Panorama Education Survey, the Educator Stay Survey, and the District Perception Survey. Each survey instrument was designed with comprehensive participant protections, incorporating detailed research project information and explicit opt-out procedures at the beginning of the survey. The informed consent document was embedded directly into each survey's introduction, ensuring participants had access to complete information about their rights and the research parameters before proceeding with their responses. To maintain strict confidentiality and protect participant privacy, the participating school districts' identity remained anonymous throughout this study. No identifying characteristics or specific details were disclosed in this study. The commitment to anonymity ensured that all response data would be analyzed objectively while protecting the district from any potential implications arising from the research findings.

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The Panorama Education Survey emerged from the collaborative work of two education researchers. Dr. Hunter Gehlbach, who serves as Vice Dean at Johns Hopkins School of Education and holds a position as senior research advisor at Panorama Education, co-developed the survey with Dr. Sam Moulton. Dr. Moulton, a former social studies teacher, serves as director of data science and applied research at Panorama Education. Their combined backgrounds in education practice, research methodology, and data analysis informed the survey's development. According to Panorama Education, (2024):

The Panorama Teacher and Staff Survey gives school and district leaders a tool to listen to and address educators' professional, social, and emotional needs. The survey is designed to spark productive conversations between teachers and school leaders about well-being, professional learning, cultural competency, school leadership, school climate, and other key topics. These critical data, when gathered regularly, can help administrators prioritize support to teachers and staff, deliver targeted professional development, and create a more positive working environment that benefits both adults and students. (para. 2-3)

The Panorama Education Survey (Appendix C), administered in the Papillon School District, was distributed electronically through district-issued email accounts to ensure accessibility for all full-time certificated professional staff members employed by the district. The research study collected quantitative data through thirty-seven Likert Scale questions administered to participants. The researcher organized the response according to five key categories that were established in the survey: Belonging, School Climate, School Leadership, Staff-Leadership Relationships and Well-being. To identify

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meaningful trends and patterns within the responses, the researcher employed a statistical descriptive statistical analysis method.

In addition to the core Likert Scale questions, the survey gathered important demographic information from participants. This supplementary data included each respondent's current grade level, the specific certification they were utilizing in their assignment, years of service within in the district and their gender information.

The Educator Stay Survey (Appendix D), administered in the Border Collie School District, was distributed electronically through district-issued email accounts to ensure accessibility for all full-time certificated professional staff members employed by the district. Osburn (2015) defines a Stay Interview as, "... a structured retention interview designed to discover why a current employee stays and what motivates and engages them. They help minimize "triggers" that cause an employee to consider quitting and they are great opportunities to build trust" (para. 2). The Educator Stay Survey is used to determine the reasons educators choose to stay in a school district. Osburn (2015) emphasizes that stay interviews serve as valuable retention strategies for multiple reasons. These interviews enhance employee engagement while helping organizations identify specific ways to both improve employees' work experience and reduce their major sources of dissatisfaction. Furthermore, by understanding the specific factors that motivate individual employees to remain with the organization, companies can strengthen positive elements across their workforce.

The research gathered two main types of data through the survey instrument. First, participants responded to six constructed response questions that explored three critical areas: the factors that motivate teachers to remain in their current positions,

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potential district actions that could strengthen teacher commitment and engagement, and reasons that might cause teachers to leave the district. Second, the survey collected essential demographic data about the participants, including their current teaching grade level, active teaching certifications used in their current role, length of service within the district, and gender identification.

The final survey, the District Perception Survey (Appendix E), administered to Human Resource Personnel affiliated with Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, was distributed electronically through district-issued email accounts. The District Perception Survey was designed to serve a specific purpose: identifying successful employee retention strategies currently being implemented across the same Intermediate Unit's area. The survey collected data through two distinct question types. First, it included eight questions using a Likert Scale format, which allowed participants to indicate their level of agreement with specific statements about retention practices. Second, the survey incorporated one constructed response question that enabled participants to provide detailed, open-ended feedback about retention strategies.

The researcher developed the District Perception Survey to identify evidence-based teacher retention strategies. To establish the instrument's validity, three experienced Central Office Administrators from school districts conducted an independent review. These administrators were chosen from districts outside the Papillon and Border Collie School Districts to ensure objective evaluation.

The validation panel consisted of three senior education leaders: a Superintendent, an Assistant Superintendent, and a Chief Human Resources Officer. Each administrator brought extensive educational expertise to the review process, with more than 25 years of

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experience spanning school-level and district-level leadership roles. Their comprehensive background in education proved particularly valuable in assessing the survey's effectiveness.

The validation process involved careful review and feedback from each administrator. Their detailed recommendations and insights were systematically analyzed and incorporated into the survey instrument, strengthening its validity, and ensuring its relevance for identifying effective teacher retention strategies. This thorough validation approach helped create a more robust and reliable research instrument.

The research study incorporated three distinct surveys, each administered with specific protocols and timelines to gather comprehensive data. The Panorama Education Survey distribution began when participants received an email containing both the survey link and required consent form on September 10, 2024. This survey remained accessible through October 31, 2024, with a reminder email sent to all potential respondents on October 1, 2024, to encourage participation.

The Educator Stay Survey implementation utilized a different distribution approach, working through building-level leadership. Building administrators received instructions on September 10, 2024, to forward the survey and consent form to their staff members. The survey collection period was extended until November 1, 2024. To maximize staff participation, administrators received a follow-up email on October 1, 2024, requesting them to redistribute the survey materials to their teams.

The District Perception Survey, which targeted Human Resources administrators, represented the final phase of data collection. This survey launched on December 4, 2024, when participants received an email containing the survey link and corresponding

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consent forms. The collection window for this survey extended through February 1, 2025, making it the longest of the three survey periods. To optimize response rates, participating administrators received reminder emails on January 13, 2025.

The research study's survey timelines were strategically designed to accommodate the depth and complexity of participant responses while maximizing response rates. The extended collection windows, ranging from approximately seven weeks for the Panorama Education Survey to eight weeks for the District Perception Survey, provided participants with sufficient time to complete both quantitative and qualitative components. This deliberate scheduling approach recognized that open-ended questions require more cognitive effort and time from respondents, as they need to reflect on their experiences and articulate detailed responses. The timing of reminder emails was also carefully planned, occurring halfway through each survey period, to prompt participants without creating undue pressure. Additionally, the staggered implementation of the three surveys prevented any potential survey fatigue among participants who might have been required to complete multiple instruments, thereby potentially enhancing the overall response rate and the depth of qualitative feedback received.

In total, this research study encompassed three distinct participant groups across two school districts. The largest group consisted of 775 certificated staff members from the Papillon School District, where 99 individuals completed the Panorama Educator Survey, yielding a 12.6% response rate. The second group included 197 certified staff members from the Border Collie School District, where 14 educators completed the Educator Stay Survey, resulting in a 7.1% response rate. The third group comprised Human Resources personnel from Intermediate Unit #20, where three out of four eligible

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participants completed the District Perception Survey, achieving a 75% response rate. Having examined the participant demographics across the three distinct groups in this study, the following section addresses key validity considerations essential to evaluating the research methodology and results.

### **Validity**

The research methodology employed three distinct surveys to triangulate data, providing a comprehensive and multi-faceted understanding of teacher retention factors within the educational community. This triangulation approach significantly strengthened the validity of the research findings gathering the perspectives from different stakeholder groups and comparing responses across varying education environments.

The Panorama Educator Stay survey, administered to certificated staff in the Papillon School District, served as the first data point by capturing teachers' perspectives on factors that influence their decisions to remain or leave their positions. These insights from practicing educators provided firsthand accounts of the day-to-day experiences and long-term considerations that affect teacher retention.

The second data point came from the Educator Stay Survey, completed by certificated staff in the Border Collie School District. By gathering similar information from teachers in different districts, the research could identify whether retention factors were unique to a specific district or represented broader trends in education. This cross-district comparison added depth to the understanding of teacher retention by revealing both common themes and district-specific challenges.

The District Perception Survey, completed by Human Resources personnel, provided the third critical perspective by capturing the administrative viewpoint on

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teacher retention strategies. This survey helped highlight potential gaps between teachers' expressed needs and district-level initiatives designed to address retention. The Human Resource perspective was particularly valuable as these professionals collaborate directly with both teachers and administration, offering insights into the implementation and effectiveness of retention strategies.

When analyzed together, these three data sources created a multidimensional picture of teacher retention. Areas where findings aligned across all three surveys carried weight, as agreement between different stakeholder groups strongly suggested the validity of those insights. Equally valuable were instances where the perceptions diverged, as these differences note potential disconnects between teacher needs and administrative approaches, offering opportunities for improved alignment in retention strategies.

### **Summary**

This research study examined teacher retention factors through a comprehensive data collection process involving three distinct surveys administered across two school districts and their shared educational service agency. The Panorama Educator Survey and Educator Stay Survey gathered vital insights from certificated staff members in the Papillon and Border Collie School Districts, respectively, while the District Perception Survey captured the administrative perspective from Human Resources personnel. Although the overall response rate of 11.5% from certificated staff appears modest, this limitation must be acknowledged when considering the study's findings and their generalizability to the broader population of educators. The methodology's strength lies in its triangulated approach, which enabled the cross-validation of findings through

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multiple stakeholder perspectives. This multi-faceted data collection strategy provides a robust foundation for the detailed analysis that follows.

Chapter IV presents a thorough examination of the collected data, exploring both quantitative patterns and qualitative insights that emerged from participants' responses. The analysis identifies common themes, highlights notable differences between stakeholder groups, and reveals key factors influencing teacher retention decisions in these educational communities. Through this comprehensive analysis, it is hoped that district leaders will gain actionable insights to strengthen their teacher retention efforts and create sustainable educational environments.

## CHAPTER IV

### Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to investigate factors influencing attrition rates among certificated professional staff from two school districts associated with Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 in Northeastern Pennsylvania. This research was threefold: first, to identify and analyze key factors that motivate teachers to maintain long-term employment within their current district; second, to understand how these factors align with or differ from existing research on teacher retention; and third, to develop actionable insights that school districts can implement to strengthen their teacher retention strategies. By examining these areas through both quantitative and qualitative lenses, this research investigation provided a comprehensive understanding of teacher retention that bridges theoretical knowledge with practical application.

The research methodology employs three distinct but complementary questions that examine teacher retention from different angles, using specific measurement tools for each investigation. The first two questions focus on understanding retention factors within individual school districts, while the third question broadens the scope to examine successful strategies across a wider geographic region. For the third question, participants were not associated with the two school districts whose teachers were surveyed.

This research was particularly significant given Pennsylvania's recent surge in teacher attrition, offering timely insights that could help districts incorporate more effective retention strategies. Through the comprehensive analysis, the research findings from this study will not only contribute to the broader body of knowledge on teacher retention but may also provide specific, implementable recommendations for educational

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leaders working to retain committed teaching teams in their schools. This analysis provides essential baseline data for comparing the district's retention patterns with regional and national trends and for developing targeted strategies to enhance teacher retention in the future. Gaining insights into the key factors that inspire and motivate certificated professional teaching staff to remain in their roles will enable district leaders to strategically plan and implement effective retention initiatives. By understanding the factors that drive teachers to continue their careers within these districts, school and district leadership can develop targeted strategies aimed at addressing those motivational factors, ultimately helping to retain high-quality teachers.

### **Data Analysis**

The mixed methods approach included quantitative and qualitative data was used to address the three research questions through a Likert scale survey and open-ended survey questions. Data was collected over a five-month period. This methodical approach revealed individuals' perceptions regarding the challenges associated with retaining certificated teachers in their respective school districts.

The research methodology employed a streamlined approach to data collection through the administration of an online survey, which eliminated the need for manual transcription of responses. This approach increased efficiency while maintaining data integrity throughout the analysis process. A systematic analytical framework was implemented to report, compare, and display the numerical data using clearly structured tables for quantitative components of the surveys. In parallel, the qualitative data derived from open-ended survey questions were analyzed through a coding scheme developed to

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track trends and themes that emerged from participant responses. The research was conducted using the convergent parallel design. According to Mertler (2022), noted:

In a convergent parallel design, the researcher collects quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, and typically with perspectives and research questions. The data collection methods are prioritized in an equal manner; that is one type of data is not given priority, or greater importance, over the other. Quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed independently, but then the results are mixed to achieve an overall interpretation. (p. 145)

The dual analytical approach, combining quantitative results with qualitative thematic analysis, established a multidimensional understanding of the research questions by capturing the statistical significance of observed patterns with contextual insights through participants' own articulated experiences and viewpoints. The combination of these strategies strengthened the validity of the findings through methodological triangulation, of an analysis that provided quantifiable measures alongside qualitative insights into the factors affecting teacher retention across both school districts.

The third component of the data analysis framework incorporated insights from three Human Resources Personnel within Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, the educational agency that serves the Papillon and Border Collie School Districts. This strategic inclusion allowed for examination of both quantitative and qualitative data from a leadership perspective. The responses from these administrators were systematically triangulated with the teacher responses collected from the participating school districts to identify alignment patterns and implementation gaps.

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This comparative analysis focused specifically on factors teachers identified as significant, contrasted against initiatives, and practices that district leadership currently implement. The triangulation methodology enabled a comprehensive assessment of how teacher-identified needs and concerns correspond with administrative priorities and resource allocation decisions. This approach provided valuable insights into potential disconnects between classroom-level experiences and district-level strategic planning, while also highlighting successful alignment between teacher responses and administrative responses.

### **Results**

The survey questions were selected to gather data to answer the research questions designed for this study. When analyzing the results there were three different sets of data collection: certificated staff responses from the Papillon School District, certificated staff responses from the Border Collie School District, and responses from Human Resources Administrators affiliated with Colonial Intermediate Unit #20.

#### **Papillon School District Participant Results**

The first research question examines the Papillon School District through the Panorama Education Survey (Panorama Education, 2025), seeking to understand teachers' perceptions about what motivates them to stay:

- What perceptions do certificated professional staff identify as important for them to remain as teachers within the Papillon School District as measured by the Panorama Education Survey?

The researcher administered the Panorama Education Survey to the Papillon School District's certificated staff members between September 9, 2024, and October 31,

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2024. The survey was electronically distributed to 775 certificated staff members through a Google Form, with 99 individuals completing the survey. An n count of 99 is reflected in Tables 5-11 as well as all percentages were rounded to the nearest tenth. In addition to noting the number of responses, Table 5 also reflects the demographic composition of respondents which garnered a female participation rate of 78.8%. Regarding current teaching assignments, 30.3% of participants identified as secondary level general education teachers, while 28.3% represented elementary level general education teachers. A key characteristic of the participant pool was the substantial professional experience, with 76.8% of respondents reporting 16 or more years in the teaching profession.

**Table 5**

*Demographics of Papillon School District Survey Respondents (n = 99)*

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Teacher Type</b>		
Elementary (K-6; Pk-4; N-3; or Mid-Level 4-6)	28	28.3
Secondary (7-12; Mid-Level 7-9; or Mid-Level 7-8)	30	30.3
Special Education	19	19.2
Related Arts (HPE, Art, Music, Technology, etc.)	12	12.1
Specialists/Other (School Counselor, School Psychologist, SLT)	10	10.1
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	78	78.8
Male	19	19.2
Prefer not to say	2	2.0
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
1-5 years	11	11.1

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6-10 years	9	9.1
11-15 years	3	3.0
16+ years	76	76.8

*Note.* SLT = Speech and Language Therapist

Data from Table 6 shows teachers reported positive feelings of belonging and respect within their professional community. 55.6% of respondents indicated they “belong quite a bit” at their school, with an additional 19.2% feeling they “completely belong.” Collegial respect emerged as a particularly strong area, with 83.8% of teachers reporting that colleagues show them “quite a bit of respect.” However, when examining professional connections, only 52.5% felt “quite connected” to other adults at school, suggesting that while respect is widespread, deeper collegial relationships may be less than consistent across the district. Table 6 further provides a detailed breakdown of how teachers perceive their relationships with colleagues and sense of belonging within their school.

**Table 6**

*Sense of Belonging (n = 99)*

Question	n	%
<b>Colleagues understand you as a person</b>		
Not at all	2	2.0
Understand a little	2	2.0
Understand somewhat	35	35.4
Understand quite a bit	58	58.6
Understand completely	2	2.0

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<b>Feel connected to other adults at your school</b>		
Not at all connected	2	2.0
Slightly connected	7	7.1
Somewhat connected	35	35.4
Quite connected	52	52.5
Extremely connected	3	3.0
<b>Respect colleagues at school show you</b>		
A little bit	2	2.0
Some respect	3	3.0
Quite a bit	83	83.8
Tremendous amount	11	11.1
<b>How much you matter to others in your school</b>		
Do not matter at all	2	2.0
A little	2	2.0
Matter some	20	20.2
Quite a bit	69	69.7
Tremendous amount	6	6.1
<b>Overall feeling like you belong at your school</b>		
Not at all	2	2.0
A little	2	2.0
Somewhat	21	21.2
Quite a bit	55	55.6
Completely belong	19	19.2

*Note.* All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

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Table 7 shows the status of resources allocated throughout the district. Nearly half have of the respondents 46.5% reported spending “quite a bit” of their own money on classroom resources, while 44.4% indicated that their school “struggles some” due to resource limitations. Regarding technology, 49.5% noted updates are needed “once in a while,” with another 32.3% indicating more urgent needs. For students requiring additional support, 76.8% of teachers reported some degree of difficulty in accessing needed help. In addition, 82.8% of teachers feel that some level of additional resources are needed to adequately support student learning.

**Table 7**

*Status of Resources (n = 99)*

Question	n	%
<b>Extent quality of resources at your school need improvement</b>		
No improvement	3	3.0
A little bit	31	31.3
Improve some	43	43.4
Quite a bit	19	19.2
Tremendous amount	3	3.0
<b>Urgent need for school's technology to be updated</b>		
Almost never	2	2.0
Once in a while	49	49.5
Somewhat urgent	32	32.3
Quite urgent	10	10.1
Extremely urgent	6	6.1
<b>Level of difficulty getting students the extra support needed</b>		

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Not at all difficult	23	23.2
Slightly difficult	32	32.3
Somewhat difficult	17	17.2
Quite difficult	19	19.2
Extremely difficult	8	8.1
<b>Amount of your own money spent on classroom</b>		
Almost none	3	3.0
A little bit	17	17.2
Some	26	26.3
Quite a bit	46	46.5
Tremendous amount	7	7.1
<b>Amount of additional resources needed to support student learning</b>		
Almost none	17	17.2
A few	31	31.3
Several more	33	33.3
Quite a few more	11	11.1
A lot more	7	7.1
<b>Overall amount your school struggles due to lack of resources</b>		
Does not at all	9	9.1
A little	36	36.4
Some	44	44.4
Quite a bit	8	8.1
Tremendous amount	2	2.0

*Note.* All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

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When asked about school climate, the survey results, presented in Table 8, indicate slightly positive perceptions among teachers regarding their professional environment. 56.6% of teachers report feeling “trusted quite a bit” to teach using methods they deem most effective. The collegial atmosphere is also supportive with 42.4% of respondents characterizing their colleagues’ attitude as “somewhat positive.” Notably, teacher-student dynamics are strong with a significant majority, 67.7%, describing these relationships as “quite respectful.” When looking toward the future, 42.4% of teachers express being “quite optimistic” about potential improvements at their school. When new pedagogical initiatives are introduced, the professional community demonstrates openness to change, with most colleagues being either “somewhat supportive” (44.4%) or “quite supportive” (29.3%). Overall, workplace satisfaction is evident with 55.6% of respondents evaluating their working environment as “quite positive.”

**Table 8**

*School Climate (n = 99)*

Question	n	%
<b>Extent teachers are trusted to teach in ways they think best</b>		
Not at all	2	2.0
A little	12	12.1
Somewhat	25	25.3
Quite a bit	56	56.6
Tremendous amount	4	4.0
<b>Positivity level of colleagues</b>		
Not at all positive	2	2.0
A little positive	21	21.2

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Somewhat positive	42	42.4
Quite a bit positive	31	31.3
Tremendous amount of positivity	3	3.0
<b>Respect level between teachers and students</b>		
Slightly respectful	4	4.0
Somewhat respectful	16	16.2
Quite respectful	67	67.7
Extremely respectful	12	12.1
<b>Level of optimism your school will improve in the future</b>		
Not at all optimistic	2	2.0
Slightly optimistic	15	15.2
Somewhat optimistic	32	32.3
Quite optimistic	42	42.4
Extremely optimistic	8	8.1
<b>Level of colleague support when new teaching initiatives implemented</b>		
Not at all supportive	3	3.0
Slightly supportive	20	20.2
Somewhat supportive	44	44.4
Quite supportive	29	29.3
Extremely supportive	3	3.0
<b>Overall positivity of your school's working environment</b>		
Not at all positive	3	3.0
Slightly positive	12	12.1
Somewhat positive	25	25.3
Quite positive	55	55.6

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Extremely positive	4	4.0
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*Note.* All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

The survey data presented in Table 9 reveals insights into teachers' perceptions of school leadership. The school leaders' ability to identify goals is rated as either "somewhat clearly" (32.2%) or "quite clearly" (31.3%) by respondents, suggesting a generally positive view of leadership direction. Most participants (54.6%) perceived the institutional atmosphere established by school leaders positively, with 37.4% describing it as "quite positive" and 17.1% rating it as "extremely positive." Communication effectiveness emerged as a notable strength, with 69.7% of respondents rating their leaders as communicating either "somewhat effectively" (30.3%) or "quite effectively" (39.4%). Regarding classroom knowledge, 79.8% of teachers view their school leaders as having some degree of knowledge about what is occurring in the classrooms. Specifically, 38.4% of teachers view their school leaders as "somewhat knowledgeable," 30.3% rate them as "quite knowledgeable," and 11.1% consider them "extremely knowledgeable," suggesting generally positive confidence in school leaders' understanding of classroom dynamics. Responsiveness to feedback shows a balanced distribution with 30.3% of teachers rating leaders as "quite responsive" to input. Teacher satisfaction is a priority for administration, with 35.4% of respondents indicating that their satisfaction is considered "quite important" by school leaders. Regarding decision-making processes, 43.4% of teachers report having "some input" in important institutional decisions. Finally, the overall influence of school leadership on teaching quality demonstrates positive impact, with responses equally divided between "somewhat positive" and "quite positive" at 37.4% each.

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**Table 9**

*School Leadership (n = 99)*

Question	n	%
<b>School leaders clearly identify goals for teachers</b>		
Not at all clear	3	3.0
Slightly clear	15	15.2
Somewhat clear	32	32.3
Quite clear	31	31.3
Extremely clear	18	18.2
<b>Level of positive tone school leaders set for school's culture</b>		
Not at all positive	4	4.0
Slightly positive	14	14.1
Somewhat positive	27	27.3
Quite positive	37	37.4
Extremely positive	17	17.2
<b>Level of effectiveness school leaders communicate important information to teachers</b>		
Not at all effective	2	2.0
Slightly effective	14	14.1
Somewhat effective	30	30.3
Quite effective	39	39.4
Extremely effective	14	14.1
<b>Level of knowledge school leaders on what is going on in teacher's classrooms</b>		
Not at all knowledgeable	4	4.0
Slightly knowledgeable	16	16.2

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Somewhat knowledgeable	38	38.4
Quite knowledgeable	30	30.3
Extremely knowledgeable	11	11.1
<b>Level school leaders are responsive to your feedback</b>		
Not at all responsive	7	7.1
Slightly responsive	20	20.2
Somewhat responsive	29	29.3
Quite responsive	30	30.3
Extremely responsive	13	13.1
<b>Level of importance teacher satisfaction is to your school leaders</b>		
Not at all important	6	6.1
Slightly important	19	19.1
Somewhat important	27	27.3
Quite important	35	35.4
Extremely important	12	12.1
<b>Amount of input teachers have when the school makes important decisions</b>		
Almost no input	17	17.2
A little bit of input	21	21.2
Some input	43	43.4
Quite a bit of input	15	15.2
Tremendous amount	3	3.0
<b>Overall level of positive influences school leaders has on the quality of your teaching</b>		
Not at all positive	3	3.0
Slightly positive	13	13.1

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Somewhat positive	37	37.4
Quite positive	37	37.4
Extremely positive	9	9.1

*Note.* All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Teachers from the Papillon School District responded to questions relating to Self-Leadership Relationships. Findings reflected in Table 10 reveal positive perceptions of leadership approachability, with 76.8% of respondents describing school leaders favorably. Within this positive assessment, 37.4% characterized their leaders as "quite friendly" and 39.4% rated them as "extremely friendly," indicating strong confidence in leadership accessibility among most participants. Professional engagement with leadership appears to positively impact teacher motivation, as 38.4% of teachers characterize their interactions with the leadership team as "quite motivating." Trust, a fundamental component of effective school relationships, demonstrates a strength with 42.4% of respondents indicating "quite a bit of trust" exists between school leaders and staff. The data further reveals that 38.4% of teachers feel their leaders "care quite a bit" about them as individuals, suggesting a leadership approach that values personal connections. Institutional confidence is evident, with a significant portion (41.4%) reporting they are "quite confident" that school leaders prioritize the best interests of the school. Perceptions of fairness in staff treatment are predominately positive, with 44.4% of respondents rating their treatment as "quite fairly." Support during challenging circumstances appears robust, with 45.5% of teachers finding their school leaders "quite supportive" when difficulties arise. Most notably, the data indicates exceptionally high

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levels of perceived respect, with most teachers (78.8%) feeling their school leaders are “quite respectful” (48.5%) or “extremely respectful” (30.3%) toward them.

**Table 10**

*Self-Leadership Relationships (n = 99)*

Question	n	%
<b>Level of friendliness you school leaders are towards you</b>		
Not at all friendly	1	1.0
Slightly friendly	9	9.1
Somewhat friendly	13	13.1
Quite friendly	37	37.4
Extremely friendly	39	39.4
<b>Level of motivation you find working with the leadership team at your school</b>		
Not at all motivating	5	5.1
Slightly motivating	15	15.2
Somewhat motivating	30	30.3
Quite motivating	38	38.4
Extremely motivating	11	11.1
<b>Amount of trust between school leaders and staff</b>		
Almost no trust	5	5.1
A little bit of trust	10	10.1
Some trust	33	33.3
Quite a bit of trust	42	42.4
A tremendous amount of trust	9	9.1
<b>Amount your school leaders care about you as an individual</b>		

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Do not care at all	4	4.0
Care a little bit	15	15.2
Care somewhat	30	30.3
Care quite a bit	38	38.4
Care a tremendous amount	12	12.1
<b>Level of confidence you feel the school leaders have the best interests of the school in mind</b>		
Not at all confident	1	1.0
Slightly confident	10	10.1
Somewhat confident	23	23.2
Quite confident	41	41.4
Extremely confident	24	24.2
<b>How fairly the school leadership treats the staff</b>		
Not at all fairly	2	2.0
Slightly fairly	10	10.1
Somewhat fairly	24	24.2
Quite fairly	44	44.4
Extremely fairly	19	19.2
<b>How supportive school leaders are when you face a challenge at work</b>		
Not at all supportive	2	2.0
Slightly supportive	11	11.1
Somewhat supportive	20	20.2
Quite supportive	45	45.5
Extremely supportive	21	21.2
<b>How respectful school leaders are towards you</b>		

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Not at all respectful	1	1.0
Slightly respectful	6	6.1
Somewhat respectful	14	14.1
Quite respectful	48	48.5
Extremely respectful	30	30.3

*Note.* All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

The final section of the Panorama Education Survey data from the Papillon School District provides compelling insights regarding teacher well-being across four key dimensions identified in Table 11. Professional efficacy appears high among teaching staff with 63.6% reporting feeling “quite effective” in their current role. Particularly noteworthy is the exceptional level of work significance expressed by respondents, with 70.7% indicating that their work “matters a tremendous amount” to them personally. This commitment to professional purpose is further reflected in perceptions of meaningfulness, as 54.5% of teachers characterize their work as “extremely meaningful,” with an additional 31.3% finding it “quite meaningful.” These metrics suggest a workforce that derives substantial intrinsic value from their educational responsibilities. Regarding overall job satisfaction, the findings are predominately positive, with 47.5% of respondents reporting being “quite satisfied” and 10.1% indicating they are “extremely satisfied” with their position. These data points collectively present a teaching staff that demonstrates high levels of professional fulfillment and engagement across multiple dimensions of workplace well-being.

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**Table 11**

*Well-being (n = 99)*

Question	n	%
<b>How effective do you feel at your job right now</b>		
Not at all effective	2	2.0
Slightly effective	7	7.1
Somewhat effective	19	19.2
Quite effective	63	63.6
Extremely effective	8	8.1
<b>How much your work matters to you</b>		
Matters some	7	7.1
Matters quite a lot	22	22.2
Matters a tremendous amount	70	70.7
<b>How meaningful the work you do is to you</b>		
Not at all meaningful	1	1.0
Slightly meaningful	2	2.0
Somewhat meaningful	11	11.2
Quite meaningful	31	31.3
Extremely meaningful	54	54.5
<b>Overall level of satisfaction with your job right now</b>		
Not at all satisfied	3	3.0
Slightly satisfied	6	6.1
Somewhat satisfied	33	33.3
Quite satisfied	47	47.5
Extremely satisfied	10	10.1

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*Note.* All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

The Papillon School District's survey data presents a nuanced portrait of school climate and leadership dynamics. In classroom environments, 67.7% of teachers characterize teacher-student relationships as "quite respectful," indicating a positive learning environment. This strong foundation at the classroom level, however, stands in contrast to perceptions of institutional leadership. Only 18.2% of respondents report that school leaders are "extremely clear" about goals, and a mere 3% indicate having a "tremendous amount of input" in significant school decisions. This disparity suggests that while direct educational interactions remain constructive, teachers experience limited inclusion in broader institutional decision-making processes.

The Self-Leadership Relationships findings demonstrate favorable interpersonal dynamics, 78.8% of teachers describing school leaders as either "quite respectful" or "extremely respectful." This positive assessment of interpersonal relations, however, appears disconnected from structural empowerment, as evidenced by the School Leadership section where only 18.4% of respondents report having substantial input in important decisions. This contradiction indicates that despite cordial professional relationships, systematic limitations on teacher agency may exist within the institutional framework. According to Calvert (2016), teacher agency within professional development contexts represents educators' ability to take deliberate and meaningful action in guiding their own professional development while simultaneously supporting their colleagues' growth. This concept emphasizes that effective teachers actively engage with learning opportunities rather than simply receiving instruction passively. The observed disconnect between positive interpersonal dynamics and constrained

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professional autonomy suggests that structural barriers may be preventing educators from exercising the purposeful, constructive approach to professional growth that characterizes true teacher agency.

Overall, the survey portrays a teaching staff deeply invested in their professional responsibilities who maintain satisfaction primarily through their commitment to students and pedagogical practice, rather than through institutional support structures. Teachers appear to derive meaning and purpose from their direct educational impact, even when facing resources constraints or varying levels of leadership support. Potential areas for institutional improvement include enhancing teacher participation in decision-making processes and addressing resource inadequacies.

The quantitative findings from the Papillon School District provides insights into the structural elements of school climate and leadership. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics, an analysis of the qualitative responses to offer deeper context and personal perspectives that compliment statistical patterns identified in the Papillon data was gathered from the Border Collie School District. Mertler (2022) expressed, “The world in which we live typically requires – or at least encourages – multiple perspectives, and mixed-methods research allows for inclusion of those multiple perspectives within a single research study” (p. 151). These perspectives highlighted the experiences behind the numbers and revealed nuances the quantitative measures alone could not capture.

### **Border Collie School District Participant Results**

The second research question investigated similar themes within the Border Collie School District but uses a different measurement tool – the Educator Stay Survey (Urban

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Schools Human Capital Academy [USHCA], 2025). This parallel investigation allows for a comparison between the two districts while acknowledging that different contexts might reveal similar and/or different retention factors. Using a separate survey instrument might also uncover unique insights that a single survey approach might miss. As noted by Mertler (2022), “Relying on a single research plan for data collection and analysis may limit the researcher in terms of his or her ability to provide such an answer...” (p. 151). The district staffing model includes 197.65 certificated professional staff for the 2022-2023 academic year (NCES, 2025).

- What factors contribute to the certificated professional staff staying in the Border Collie School District as measured by an Educator Stay Survey?

Approximately 197 certified teachers in the Border Collie School district received the online survey through Google Forms. Of those contacted, 14 teachers (7.1% response rate) completed the survey, which included demographic information (gender, certification area, and years of experience) as well as open-ended response questions. As shown in Table 12, the respondent demographics represented a cross-section of teaching roles within the district. Teaching levels were distributed across Secondary (2%), Elementary (1%), Special Education (3%) and Related Arts (1%) positions. The gender distribution among the respondents consisted of five (5) males and nine (9) females. Experience levels were predominately 16+ years (78.6%) with substantially lower teachers reporting 6-10 years (14.3%) of experience. This experience distribution suggests that the survey data primarily reflects perspectives of veteran educators within the district.

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**Table 12**

*Participant Demographics (n = 14)*

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Teacher Type</b>		
Elementary (K-6; Pk-4; N-3; or Mid-Level 4-6)	3	21.4
Secondary (7-12; Mid-Level 7-9; or Mid-Level 7-8)	5	35.7
Special Education	5	35.7
Related Arts (HPE, Art, Music, Technology, etc.)	3	21.4
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	9	64.3
Male	5	35.7
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
1-5 years	2	14.3
6-10 years	2	14.3
16+ years	10	71.4

*Note.* All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Analysis of teacher responses regarding job satisfaction factors revealed clear priorities among the Border Collie Area School District faculty. As noted in Table 13, relationships with students emerged as the predominant source of professional satisfaction, with 85.7% of respondents specifically highlighting student interactions as a positive aspect of their teaching experience. Collegial relationships constituted the second most frequently cited satisfaction factor, with 64.3% of respondents expressing appreciation for their fellow staff members. The importance of these interpersonal connections was evident in representative statements such as, “I like working with my

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students and getting to know them as people and helping them grow as individuals,” as well another participant stating, “The people I work [with] are supportive and very helpful.” Additional satisfaction factors included subject-specific teaching enjoyment, positive building-level administrative relationships, and satisfaction with physical teaching environments. Notably, one teacher expressed attachment to their teaching space, stating, “I love my classroom; it is the best room in the school.”

**Table 13**

*Summary of what teachers like about their job and why (n = 14)*

Theme	Description	Frequency
Students	<p>“Daily student interaction and being a positive role model.”</p> <p>“I like the students I work with. They are at risk and need someone that wants them to do well.”</p> <p>“I like working with my students and getting to know them as people and helping them grow as individuals.”</p> <p>“I also LOVE the teaching staff here at BCAMS- they are amazing!”</p>	12
Colleagues / Staff	<p>“The staff and the current administration.”</p> <p>“My colleagues and an amazing, supportive administrator.”</p> <p>“I like my colleagues because I feel we have a pretty close faculty.”</p> <p>“The teachers I work with and the population of students and parents I have.”</p> <p>“I also LOVE the teaching staff here at BCMS- they are amazing!”</p>	9
Teaching Content	<p>“I love to inspire students to love and/or appreciate the written language.”</p> <p>“I love working with children and helping them learn how to read.”</p>	3

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	“Working with kids and teaching them skills they do not know.”	
Building Administration	“The staff and the current administration.” “My colleagues and an amazing, supportive administrator.”	2
Classroom / Facilities	“I love my classroom; it is the best room in the school.”	1

*Note.* Frequencies represent the number of participants who mentioned each theme in their responses. Some participants mentioned multiple themes in their responses.

Analysis of teacher career intentions revealed significant trends in the Border Collie School District. As shown in Table 14, retirement plans dominated future career intentions, with 42.9% of respondents indicating plans to retire within the next 3-5 years. The retirement trajectory aligns with the demographic profile of the respondent pool, where 78.6% reported having 16+ years of experience. Several teachers expressed interest in accelerating their retirement timelines, with one respondent stating, “I would go sooner if I could,” suggesting workplace dissatisfaction.

The impending contract negotiations emerged as a critical inflection point in teacher retention considerations. Multiple respondents explicitly referenced the contract as a determinant in their future employment decisions. One teacher stated, “The next contract will determine how I feel moving forward,” indicating that compensation, benefits and working conditions represent significant factors in career planning for current faculty. These contract-contingent responses suggest that the district has a time-sensitive opportunity to influence retention outcomes through upcoming negotiations.

Career development aspirations were evident among a smaller segment of respondents. Teachers showed significant interest in career transitions, with 21.4%

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expressing desire to move into specialized teaching positions and higher education opportunities. These responses included plans for advanced degree attainment and development of specialized expertise. One example, a teacher who aspires to become a “Structured Literacy Consultant.” Additionally, 14.3% of respondents indicated potential interest in leaving the district, either for positions in other school systems or career changes outside of education.

**Table 14**

*Teachers' Responses Regarding Future Career Plans and Needed Resources (n = 14)*

<b>Future Career Plans</b>	<b>Survey Statements</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Retire within 5 years	<p>"I plan on retiring in 4 years. I would go sooner if I could."</p> <p>"I am in my last year of teaching and retiring to do my artwork full time."</p> <p>"Retirement - as this is a second career that won't be happening."</p>	6
Continue in Current Position	<p>"I would hope to still be teaching. The next contract will determine how I feel moving forward."</p> <p>"I believe I will still be in K-12 education as a teacher."</p> <p>"I will still be here. I have no plans to go anywhere else."</p>	5
Transition to a New Role in Education	<p>"Special Ed, Learning Support teacher, going for my Masters in Special Ed."</p> <p>"I would like to get my Doctorate of Education and eventually teach at the collegiate level."</p> <p>"I would like to be a Structured Literacy Consultant. I need to figure out how to advertise myself and my services."</p>	3
Change Career Fields	<p>"I'd like to be teaching in a new district or working in accounting."</p>	2

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	"I believe I will still be in K-12 education as a teacher. I would like to get my Doctor of Education and eventually teach at the collegiate level."	
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*Note.* Frequencies represent the number of participants who mentioned each theme in their responses. Some participants provided responses that fit into multiple categories.

Teacher recognition perceptions revealed a contrast between building-level and district-level acknowledgement practices. As shown in Table 15, teachers consistently differentiated between their experiences with immediate administrators versus upper leadership. One respondent articulated this division by stating, "The teaching staff and support staff at Border Collie Middle School are extremely supportive and appreciative. The upper administration is not at all supportive. In fact, our board required them to participate monthly in a Climate and Culture meeting with staff because morale was so low in the district. What was supposed to be a way to express our thoughts and feelings and a way to bring up issues was anything BUT supportive! In fact, our Superintendent, one of our Assistant Superintendents, and another administrator were extremely condescending. There has been a change at the top, however, and I am hoping for a change in the climate at our school. So far it has been better."

Administrative priorities emerged as a significant factor affecting teacher recognition experiences. Respondents who reported feeling unrecognized frequently cited misalignments between administrative focus and classroom realities. One teacher specifically noted that, "The administration are out of touch with the student needs. And too focused on testing." The quality and depth of recognition efforts represented another notable finding. Several teachers characterized existing recognition as perfunctory or superficial rather than meaningful. The statement that, "No, I am in my 35<sup>th</sup> year of

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teaching, and I have rarely been recognized for being a good teacher, rarely been praised for doing a good job. We are lucky if we get a pencil and a bagel for teacher appreciation week" exemplifies the perception that recognition activities often lack substantive impact or genuine appreciation.

Positive recognition experiences were predominately associated with building-level leadership approaches. Teachers who reported feeling appropriately recognized mentioned specific, personalized feedback from immediate administrators. One respondent highlighted that, "My administrator is encouraging and gives me positive feedback (post-it note recently)." A second teacher affirmed their positive experience, stating "I do. My principals have been great." Similarly, another teacher emphasized the local support they receive: "At the building level I do feel appropriately recognized, the building principal and assistant principal do a lot for us to show their appreciation for all my hard work and efforts." This pattern indicates that effective recognition practices tend to be individualized, specific, and delivered by administrators with direct knowledge of teachers' daily contributions.

**Table 15**

*Teachers' Perceptions of Recognition for Their Contributions (n = 14)*

Recognition Status	Survey Statements	Frequency
Feel recognized	"Yes, my administrator is encouraging and gives me positive feedback (post-it note recently)." "I feel most of the time that I am. We are acknowledged for most of the positive things we do and contribute." "At the building level I do feel appropriately recognized, the building principal and asst. principal do	4

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	a lot for us to show their appreciation for all my hard work and efforts." "Yes. My principals have been great."	
Feel partially recognized	<p>"Sometimes, but only for surface level things, like making cards for sick coworkers. Never for my actual work as an educator."</p> <p>"Neutral- for some things yes, for some other things no."</p> <p>"In my position I've felt that way."</p> <p>"Yes, from co-workers, no by students and community members."</p> <p>"I feel recognized by students and parents, but last year I didn't feel recognized by upper admin. I am hopeful that will change this year with the shifts in administration."</p>	5
Do not feel recognized	<p>"We are not recognized at all. The upper administration only cares about them and their salaries. They don't care about the teachers or the overall health and well-being of the teachers."</p> <p>"No, the administration are out of touch with the student needs. And too focused on testing."</p> <p>"No, I am in my 35<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, and I have rarely been recognized for being a good teacher, rarely been praised for doing a good job. We are lucky if we get a pencil and a bagel for teacher appreciation week."</p> <p>"No. I work hard, but get more work demands placed on me while others in my position are not doing their job."</p> <p>"Unfortunately, No I do not feel recognized for my contributions by previous administrator. I am hoping this changes with the new administration that was hired."</p>	5

Resource adequacy perceptions revealed varied experience across respondent groups. As expressed in Table 16, teachers' assessments of available resources fell into three distinct categories: adequate (n = 6), partially adequate (n = 5) and inadequate (n =

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3). A pattern emerged regarding financial investment in classroom resources, with multiple teachers reporting self-funding practices to supplement district-provided materials. One special education teacher explicitly stated, “I have the right resources to be successful here because I research and buy whatever resources are needed for my lessons.” Resource distribution inequities were apparent, particularly among special education faculty who reported, “As a special education teacher, I have learned this district always considers you second. You are rarely considered when teaching materials are ordered for others.” Technological insufficiencies constituted another significant concern, with several teachers identifying outdated equipment as an instructional barrier. Respondents specifically noted, “I wish our technology was a little more up to date” and “No, because they don't give us enough money in our budget to have good equipment.”

Additionally, several teachers highlighted funding limitations for enrichment programming, particularly field trips and positive behavior incentives, which they considered essential for optimal student engagement. This was noted by the statement, “I wish that we had more money to put towards positive behavior incentives and field trips. However, on a day-to-day basis, I have the resources necessary to teach.”

**Table 16**

*Teachers' Perceptions of Resource Adequacy (n = 14)*

Resource Status	Survey Statements	Frequency
Adequate resources	"For the most part, we do. I feel that our building administration is approachable. We are provided most resources but, (are) anywhere, there are certain things that we need to obtain on our own." "Yes, Border Collie provides me with (a) decent budget to order supplies for my lessons."	6

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	<p>"So far I have gotten everything I have asked for."</p> <p>"Yes."</p> <p>"I have the right resources to be successful because I research and buy whatever resources are needed for my lessons."</p> <p>"I believe we do have the proper resources in our school in order to perform successfully, however- there is a lack of training using those resources."</p>	
Partially adequate resources	<p>"For the most part, we do. I feel that our building administration is approachable. We are provided most resources but, as anywhere, there are certain things that we need to obtain on our own."</p> <p>"I feel like I do have the right resources to perform successfully for the most part. I wish our technology was a little more up to date, and I wish that we had more money to put towards positive behavior incentives and field trips. However, on a day-to-day basis, I have the resources necessary to teach."</p> <p>"Yes and no. I have the resources I am just stretched too thin."</p> <p>"Yes- mostly provided by myself, not given to me by district."</p> <p>"Yes and no - I do not have the money, but our district provides technical resources like smartboards and projectors that work."</p>	5
Inadequate resources	<p>No, because they don't give us enough money in our budget to have good equipment."</p> <p>"No, as a special education teacher, I have learned this district always considers you second. You are rarely considered when teaching materials are ordered for others."</p> <p>"No, I could use more resources to better (do) my job, over the years I have bought a lot of things that help me better teach my students."</p>	3

Analysis of teachers' perceptions regarding trust and respect revealed a divided pattern among the respondent pool. As shown in Table 17, only 28.6% of teachers

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reported feeling fully trusted and respected in their positions, while 35.7% indicated partial trust and respect, and an equal 35.7% reported not feeling trusted or respected at all. A predominant pattern emerged regarding the hierarchical source of trust and respect, with building-level administration perceived more positively than district-level leadership. One teacher explicitly stated, “Yes, at the building level. They at least do their best to support the teachers. The upper administration doesn’t respect the teachers.”

Concerns about micromanagement and excessive oversight were also noted as undermining trust, with one respondent stating, “Very little. Everything is over micromanaged. Again, teacher ideas are rarely if ever considered.” Even among teachers who felt trusted, issues of instructional autonomy emerged, exemplified by one teacher’s observation that, “I mostly feel trusted, although I do not like that certain trends are forced upon us. There are times when a certain practice just does not fit well into the lesson, and that may be a day when we are observed, and the absence of that practice is noted.” The data further revealed that some teachers experienced trust differentially from various stakeholders, with one stating trust from “co-workers” but not from “students and community members.”

Several teachers expressed hope that recent administrative changes might improve trust dynamics, suggesting recognition of the critical role leadership plays in establishing a climate of professional respect. This is evident through one respondent’s statement expressing, “No- I don’t believe I am for the reasons stated earlier. Upper administration does not listen to our concerns and does not trust that we are professional enough to add insight into bettering our district. Again- I am hoping with the changes in administration this year that things will be different.”

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**Table 17**

*Teachers' Perceptions of Trust and Respect in Their Positions (n = 14)*

Trust and Respect Status	Survey Statements	Frequency
Feel trusted and respected	<p>"Yes."</p> <p>"In my position I've felt that way."</p> <p>"Yes, at the building level. They at least do their best to support the teachers. The upper administration doesn't respect the teachers."</p> <p>"I feel treated with respect and trust from my colleagues. Again, I did not feel that way from my previous administrator. I felt he didn't respect special education teachers due to lack of knowledge about the profession. I also felt he allowed other people to make decisions for him because he lacked knowledge and experience in his position."</p> <p>"Yes, with the exception of small group learning. Last year, there was a very large focus on small group learning, and the ELA and math teachers at the middle school were observed almost every day for a month to make sure we were doing small groups every day. It felt like they were trying to catch us doing something wrong, and it was stressful. Other than that, I feel trusted and respected in my position."</p>	4
Feel partially trusted and respected	<p>"I mostly feel trusted, although I do not like that certain trends are forced upon us. There are times when a certain practice just does not fit well into the lesson, and that may be a day when we are observed, and the absence of that practice is noted."</p> <p>"Yes, from co-workers, no by students and community members."</p> <p>"Yes, at the building level. They at least do their best to support the teachers. The upper administration doesn't respect the teachers."</p> <p>"Very little. Everything is over micromanaged. Again, teacher ideas are rarely if ever considered."</p>	5

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	<p>"No, I don't believe I am for the reasons stated earlier. Upper administration does not listen to our concerns and does not trust that we are professional enough to add insight into bettering our district. Again- I am hoping with the changes in administration this year that things will be different."</p>	
Do not feel trusted or respected	<p>"No, because of the heavy administrative presence the past few years. They heavily criticized all classroom teachers' performances, making us feel disrespected and mistrustful of admin."</p> <p>"No. The administration is out of touch with the student's needs. And too focused on testing."</p> <p>"No, teachers are always criticized for only working 9 months a year and we are severely underpaid for the important job we are expected to perform."</p> <p>"Unfortunately, No, I do not feel recognized for my contributions by the previous administrator. I am hoping for this changes with the new administration that was hired.</p> <p>"No- In the end I think I am unheard by staff and administration."</p> <p>I felt he didn't respect special education teachers due to lack of knowledge about the profession. I also felt he allowed other people to make decisions for him because he lacked knowledge and experience in his position.</p>	5

*Note.* Based on responses, some teachers provided responses that fit into multiple categories.

The final question teachers in the Border Collie School District were asked to respond focused on how they would change their day-to-day job to be more enjoyable. The teachers' desired job changes revealed a multifaceted set of priorities focused primarily on professional autonomy and structural improvement. As Table 18 shows, schedule modifications and increased professional autonomy emerged as the most frequently mentioned changes, with 35.7% of respondents in each category advocating

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for these adjustments. Schedule-related suggestions demonstrated specificity, from broad restructuring proposals such as, “I would change our school schedule and go back to teaming at the middle school with team meetings and such, as it really provided us with the opportunity to have parent and student conferences, to meet as a team to discuss and look at data in order to ensure that all of the students were ensured a path to success” to targeted adjustments like “One more prep period. I bring work home, especially over the weekends, and I would love to have more time during my day to get planning and grading done to reduce weekend work.” The desire for greater professional autonomy manifested in requests for reduced micromanagement and increased instructional decision-making power, with one teacher requesting, “not having as strict of a pacing guide and being able to make more instructional decisions.”

Student engagement concerns constituted another significant theme, with 21.4% of respondents expressing desire to enhance student experiences through improved accountability practices and the restoration of reward activities. As one teacher observed, “School is less fun than it used to be, and I think all students feel it. They aren’t happy and it’s manifesting itself in the form of behavior issues.” Resource enhancement requests (21.4%) focused on improving facilities, equipment, and instructional materials, while administrative changes (21.4%) emphasized reducing classroom observation frequency and non-instructional duties. Compensation concerns though less frequently mentioned (14.3%), reflected the key role of financial recognition in teacher satisfaction. Similarly, staffing improvements (14.3%) centered on increasing instructional personnel and reducing coverage responsibilities.

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**Table 18**

*Teachers' Suggested Changes to Make Their Jobs More Enjoyable (n = 14)*

Theme	Survey Statements	Frequency
Improved Student Accountability and Behavior	<p>"Make students accountable for their actions and discipline when necessary."</p> <p>"I would like to see student rewards like movies and holiday parties be brought back. School is less fun than it used to be and I think all students feel it. They aren't happy and it's manifesting itself in the form of behavior issues."</p> <p>"Focus on the students as learners. Slow the pace down. Stop over testing kids. Teach to understanding."</p>	3
Enhanced Facilities and Resources	<p>"To improve our facility and have enough equipment that we can teach more units that the students would enjoy more."</p> <p>"I could use more resources to better my job, over the years I have bought a lot of things that help me better teach my students."</p> <p>"More resources to use in my instruction, more money."</p>	3
Schedule Changes	<p>"Later start (15-30 minutes)."</p> <p>"I would have one more prep period. I bring work home, especially over the weekends, and I would love to have more time during my day to get planning and grading done."</p> <p>"I would change our school schedule and go back to teaming at the middle school with team meetings and such, as it really provided us with the opportunity to have parent and student conferences."</p> <p>"More time to plan and meet with co-teachers, hire more teachers so we would have smaller class sizes."</p>	5

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	<p>"Not have as strict of a pacing guide and being able to make more instructional decisions (switch schedule if needed)."</p>	
Increased Autonomy and Professional Respect	<p>"I think teachers know their students and know what works best for the students and the class. I think we do have autonomy, but I think it is important not to be micromanaged."</p> <p>"True respect and being heard by the administration. Not having to fear retaliation because you speak up for what you need for yourself and your students."</p> <p>"I feel that teachers know their students and know what works best for the students and the class. I think we do have autonomy, but I think it is important not to be micromanaged."</p> <p>"Focus on teaching students how to be lifelong learners."</p> <p>"I would be able to just work with teachers and not have to be put in other locations to cover for other people who aren't doing their job. I would love to just belong in one place."</p>	5
Improved Compensation and Contract	<p>"A new contract with a decent raise that at least helps with the cost of inflation."</p> <p>"I plan on retiring in 4 years. I would go sooner if I could."</p>	2
Administrative Changes	<p>"Fewer administrators in classrooms."</p> <p>"Less duties and no mandatory meeting after school just because they are in the contract."</p> <p>"Being as politically unbiased as possible in referencing content to respond."</p>	3
Staffing Improvements	<p>"Hire more teachers so we would have smaller class sizes."</p> <p>"Being able to just work with teachers and not have to be put in other locations to cover for other people who aren't doing their job."</p>	2

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*Note.* Some teachers provided multiple suggestions that were categorized across different themes.

The survey results from the Border Collie School District revealed insights into the current educational climate. Most notably, a significant disconnect exists between building-level support (which teachers generally view as positive) and district-level administration (perceived as disconnected and unsupportive). The veteran staff with 71.4% having 16 or more years of teaching experience, valued student interaction and collegial relationships, yet expressed consistent concerns about professional autonomy, resource allocation, and recognition. Teachers specifically highlighted concerns with micromanagement, over-testing, inadequate technology, and the need to self-fund classroom resources. Many veteran educators indicated retirement plans within 3-5 years, signaling a potential staffing transition on the horizon. These firsthand perspectives from classroom educators provide key context for understanding the district's current challenges and opportunities for enhancement.

To complement the quantitative and qualitative insights from teachers, the next section provides quantitative workforce data provided by Human Resources Administrators. These metrics will offer objective measurement of resources and support, compensation comparison and professional development opportunities that will further illuminate the subjective experiences from survey data.

### **Human Resources Personnel Participant Results**

The third research question expands the investigation beyond these two specific districts to examine successful retention practices across Colonial Intermediate Unit #20:

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- What recruitment and retention strategies have been adopted by other school districts within Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 within the past five (5) years as measured by a District Perception Survey?

Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, located in Northeastern Pennsylvania, serves school districts in Monroe, Northampton, and Pike Counties. This broader perspective, measured through a District Perception Survey (Appendix F), provided valuable context about what strategies have proven effective in similar geographic and demographic settings over the past five years. The District Perception Survey was electronically distributed to four Human Personnel Administrators via Google Forms, garnering responses from three members. The response collection period ran from December 2, 2024, to February 1, 2025. A reminder email was sent to the Human Resources Administrators on January 13, 2025.

The survey data regarding comprehensive induction and mentoring programs showed a positive but not uniform implementation across the three districts. As evidenced in Table 19, a substantial majority of respondents (67.7%) reported these programs are implemented “Almost all the time (81-100%) throughout their respective district. This indicates a high level of consistency in program delivery for most educational settings. However, it is noteworthy that one respondent (33.3%) indicated a lower implementation frequency, characterizing it as occurring “Frequently (51-80% of the time).” This inter-district variation shows that while induction and mentoring programs are generally well-established in most responding districts, there remains an opportunity for cross-district collaboration and knowledge sharing.

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**Table 19**

*Implementation of Comprehensive Induction and Mentoring Programs (n = 3)*

Statement	n	%
<b>Our school district implements comprehensive Induction and Mentoring Programs.</b>		
Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time	1	33.3
Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time	2	66.7

An analysis of the Human Resource Administrator responses noted uniformity in professional development implementation across all participating districts. As shown in Table 20, all three school districts (100%) reported implementing meaningful professional learning/development for teachers “Almost all the time (81-100% of the time).” This unanimous response pattern demonstrates consistency in school districts prioritizing teacher professional growth across different educational systems.

**Table 20**

*Implementation of Meaningful Professional Learning/Development for Teachers (n = 3)*

Statement	n	%
<b>Our school district implements meaningful professional learning/development for our teachers.</b>		
Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time	3	100

All three respondents (100%) indicted that leadership opportunities for teachers are provided “Almost all the time (81-100%)” in their respective school districts. As noted in Table 21, this unanimous response suggests that providing leadership opportunities is a consistent practice across three separate school districts, like the

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implementation of meaningful professional learning/development. This consistent 100% rate across both professional development and leadership opportunities indicates areas of strength in the districts' support and engagement practices.

**Table 21**

*Provision of Leadership Opportunities for Teachers (n = 3)*

Statement	n	%
<b>Our school district provides leadership opportunities for teachers.</b>		
Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time	3	100

The survey results regarding support for teacher well-being reveals notable variation among the participating school districts. As presented in Table 22, two districts (66.7%) reported supporting teacher well-being "Almost all the time (81-100)," while one school district (33.3%) indicated providing support "Frequently (51-80% of the time)." This distribution mirrors the pattern observed in the implementation of induction and mentoring programs (Table 19), where the same districts provided identical responses to both survey questions. This mirroring suggests consistent inter-district variability in teacher support mechanisms, with each district maintaining similar levels of commitment across different types of teacher support programs.

**Table 22**

*Support for Teacher Well-Being (n = 3)*

Statement	n	%
<b>Our school district supports teacher well-being.</b>		
Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time	1	33.3

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Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time	2	66.7
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Survey results demonstrate consistency in teacher engagement practices among the participating educational systems. As shown in Table 23, all three surveyed school districts (100%) reported promoting teacher engagement “Almost all of the time (81-100%).” This unanimous response pattern indicated implementation of engagement strategies throughout the region.

This finding represents the third category, alongside professional development, and leadership opportunities, where all districts reported the highest possible implementation frequency. The data indicates that participating districts have successfully established systematic approaches to engage teachers professionally, potentially contributing to positive retention outcomes.

**Table 23**

*Promotion of Teacher Engagement (n = 3)*

Statement	n	%
<b>Our school district promotes teacher engagement.</b>		
Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time	3	100

When asked about competitive starting salary for certificated teachers, the data noted in Table 24 shows two respondents (66.7%) indicated that a competitive starting salary is implemented “Almost all the time (81-100%),” while one respondent (33.3%) indicated implementation “Once in a while (11-30% of the time).” This category shows the most significant variation in responses, with one response falling in the lower

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frequency range. This suggests that perceptions regarding competitive starting salaries may vary considerably among participating school districts.

**Table 24**

*Implementation of Competitive Starting Salary (n = 3)*

Statement	n	%
<b>Our school district implements a competitive starting salary.</b>		
Once in a while ~ 11-30% of the time	1	33.3
Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time	2	66.7

Table 25 represents survey responses regarding the frequency with which the school district implements a streamlined salary matrix that offers competitive compensation through a focused approach to step and column advancements. The data shows that all three respondents (100%) indicated that a streamlined salary matrix is implemented “Almost all the time (81-100%)” in their respective school districts.

This is the fourth category from the Human Resources responses to receive a unanimous “Almost all the time” notation (along with professional development, leadership opportunities, and teacher engagement), indicating another area of strength in the districts’ teacher compensation framework. Interestingly, where there was some variation in perceptions about competitive starting salaries, there is complete agreement about the implementation of the overall salary matrix structure within Colonial Intermediate Unit #20’s region.

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**Table 25**

*Implementation of Streamlined Salary Matrix Offering Competitive Compensation (n = 3)*

Statement	n	%
<b>Our school district has a streamlined salary matrix that offers competitive compensation through a focused approach to step and column advancements.</b>		
Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time	3	100

Survey responses regarding the frequency with which a school district promotes positive working conditions (i.e., administrative support, resources, shared decision making, positive district/school culture) is represented in Table 26. This data showed that two respondents (66.7%) indicated that positive working conditions are promoted “Almost all the time (81-100%),” while one respondent (33.3%) indicated positive promotion occurs “Frequently (51-80% of the time).” This distribution matches what was noted in the tables for induction/mentoring programs and teacher well-being support, with the majority indicating high implementation frequency, but with some variation in perception. This suggests that while promoting positive working conditions is generally viewed as consistent across Colonial Intermediate Unit #20’s region, there may be opportunities to enhance this aspect to achieve the same level of unanimity uncovered in other categories.

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**Table 26**

*Promotion of Positive Working Conditions (n = 3)*

Statement	n	%
<b>Our school district promotes positive working conditions (i.e.: administrative support, resources, shared decision making, positive district/school culture).</b>		
Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time	1	33.3
Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time	2	66.7

The qualitative responses from participating school districts reveals distinct approaches to teacher retention beyond the structured survey items. As documented in Table 27, each district employs a differentiated strategy emphasizing various retention elements. The first district prioritizes financial security through “Excellent Benefits,” suggesting an emphasis on compensation packages beyond base salary. The second district implements a systematic developmental approach featuring formal “Induction Program, Two-Year Mentoring Program, Competitive Contract,” indicating investment in both professional growth and competitive compensation. The third district focuses on engagement and professional fulfillment through “Leadership opportunities, many clubs and/or programs that teachers can be part of,” highlighting the importance of meaningful professional involvement beyond classroom responsibilities. These qualitative insights complement quantitative findings by illustrating how districts operationalize retention strategies through specific initiatives. Collectively, the responses demonstrate complementary approaches across the financial (benefits, competitive contracts), development (induction and mentoring), and engagement (leadership roles,

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extracurricular involvement) dimensions of retention frameworks. This multifaceted approach aligns with research-supported best practices in educator retention.

**Table 27**

*Additional Strategies and Approaches for Improving Teacher Retention (n = 3)*

Human Resources Response (HR)	Strategies
<b>HR Participant #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excellent Benefits</li></ul>
<b>HR Participant #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Induction Program</li><li>• Two-Year Mentoring Program</li><li>• Competitive Contract</li></ul>
<b>HR Participant #3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leadership opportunities</li><li>• Many clubs and/or programs that teachers can be part of</li><li>• A deep connectedness between the district and the city of Bethlehem and its community partners. The district is committed to a diverse faculty and supports that effort through employing a supervisor of equity initiatives.</li></ul>

### Discussion

The purpose of the data collection in this action research study was to identify key factors that influence certificated professional staff to remain in their teaching positions at the Papillon and Border Collie School Districts. By gathering both individual perspectives and institutional data, providing a comprehensive understanding of teacher retention, identifying specific factors that motivate teachers to continue their careers within these districts, will enable district leaders to develop evidence-based retention strategies, and support implementation of targeted initiatives to retain teaching staff.

Through the triangulation of three data sources: quantitative survey data from the Papillon School District, qualitative data from educators in the Border Collie School

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District, and district-level perception data from Human Resources administrators, the analysis explored factors contributing to teacher attrition and retention, with emphasis on alignment and misalignment between systematic efforts and teachers' lived experiences.

Results that appear consistently across all three data sources revealed similar themes, issues, or mutually reinforced the validity:

- Supportive Structures and Mentoring
- Leadership Opportunities
- Compensation Frameworks

Human Resources Administrators believe mentoring and induction programs are core elements for teacher retention. This assessment is validated by feedback from teachers in the Border Collie School District, where successful implementation has yielded positive results. Teachers specifically highlight the value of supportive administrators who provide positive feedback, including thoughtful gestures like post-it notes (Table 15). As stated in Table 15, another teacher emphasized that supportive colleagues and exceptional administrative support are decisive factors in their professional satisfaction. In the Papillon School District, survey data reveals moderately positive attitudes toward school leadership and peer relationships (Table 6). The data indicated that 83% of responses showed teachers feel "quite a bit" or a "tremendous amount" of respect from their colleagues. Additionally noted in Table 6, 78% of responses indicated teachers feel they "belong quite a bit" or completely belong" at their school, demonstrating strong professional community bonds.

In reference to leadership opportunities, Human Resources reports that extensive leadership pathways are available to teachers. Qualitative data confirms that access to

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leadership opportunities positively impact teacher morale, though implementation effectiveness varies across schools and districts. While some teachers express enthusiasm about their role inspiring students and their appreciation for teaching colleagues, there are notable concerns regarding upper administration support. One teacher specifically stated, “I love inspiring students...and I LOVE the teaching staff...[but] upper administration is not at all supportive.” This suggests that leadership structures may be present but require better execution to fully realize their potential for improving teacher retention.

When analyzing competitive compensation responses, the Human Resources personnel identify this component as an organizational strength. Teachers in the Papillon School District acknowledge the existence of structured pay systems but express significant ongoing concerns regarding compensation adequacy. Over 65% of respondents (Table 7) report spending “quite a bit” or a tremendous amount” of their personal funds on classroom resources, indicating a substantial financial burden beyond their professional salaries. Teacher feedback explicitly addresses compensation dissatisfaction, with one teacher stating they are, “severely underpaid for the important job we are expected to perform” (Table 17). The disconnect between Human Resources Administrators’ assessment and teacher experience regarding compensation suggests this area requires particular attention for improving retention.

Areas that revealed significant inconsistencies or disconnects among the data response perceptions were:

- Well-being and Workload Disconnect.
- Recognition and Trust.

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The Human Resources Administrators rate teacher well-being as well-supported “Almost all the time (81-100%),” indicating a positive assessment of the systems in place to support teachers (Table 22). However, this evaluation stands in stark contrast to the actual experiences reported by teachers in both Papillon and Border Collie School Districts. Teachers consistently report experiencing burnout, insufficient planning time, and overwhelming workloads. The severity of this disconnect is evident in teachers’ testimonials. One teacher expressed frustration with management practices stating, “Everything is over micromanaged...teacher ideas are rarely if ever considered.” This suggests not only workload concerns but also a lack of professional autonomy. Another teacher highlighted encroachment of work into personal time, noted in Table 18, “I would love one more prep period; I bring work home, especially over the weekends. I would love more time during my day for grading and planning.” This statement reflects the inadequacy of allocated planning time and the subsequent impact on work-life balance, directly contradicting Human Resources Administrators’ assessment of well-supported well-being.

The Human Resources data noted positive working conditions are widely promoted throughout the school system. However, teacher feedback shows a significant divergence from this perspective, with educators reporting feelings of being unrecognized for their contributions and mistrusted in their professional capacities. The depth of this disconnect is captured in teachers’ comments. For example, one teacher expressed a severe lack of recognition and appreciation by stating, “We are not recognized at all, the upper administration only cares about themselves and their salaries. They don’t care about the teachers or the overall health and well-being of the teachers.” (Table 15). This

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perception indicates a divide between administration and teaching staff. Another veteran educator provided historical context to the issue expressing, “No, I am in my 35<sup>th</sup> year of teaching and I have rarely been recognized for being a good teacher” (Table 15). This statement from a 35-year veteran teacher suggests that recognition issues are not merely recent developments but potentially long-standing systemic problems that contradict the Human Resources’ positive assessment of working conditions within the same region served by Colonial Intermediate Unit #20.

Finally, the comprehensive analysis examined shows the following areas in alignment with all stakeholders’ input highlighting important connections that might not be apparent when examining each source in isolation:

- Mission-Driven Resilience
- Equity and Inclusion Efforts

While the Human Resource responses did not explicitly address teachers’ intrinsic motivations, qualitative responses from educators revealed mission-driven resilience is a major retention factor. Teachers consistently noted their commitment to students and educational purpose serves as a powerful foundation for professional resilience and job satisfaction. One teacher articulated this connection through their commitment to vulnerable students, “I like the students I work with. They are at risk and need someone that wants them to do well” (Table 13). This statement underscores how service to students with specific needs fosters a meaningful professional purpose. Another teacher emphasized their passion for subject matter and student development by stating, “I love working with children and helping them learn how to read” (Table 13). These testimonials demonstrate that personal mission and purpose significantly contribute to

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teacher retention, complementing formal retention strategies with intrinsic motivational factors that Human Resources initiatives could potentially leverage more effectively.

"Supervisor of Equity Initiatives" was mentioned in the Human Resources responses and articulates a commitment to diverse hiring practices, indicating institutional attention to equity concerns. While teachers did not directly reference these specific initiatives in their qualitative responses, this organizational focus complements reported concerns centered around micromanagement and exclusion. Teacher autonomy emerged as a concern across multiple responses, with educators expressing frustration about excessive oversight and limited professional decision-making authority. One teacher directly identified the problem, stating: "Everything is over micromanaged. Again, teacher ideas are rarely, if ever considered." This sentiment was echoed by another educator who acknowledged existing autonomy while emphasizing its importance: "I feel that teachers know their students and know what works best for the students and the class. I think we do have autonomy, but I think it is important not to be micromanaged."

The concerns about micromanagement were further reinforced by broader issues of administrative disconnect, with another teacher noting: "Administration are out of touch...teacher voices are not heard." Collectively, these responses highlight a pattern where teachers feel their professional expertise is undervalued and their voices marginalized in decision-making processes that directly affect their classrooms and students. Another teacher highlighted specific equity challenges related to special education by stating, "I felt he didn't respect special education teachers do to lack of

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knowledge about the profession. I also felt he allowed other people to make decisions for him because he lacked knowledge and experience in his position" (Table 17).

The presence of formal equity structures in the Human Resources documentation, when analyzed alongside teacher concerns, suggests that though the organization has established mechanisms to address equity, implementation effectiveness may require enhancement to fully address teachers' experiences of exclusion or disrespect. The relationship between institutional structures and identified challenges presents an opportunity to strengthen existing equity initiatives by directly addressing concerns raised by educators.

### **Summary**

This research has examined teacher retention factors through a comprehensive analysis of data triangulated from three distinct surveys across the Border Collie and Papillon School Districts, and Human Resources Administrators from school districts served by Colonial Intermediate Unit #20. The research uncovered significant insights into the complex dynamics affecting teacher satisfaction, engagement, and retention.

The findings demonstrated both areas of alignment and notable divergence between the Human Resources' perceptions and teachers' experiences. In areas of complementarity, evidence showed mentoring and induction programs positively impact retention when implemented effectively, with supportive administrators and colleagues making "all the difference" according to educator testimonials. Additionally, the data unveiled that while Human Resources Administrators did not explicitly address intrinsic motivation, teachers consistently identified mission-driven resilience (commitment to their students) and educational purpose as a foundational retention factor.

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The analysis also uncovered key areas of divergence. The Human Resources' perceptions rated teacher well-being as well-supported "almost all the time," educators in both school districts reported significant levels of burnout, insufficient planning time, and increased workloads, with many bringing work home over the weekend. Similarly, Human Resources Administrators' assessment of widely promoted positive working conditions stood in stark contrast to teachers' reports of feeling unrecognized and mistrusted, with 10 out of 14 respondents expressed feeling "partially recognized" "or "not "recognized" as noted in Table 15.

The research further highlighted nuanced perspectives on leadership opportunities, compensation frameworks, and equity initiatives. While Human Resource professionals reported extensive leadership pathways and competitive compensation as organizational strengths, teacher experiences varied considerably, with 65% of respondents reporting significant personal expenditures on classroom resources. While formal equity structures exist at the institutional level, implementation effectiveness requires enhancement to address teachers' experiences of exclusion or disrespect.

These findings provide a foundation for developing comprehensive conclusions and targeted recommendations to address the complex challenges of teacher retention. The significant disparities between institutional perceptions and classroom realities underscore the necessity for evidence-based approaches that bridge these gaps while leveraging identified organizational strengths. Building upon this synthesis, will propose specific, actionable strategies to enhance teacher retention by addressing the identified areas of divergence while strengthening complementary factors that support educator satisfaction and professional longevity.

## Chapter V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The American education system faces a challenge that threatens its fundamental ability to provide quality education: the increasing difficulty retaining qualified teachers in our nation's classrooms. Teacher retention has emerged as one of the most pressing issues affecting educational institutions today, with implications that extend far beyond staffing concerns to directly impacting student achievement, school culture, and educational continuity. When experienced teachers leave their positions, they take with them not only their professional expertise, but also their understanding of the school community, established relationships with students and families, and the instructional knowledge that cannot be easily replaced.

The urgency of addressing teacher retention has intensified in recent years as schools navigate evolving educational landscapes, increased accountability measures, and ever-changing student needs. Educational leaders need to move beyond simply acknowledging the concern to implementing evidence-based strategies that effectively support and retain their teaching staff. In Northeastern Pennsylvania, school districts face challenges maintaining a stable teaching workforce, which places immense pressure on district leaders responsible for staffing. The competition for talent extends beyond the immediate region, as rural and suburban districts competing with not only each other but also with larger urban districts and neighboring states that often provide more lucrative compensation packages.

This mixed methods research study explored multifaceted factors contributing to teacher attrition in public schools through a comprehensive triangulation approach that

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combined quantitative survey data from the Papillon School District, in-depth qualitative responses from educators in the Border Collie School District, as well as strategic insights from Human Resources Administrators. The research addressed the complex task of recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, which has become increasingly demanding for Human Resources Administrators and other educational leaders, requiring strategic thinking and innovative approaches grounded in empirical evidence.

### **Conclusions**

The findings highlight a complex web of interconnected professional, structural, and emotional factors that shape teachers' career persistence decisions and their choice to remain in or depart from the education profession. The research results revealed that teacher retention cannot be understood through a single lens or addressed through isolated interventions. Instead, the data demonstrates that educators' decisions emerge from the dynamic interaction between workplace conditions, administrative support systems, professional growth opportunities, and personal fulfillment factors within the broader context of competitive regional education employment markets.

Each dataset contributed distinct yet complementary perspectives that, when analyzed through methodological triangulation, exposed both the strengths within current district approaches and the gaps that continue to impact teacher retention efforts. The quantitative findings from the Papillon School District provided the statistical foundation for understanding retention patterns and identifying key variables that correlate with teacher persistence. The numerical insights were enriched by the qualitative responses from Border Collie School District educators, who provided detailed explanations of experiences and decision-making processes. The administrative perspective from Human

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Resources Administrators added a third dimension, which revealed the organizational challenges and policy constraints that shape district-level retention strategies in an increasingly competitive talent acquisition environment.

Together, the converging data sources provide a comprehensive picture of the teacher attrition concern to reveal the systemic nature of retention challenges. The findings suggest that effective retention strategies should address multiple interconnected factors simultaneously, recognizing that teachers' career decisions are influenced by multiple factors rather than any single determining factor. Understanding this becomes key for school districts operating in competitive job markets where traditional approaches to retention may be insufficient.

The results from the research study revealed five interconnected themes that illuminate the complex factors driving teacher attrition in public school districts located in Northeastern Pennsylvania. These conclusions demonstrate significant gaps between administrative perceptions and teacher experiences across multiple dimensions of the educational workplace environment.

### ***Teacher Compensation and Financial Strain***

Inadequate compensation remains a fundamental contributor to teacher attrition, creating financial pressures that extend beyond base salary considerations. While Human Resource Administrators consistently emphasized their districts' structured and competitive salary matrices, the experiences of the teachers revealed substantial financial burdens that these systems fail to address. More than 65% of Papillon respondents indicated spending "quite a bit" or "a tremendous amount" of their personal funds on classroom materials, highlighting a disconnect between policy intent and teacher reality.

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This gap suggests that even districts with well-designed compensation structures may inadvertently contribute to teacher financial stress through inadequate funding for essential classroom resources, forcing educators to subsidize their professional responsibilities with personal finances.

### ***Workload, Burnout, and Time Constraints***

The research revealed that teachers consistently experience overwhelming workloads and insufficient planning time, contributing to professional burnout and attrition decisions. Despite Human Resources' perceptions of strong district well-being initiatives, teacher responses illustrated how current support systems fail to address the demands of daily operations that define their professional experience. Comments such as "I bring work home...I would love more time during my day" demonstrate that existing wellness programs, while well-intentioned, do not adequately address the fundamental time constraints that force teachers to extend their workday beyond sustainable limits. This finding indicates that effective retention strategies should address structural workload issues rather than relying solely on supplemental wellness offerings.

### ***Leadership and Administrative Trust***

Trust in school leadership emerged as a key factor influencing teacher retention decisions, with significant disparities between administrative self-perceptions and teacher experiences. While Human Resource Administrators reported school leaders promote positive working conditions "almost all the time," teachers described inconsistent recognition, micromanagement practices, and limited voice in decision-making processes that directly affect their professional responsibilities. Papillon School District teachers frequently marked "trusted somewhat" or "trusted a little" about their relationships with

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administration, while Border Collie School District teachers expressed concerns about administrative priorities that seem disconnected from classroom realities. This trust deficit suggests that leadership development and communication strategies require substantial attention to bridge the gap between administrative intentions and teacher perceptions.

### ***Mentoring and Professional Development***

Mentoring programs demonstrated both significant potential and concerning inconsistencies in the implementation and effectiveness. Human Resources Administrators widely cited mentoring initiatives as key retention strategies, and teachers who received strong mentoring reported notably higher job satisfaction levels, confirming the value of these programs when implemented with fidelity. However, this research revealed substantial variations in program delivery and impact, suggesting that many mentoring efforts lack the sustained and individualized support necessary to effectively retain new teachers. This finding suggests that effective teacher retention requires school districts to move beyond simply establishing mentoring programs to ensuring consistent, high-quality implementation that meets the diverse needs of beginning and/or novice educators.

### ***School Climate and Collegial Relationships***

Strong collegial relationships and positive school climate emerged as important protective factors that can help retain teachers even in the presence of other challenges. Teachers who described supportive peer relationships and experienced a strong sense of belonging within their school communities were more likely to express commitment to their positions despite facing compensation, workload, or administrative concerns. These

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findings underscore the vital role that interpersonal dynamics and school culture play in teacher retention decisions. This suggests school districts should prioritize initiatives that foster collaborative professional environments and strengthen the social fabric of their school communities as fundamental retention strategies.

### **Recommendations for Educational Stakeholders**

The conclusions from this research study necessitate targeted, evidence-based interventions across multiple levels of educational leadership and governance. Based on these findings, specific recommendations are provided for district administrators to implement effective retention strategies for their current staff. Additionally, this section draws broader conclusions about teacher retention in public education and suggests areas for future research and policy development. The following recommendations address the identified gaps between administrative perceptions and teacher experiences while providing actionable strategies for improving teacher retention through systematic organizational change.

#### ***School District Leaders and Administrators***

District leaders and school administrators should prioritize comprehensive compensation reform that extends beyond base salary adjustments to address the full scope of teacher financial concerns. This includes improving compensation transparency through clear communication about salary structures, benefits packages, and advancement opportunities, while simultaneously advocating for competitive wages that reflect regional market conditions, and the professional qualifications required for effective teaching. School Districts should establish dedicated funding streams for

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classroom materials and instructional resources to eliminate the expectation that teachers should subsidize their professional responsibilities with personal finances.

Addressing teacher workload requires systematic restructuring of daily schedules and professional responsibilities to provide meaningful relief from the time constraints that contribute to burnout and attrition. Administrators should implement protected planning time that cannot be compromised by meetings, duties, or other non-instructional demands, while streamlining administrative tasks and non-instructional duties that detract from core teaching responsibilities. This approach requires careful analysis of current time allocation practices and deliberate reallocation of resources to support teachers' primary instructional mission.

Building authentic trust between teachers and administrators demands fundamental changes in leadership approaches that prioritize shared governance, transparent communication, and consistent recognition of staff contributions. Leaders should establish regular opportunities for meaningful teacher input in decision-making processes, implement visible recognition systems that acknowledge both individual achievements and collaborative efforts, and develop communication practices that demonstrate genuine respect for teacher expertise and professional judgement. This trust-building process requires sustained commitment to authentic leadership practices that align administrative actions with stated values and priorities.

Effective teacher retention requires mentoring programs to evolve from traditional first-year support models toward comprehensive, sustained professional development that addresses the diverse needs of educators at various career stages. School Districts should ensure mentoring initiatives include relevant, job-embedded support that extends beyond

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initial orientation to encompass ongoing professional growth, career advancement preparation, and leadership opportunities. Berry et al. (2019) stated, “Professional learning, properly structure influences teacher retention and the kind of collective efficacy necessary for long-term school improvement” (p.13). This assertion is substantiated by this research findings where four respondents demonstrated clear intentions for continued professional growth within education. When asked about their career transitions, participants expressed diverse yet education-focused aspirations. One respondent shared the desire to specialize in special education while pursuing a master’s degree in the field. Another respondent expressed goals of obtaining a Doctor of Education to eventually teach at the collegiate level and a third stated their interest in becoming a Structured Literacy Consultant. These respondents illustrate how structured professional learning opportunities not only support teacher retention but also foster the forward-thinking career development that Berry et al. (2019) identified as essential for sustained educational improvement. This finding is further supported by responses from the Papillon School District, which revealed high levels of educator optimism regarding future school improvement, with 32.3% of respondents indicating they were “somewhat optimistic” and 42.4% expressing that they were “quite optimistic” about their school’s potential for growth.

These programs require adequate funding, trained mentor selection and preparation, and systematic evaluation to ensure consistent quality and effectiveness across all school sites. In addition, school districts that reported the highest implementation rates could potentially share best practices, resources, and implementation strategies with other school districts that reported less consistent

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application. This collaborative approach could help elevate program consistency across all participating districts, potentially leading to more uniform support for new teachers throughout the region.

### ***Human Resources Departments***

Human Resources Departments should develop systematic approaches to bridge the perception gaps noted in this research study by implementing regular auditing processes that assess how district practices and initiatives are experienced at the school level because the educators we bring into our schools and institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the minds of future generations. This includes conducting comprehensive policy impact assessments that gather direct feedback from teachers about the effectiveness of existing supports, the accessibility of resources, and the alignment between stated policies and actual implementation practices. These auditing processes would be part of the continuous improvement efforts that address identified discrepancies between administrative intentions and teacher experiences.

Professional development and induction programs emerge as another retention strategy that requires comprehensive implementation and sustained support beyond the first year. Shuls and Flores (2020, p. 12) stated, “Grier and Holcombe (2008) note that teachers are more willing to engage and support the professional development and improvement process if they are tasked with helping create it.” This collaborative approach to professional development design recognizes teachers as professionals who can identify their own growth needs and contribute meaningfully to program development. Research demonstrates that new teachers who engage in comprehensive induction programs develop stronger instructional and classroom management

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capabilities (Sutcher et al., 2016, as cited in Shuls & Flores, 2020). These programs could extend beyond initial orientation sessions to provide ongoing mentoring, structured feedback, and targeted skill development throughout the critical early years of teaching. Results from my research showed that 100% of Human Resources Administrators reported implementing comprehensive induction and mentoring programs with high frequency. Specifically, two-thirds (66.7%) indicate implementation “almost all the time” (81-100% of the time), while one-third (33.3%) reported implementation “frequently” (51-80% of the time). The alignment between district implementation practices and the research from Sutcher et al. (2016) further supports new teachers receiving evidence-based supports builds their professional competencies over time.

Well-being support systems require substantial enhancement to address the complex mental health and professional satisfaction needs of educators. Human Resources Administrators should prioritize comprehensive mental health services that include counseling support, stress management resources, and work-life balance initiatives specifically designed for the unique demands of teaching. The variation in well-being support implementation merits particular attention, given the established connection between teacher well-being and retention outcomes documented by Ferren (2021), who stated, “Yet comprehensive SEL training for educators is currently not widely available. All states include some SEL competency training for teachers in their certification requirements.” Ferren (2021) explains that teachers are expected to foster students' social-emotional learning (SEL) despite lacking adequate professional development in this area themselves. SEL instruction is fundamental to K-12 education as it enhances student conduct, academic performance, and overall school environment.

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These research findings show that 80.8% of respondents cited staff well-being as a reason for staying in school districts that prioritize employee well-being. Enhanced consistency in this area contributes significantly to comprehensive teacher retention across all districts. Regular climate surveys should be implemented to monitor school culture, job satisfaction, and emerging concerns before they contribute to attrition decisions. According to Lee et al. (2023), “Teacher well-being plays a critical role in establishing acceptable levels of school staffing, maintaining teacher attendance, and retaining teachers over time” (p. 54). These well-being initiatives need to be designed with teacher input and regularly evaluated for effectiveness and accessibility.

Implementing stay surveys is a proactive approach to gather teacher feedback on retention factors, instructional support, and professional development needs. Osburn (2015) defines a Stay Interview as, “structured retention interview designed to discover why a current employee stays and what motivates and engages them. They help minimize ‘triggers’ that cause an employee to consider quitting and they are great opportunities to build trust” (para. 2). The Educator Stay Survey serves as a systematic tool to determine specific reasons educators choose to remain within a school district rather than seeking employment elsewhere. These research findings revealed that student relationships serve as the primary retention factor motivating teachers to remain in their positions. Twelve respondents cited their “enjoyment of working with and helping students learn and grow” as a key motivating factor. Additionally, teachers expressed fulfillment in working with at-risk populations, with one respondent noting the importance of serving students who “need someone that wants them to do well.”

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Investment in leadership development represents a key opportunity to address the trust deficits identified in this study while simultaneously creating diverse pathways for teacher advancement and retention. One way to achieve this is for Human Resources Administrators to establish comprehensive leadership preparation programs that develop administrators' skills in authentic communication, shared governance, and teacher support while creating opportunities for teacher leadership that do not require leaving the classroom.

### ***Policymakers and Education Boards***

Sustained funding from policymakers and education boards for comprehensive retention initiatives address structural factors contributing to teacher attrition. The complexity of managing school budgets that are rarely flush with funds creates significant challenges for administrators tasked with balancing limited resources against the increasing need for financial incentives and competitive compensation packages to retain quality educators. Without adequate financial support from higher levels of governance, schools find themselves caught between the imperative to retain quality educators and the practical constraints of limited resources. This funding gap undermines the efforts to implement meaningful retention strategies, as schools cannot offer the competitive salaries, professional development opportunities, and support systems necessary to keep experienced teachers in the classroom. Sustained investment initiatives in retention acknowledges both the fiscal realities facing individual schools and the broader systemic changes required to create stable, attractive teaching environments that reduce attrition rates across the education sector.

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This funding should support competitive compensation packages, adequate classroom resource allocation, and the creation of working conditions that enable effective teaching and professional satisfaction. Specific funding priorities should include stipends for additional responsibilities, protected planning time that may require additional staffing, and instructional autonomy that empowers teachers to make professional decisions about curriculum delivery and student support strategies.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the findings and conclusions of this research study. These limitations affect both the scope of the findings and their broader applicability to other educational contexts and populations.

#### ***Response Rate and Sample Representativeness Concerns***

The response rate across all three data collection sources presents substantial limitations that may compromise the generalizability of the study findings. The Papillon School District yielded only 99 responses from approximately 775 eligible staff members, representing a response rate of approximately 13%. The Border Collie School District participation was even more limited, with just 14 responses received from approximately 197 eligible staff members, resulting in a response rate of only 7%.

According to Wu et al. (2022), the research is mixed regarding an acceptable rate of return for online surveys in action research; however, an acceptable low response rate generally falls between 20% and 30%. While these sample sizes provided sufficient data for identifying trends and patterns within the responding populations, they may not adequately represent the full spectrum of perspectives, experiences, and demographic characteristics present within the broader teaching workforce.

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The low response rates raise important questions about potential systematic differences between teachers who chose to participate and those who did not respond to the survey invitations. Teachers experiencing high levels of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction might be more motivated to participate than those with moderate feelings about their professional experiences. Additionally, teachers facing significant time constraints or burnout may have been less likely to complete the survey, potentially underrepresenting the very population most at risk for attrition. These response rates suggest the findings may not fully capture the range of factors influencing teacher retention decisions across the entire eligible population.

### *Administrative Perspective Alignment Challenges*

The Human Resources Administrator's response rate created additional limitations that affected the triangulation potential of the mixed methods design. Only three out of four invited Human Resources administrators participated in the district-level survey, reducing the administrative perspective component of the study. More significantly, none of the responding Human Resources participants represented the Papillon or Border Collie School Districts where teacher surveys were conducted. This misalignment prevented direct comparison and triangulation of teacher and administrative perspectives within the same organizational contexts, limiting the ability to assess how policy intentions translate into teacher experiences within specific district environments.

The absence of Human Resources perspectives from the teacher survey districts means that identified gaps between administrative perceptions and teacher experiences cannot be definitively attributed to specific districts under study. This limitation affects

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the precision of recommendations for these districts and reduces the ability to provide targeted, context-specific guidance for addressing retention within these organizational settings.

### ***Geographic and Institutional Scope Limitations***

The study's geographic boundaries present important constraints on the generalizability of findings to other educational contexts and regions. All participating districts maintain affiliations with Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, creating an institutional environment that may not reflect the diversity of challenges, resources, and organizational cultures present in other geographic locations. The Northeastern Pennsylvania context introduces specific regional factors, including competitive salary pressures from neighboring states and rural-suburban district characteristics, which may not apply to urban districts, other geographic regions, or states with different educational funding structures and policy environments.

### ***Methodological and Recruitment Limitations***

Several methodological choices created additional constraints on the study's scope and potential impact. The absence of systematic follow-up communication strategies to encourage broader participation may have contributed to the low response rates and limited the diversity of perspectives captured in the data collection process. In retrospect, sending a third reminder email a few days before the survey window closed would have been beneficial. This final outreach effort may have provided additional motivation for educators who had expressed initial interest but had not yet found the opportunity to complete their participation. Enhanced recruitment approaches, such as follow-up communications or administrative support for participation, could have

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contributed to improved response rates and a more comprehensive representation of the target population. The voluntary participation approach, while ethically appropriate, introduced potential self-selection bias that may have skewed the sample toward educators with particularly strong opinions about retention factors or those with sufficient time and motivation to complete survey instruments. The lack of random sampling techniques further limits the ability to make statistical inferences about the broader population of teachers within these districts or similar educational contexts.

While these methodological limitations must be acknowledged in interpreting the study results, the findings provide valuable evidence-based insights to teacher retention factors that can inform immediate practice improvements and policy development. The identified patterns and relationships offer contributions to understanding retention challenges, and the recommendations presented are grounded in solid empirical evidence from multiple data sources. Future research with expanded samples and enhanced recruitment strategies would further strengthen these conclusions and extend their applicability to broader educational contexts, building upon the foundation established by this study's findings.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings and limitations of this research study reveal areas where additional research could significantly enhance understanding of teacher retention factors and inform more effective policy and practice decisions. These recommendations address methodological improvements, expanded scope, and deeper investigation of the relationships between organizational policies and teacher experiences.

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### *Expanding Geographic and Demographic Scope*

Future research should substantially expand the sample size and geographic diversity to include school districts beyond the region of Colonial Intermediate Unit #20. A comprehensive study incorporating urban, suburban, and rural school districts throughout Pennsylvania would provide a more robust insight into how contextual factors influence teacher retention across different educational environments. This expanded scope would enable readers to identify retention factors that transcend specific contexts while highlighting challenges faced by different types of districts. Such research would be valuable for understanding how competitive salary markets and employment opportunities affect teacher career decisions across diverse geographic areas.

The inclusion of school districts from a larger geographic area would allow for comparative analysis of how different policy environments, funding structures, and administrative support systems influence teacher retention outcomes. A broader perspective would enhance the generalizability of findings and provide policymakers with evidence-based insights applicable to various educational contexts and organizational structures.

### *Strengthening Administrative-Teacher Perspective Alignment*

A priority for future research involves ensuring Human Resources Administrators and teachers are surveyed from the same school districts to enable direct comparison of administrative intentions and teacher experiences within identical organizational contexts. This improvement would provide more precise insight into how district policies translate into classroom-level experiences and where specific gaps exist between policy design and implementation. In addition, this will provide the opportunity for respondents

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to participate in focus groups or individual interviews to garner a more robust understanding.

Research that systematically compares administrative and teacher perspectives within the same school districts would offer valuable guidance for district leaders seeking to understand why well-intentioned practices may not achieve intended retention outcomes. This approach would also enable school districts to identify best practices where administrative support successfully translates into positive teacher experiences, providing models for replication.

### ***Investigating Practices Implementation and Perception Gaps***

The significant gaps between administrative perceptions and teacher experiences identified in this study warrant a focused qualitative investigation through potential case study methodology or ethnographic research approaches. Future studies should examine how district retention initiatives are implemented at the school level, what factors influence successful implementation, and how teachers and school officials perceive and experience these initiatives in their daily professional lives.

Future research should specifically investigate the mechanisms through which district practices either succeed or fail to retain teachers effectively. Understanding implementation barriers, communication challenges, and school-level factors that mediate practice effectiveness would provide practical guidance for improving retention strategy implementation. Such research would benefit from extended observation periods and in-depth interviews with multiple stakeholders at different organizational levels.

***Implementing Longitudinal Research Design***

The dynamic nature of teacher career decisions necessitates longitudinal research that follows educators over multiple years to assess the long-term effectiveness of retention strategies to understand how teacher needs and priorities evolve throughout their careers. Such research should track teachers who participate in specific retention initiatives, including mentoring programs, professional development opportunities, and compensation enhancements, to measure their sustained impact on career satisfaction and retention decisions.

Longitudinal studies could provide critical insight into which retention strategies produce lasting effects versus those that offer only temporary improvements in teacher satisfaction. This research approach would also enable investigation of how external factors, such as policy changes, administrative transitions, or economic conditions, affect retention strategies over time to influence teacher career persistence.

**Summary**

This research study's conclusions were drawn from the mixed-methods study examining factors that contribute to teacher attrition and strategies that support teacher retention. Using data triangulated from three sources: quantitative surveys from the Papillon School District, qualitative responses from educators in the Border Collie School District, and perception data from Human Resources administrators, the research study identified key themes influence teacher decisions to stay or leave the profession.

The findings revealed both areas of alignment and disconnect between district-level practices and experiences of educators. While structures such as mentoring programs, leadership pathways, and salary frameworks are in place, the perceived

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effectiveness varies significantly between teacher respondents and Human Resources Administrators respondents. Topics such as inadequate compensation, unsustainable workloads, inconsistent administrative support, and a lack of recognition emerged as prominent attrition drivers. Conversely, strong collegial relationships, effective mentorship, and a personal sense of mission were shown to positively influence teacher commitment and resilience, leading to higher retention rates and job satisfaction.

Recommendations were offered to address these challenges at multiple levels, including district leadership, Human Resources Departments, and policy makers, with an emphasis on improving communication, aligning policy with practice, and developing equity-centered, teacher-informed retention strategies. Limitations of the study were noted, including low response rates and restricted geographic scope. Recommendations for future research were proposed, which would deepen and broaden the understanding in this critical area.

Ultimately, this research study contributes to the growing body of research that emphasizes the importance of listening to educators, valuing their expertise, and creating sustainable systems of support related to factors that reduce teacher turnover. Reducing teacher attrition is not only a matter of operational efficiency but also a moral imperative to ensure that every student is taught by educators who are supported, respected, and empowered to thrive.

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**APPENDICES**

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

### Appendix A

#### IRB Approval



**Institutional Review Board**  
**250 University Avenue**  
**California, PA 15419**  
**[instreviewboard@pennwest.edu](mailto:instreviewboard@pennwest.edu)**  
**Melissa Sovak, Ph.D.**

Dear Courtney,

Please consider this email as official notification that your proposal titled “Determining Factors to Reduce Attrition Rate Among Certified Teachers” (Proposal #PW24-026) has been approved by the Pennsylvania Western University Institutional Review Board as submitted.

The effective date of approval is 09/06/2024 and the expiration date is 09/05/2024. These dates must appear on the consent form.

Please note that Federal Policy requires that you notify the IRB promptly regarding any of the following:

- (1) Any additions or changes in procedures you might wish for your study (additions or changes must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented)
- (2) Any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects
- (3) Any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in (2).
- (4) To continue your research beyond the approval expiration date of 08/15/2025, you must file additional information to be considered for continuing review. Please contact [instreviewboard@pennwest.edu](mailto:instreviewboard@pennwest.edu)

Please notify the Board when data collection is complete.

Regards,

Melissa Sovak, PhD.  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

### Appendix B

#### **Survey Participant Disclosure Form (Cover Letters)**

##### Informed Consent Form *Panorama Education Survey*

Title of Project: *Determining Factors to Reduce Attrition Rate Among Certificated Teachers*

Researcher/Doctoral Student: Courtney Burrus

Pennsylvania Western University

Phone: (570) 839-7121 ext: 1000

Capstone Project Chair: Dr. John F. Ziegler ([jfziegler@pennwest.edu](mailto:jfziegler@pennwest.edu))

Survey Link: <https://forms.gle/fJtHA8uxwSX72tb48>

**IRB Approval: #PW24-026**

**Effective date: 09/06/2024**

**Expiration date: 09/05/2024**

Dear Papillon Teacher,

As a full-time certified teacher in the Papillon School District, you are being asked to participate in a research study about perceptions of PSD teachers and the reasons why you choose to remain in the district as a classroom teacher. This will be accomplished through an online survey highlighting the following areas: belonging, resources, school climate, school leadership, staff-leadership relationships and well-being.

#### **Where will this study occur?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete one (1) Google Form Electronic Survey entitled, *Panorama Education Survey*, sent via district email in the Fall of 2024. Survey responses will be collected anonymously - your name, email address and building will not be collected on the survey.

#### **How long will the study last?**

The Panorama Education Survey consists of thirty-seven (37) multiple choice questions and will take approximately fifteen (15) minutes to complete. The survey will be available to accept your survey response until: October 31, 2024.

#### **What happens if I choose not to participate?**

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You have the ability to choose whether you want to participate in the study or not. There is no penalty if you elect not to participate.

#### **What are the risks?**

There are minimal risks to this study. You will not be asked questions sensitive in nature. The survey questions may make you feel uncomfortable as some people do not like to volunteer information or feedback that could be perceived as negative or complaining. However, participants are reminded that they are not required to answer any questions of

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

which one chooses. Participants also have the ability to stop their participation at any time without question and responses will be collected anonymously.

### **Can I quit the study before submitting the survey?**

You can elect to stop responding to the survey at any point. Responses will only be recorded when you select the SUBMIT button at the end of the survey.

### **Will my responses be kept confidential and private?**

Yes, the survey data collected from you will be kept confidential, which means only the researcher will see or have access to it. The district will be given a pseudonym, participants' names and email addresses will not be collected and participants will be assigned/referenced using an identification number. Data will be stored on a secure server and password protected and only accessible to the researcher. Researcher notes, including paper notes, will be stored on a flash drive and locked in a fire-proof safe. As per Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46), all research data will be saved and secured for three years.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions about this study?**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher, Courtney Burrus, at [mei88423@pennwest.edu](mailto:mei88423@pennwest.edu) or (570) 839-7121 ext.1000. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researcher, please contact Dr. John F. Ziegler at [jfziegler@pennwest.edu](mailto:jfziegler@pennwest.edu).

*I have read and I understand the preceding information. Any questions or concerns I have regarding participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily. By completing and submitting the survey, I am giving consent to participate.*

**Survey link:** <https://forms.gle/fJtHA8uxwSX72tb48>

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to contribute to this research project. Your involvement in this research study is greatly valued and acknowledged with gratitude.

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

### Informed Consent Form *Educator Stay Survey*

Title of Project: Determining Factors to Reduce Attrition Rate Among Certificated Teachers

Researcher/Doctoral Student: Courtney Burrus

Pennsylvania Western University

Phone: (570) 839-7121 ext: 10000

Capstone Project Chair: Dr. John F. Ziegler ([jfziegler@pennwest.edu](mailto:jfziegler@pennwest.edu))

**Survey Link:** <https://forms.gle/rpeeRsFdvLc64ziR8>

**IRB Approval:** #PW24-026)

**Effective date:** 09/06/2024

**Expiration date:** 09/05/2024

Dear Border Collie Teacher,

As a full-time certified teacher in Border Collie School District, you are being asked to participate in a research study about perceptions of teachers and the reasons why you choose to remain in the district as a classroom teacher. This will be accomplished through an online survey highlighting the following areas: factors that cause a teacher to stay, actions the district can take to increase the teacher's commitment and engagement within their district and causes for a teacher to leave their district.

#### **Where will this study occur?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete one (1) Google Form Electronic Survey entitled, *Educator Stay Survey*, sent via district email in the Fall of 2024. Survey responses will be collected anonymously - your name, email address and building will not be collected on the survey.

#### **How long will the study last?**

The Educator Stay Survey consists of six (6) constructed responses and will take approximately fifteen (15) minutes to complete. The survey will be available to accept your survey response until: November 1, 2024.

#### **What happens if I choose not to participate?**

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You have the ability to choose whether you want to participate in the study or not. There is no penalty if you elect not to participate.

#### **What are the risks?**

There are minimal risks to this study. You will not be asked questions sensitive in nature. The survey questions may make you feel uncomfortable as some people do not like to volunteer information or feedback that could be perceived as negative or complaining. However, participants are reminded that they are not required to answer any questions of which one chooses. Participants also have the ability to stop their participation at any time without question and responses will be collected anonymously.

#### **Can I quit the study before submitting the survey?**

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

You can elect to stop responding to the survey at any point. Responses will only be recorded when you select the **SUBMIT** button at the end of the survey.

### **Will my responses be kept confidential and private?**

Yes, the survey data collected from you will be kept confidential, which means only the researcher will see or have access to it. The district will be given a pseudonym, participants' names and email addresses will not be collected and participants will be assigned/referenced using an identification number. Data will be stored on a secure server and password protected and only accessible to the researcher. Researcher notes, including paper notes, will be stored on a flash drive and locked in a fire-proof safe. As per Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46), all research data will be saved and secured for three years.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions about this study?**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher, Courtney Burrus, at [mei88423@pennwest.edu](mailto:mei88423@pennwest.edu) or (570) 839-7121 ext. 1000. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researcher, please contact Dr. John F. Ziegler at [jfziegler@pennwest.edu](mailto:jfziegler@pennwest.edu).

*I have read and I understand the preceding information. Any questions or concerns I have regarding participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily. By completing and submitting the survey, I am giving consent to participate.*

**Survey link:** <https://forms.gle/rpeeRsFdvLc64ziR8>

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to contribute to this research project. Your involvement in this research study is greatly valued and acknowledged with gratitude.

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

### Informed Consent Form *District Based Perception Survey*

Title of Project: Determining Factors to Reduce Attrition Rate Among Certificated Teachers

Researcher/Doctoral Student: Courtney Burrus

Pennsylvania Western University

Phone: (570) 839-7121 ext: 1000

Capstone Project Chair: Dr. John F. Ziegler ([jfziegler@pennwest.edu](mailto:jfziegler@pennwest.edu))

**Survey Link:** <https://forms.gle/1HkwUvjafaeZwLYP7>

**IRB Approval:** #PW24-026

**Effective date:** 09/06/2024

**Expiration date:** 09/05/2024

Dear Human Resources Administrator,

As the Human Resources Administrator for your school district, you are being asked to participate in a research study about perceptions of teachers and the reasons why they choose to remain in the district as a teacher. The District Based Perception Survey data will help identify research-based employee retention strategies being implemented across other school districts served by the same Intermediate Unit.

#### **Where will this study occur?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete one (1) Google Form Electronic Survey entitled, *District Based Perception Survey*, sent via district email in the Fall of 2024. Survey responses will be collected anonymously - names and school district of employment will not be collected.

#### **How long will the study last?**

The District Based Perception Survey consists of eight (8) multiple choice questions, one (1) constructed response and will take approximately ten (10) minutes to complete. The survey will be available to accept your survey response until: February 1, 2025.

#### **What happens if I choose not to participate?**

Your participation is strictly voluntary. You have the ability to choose whether you want to participate in the study or not. There is no penalty if you elect not to participate.

#### **What are the risks?**

There are minimal risks to this study. You will not be asked questions sensitive in nature. The survey questions may make you feel uncomfortable as some people do not like to volunteer information or feedback that could be perceived as negative or complaining. However, participants are reminded that they are not required to answer any questions of which one chooses. Participants also have the ability to stop their participation at any time without question. Participants' names, email addresses and district where one is employed will not be collected and participants will be assigned/referenced using an identification number.

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

### **Can I quit the study before submitting the survey?**

You can elect to stop responding to the survey at any point. Responses will only be recorded when you select the **SUBMIT** button at the end of the survey.

### **Will my responses be kept confidential and private?**

Yes, the survey data collected from you will be kept confidential, which means only the researcher will see or have access to it. Participants' names and email addresses will not be collected, participants will be assigned/referenced using an identification number. Data will be stored on a secure server and password protected and only accessible to the researcher. Researcher notes, including paper notes, will be stored on a flash drive and locked in a fire-proof safe. As per Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46), all research data will be saved and secured for three years.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions about this study?**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher, Courtney Burrus, at [mei88423@pennwest.edu](mailto:mei88423@pennwest.edu) or (570) 839-7121 ext. 1000. If you would like to speak with someone other than the researcher, please contact Dr. John F. Ziegler at [jfziegler@pennwest.edu](mailto:jfziegler@pennwest.edu).

*I have read and I understand the preceding information. Any questions or concerns I have regarding participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily. By completing and submitting the survey, I am giving consent to participate.*

**Survey link:** <https://forms.gle/1HkwUvjafaeZwLYP7>

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to contribute to this research project. Your involvement in this research study is greatly valued and acknowledged with gratitude.

## Appendix C

### Panorama Education Survey

Thank you for participating in a research study about perceptions of PSD teachers and the reasons why you choose to remain in the district as a classroom teacher. The Informed Consent Form has been provided to you. You can elect to stop responding to the survey at any point. Responses will only be recorded when you select the **SUBMIT** button at the end of the survey.

After the demographic statements, this survey is divided into six (6) Sections:

- Section 2: Belonging
- Section 3: Resources
- Section 4: School Climate
- Section 5: School Leadership
- Section 6: Staff-Leadership Relationships
- Section 7: Well-being

*Please Note: Google Forms is not secure survey software and it is not supported by the University.*

1. I am a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ teacher.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Elementary (K-6, Pk-4, N-3, OR Mid-Level 4-8 \*if teaching 4th, 5th, or 6th grade)
- Secondary (7-12, Mid-Level 7-9, OR Mid-Level 4-8 \*if teaching 7th or 8th grade)
- Special Education
- Related Arts (HPE, Art, Music, Technology etc)
- Specialists / Other (School Counselor, School Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist)

2. I am a \_\_\_\_\_ teacher.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other:

3. I have been a teacher in the Papillon School District for:

*Mark only one oval.*

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16+ years

### Belonging

How much teachers feel that they are valued members of the school community.

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

4. How well do your colleagues understand you as a person?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Do not understand at all
- Understand a little
- Understand somewhat
- Understand quite a bit
- Understand completely

5. How connected do you feel to other adults at your school?

*Mark only one oval.*

Not at all connected

- Slightly connected
- Somewhat connected
- Quite connected
- Extremely connected

6. How much respect do colleagues at your school show you?

*Mark only one oval.*

- No respect at all
- A little bit of respect
- Some respect
- Quite a bit of respect
- A tremendous amount of respect

7. How much do you matter to others in your school?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Do not matter at all
- Matter a little bit
- Matter some
- Matter quite a bit
- Matter a tremendous amount

8. Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Do not belong at all
- Belong a little bit
- Belong somewhat
- Belong quite a bit
- Completely belong

### Resources

Perceptions of the adequacy of the school's resources.

9. To what extent does the quality of resources at your school need to improve?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Needs to improve a tremendous amount
- Needs to improve quite a bit

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

- Needs to improve some
- Needs to improve a little bit
- Does not need to improve at all

10. How urgently does your school's technology need to be updated?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Extremely urgently
- Quite urgently
- Somewhat urgently
- Once in a while
- Almost never

11. For students who need extra support, how difficult is it for them to get the support that they need?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Extremely difficult
- Quite difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Slightly difficult
- Not at all difficult

12. How much of your own money do you spend on your classroom?

*Mark only one oval.*

- A tremendous amount
- Quite a bit
- Some
- A little bit
- Almost none

13. How many more resources do you need to adequately support your students' learning?

*Mark only one oval.*

- A lot more resources
- Quite a few more resources
- Several more resources
- A few more resources
- Almost no resources

14. Overall, how much does your school struggle due to a lack of resources?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Struggles a tremendous amount
- Struggles quite a bit
- Struggles some
- Struggles a little bit
- Does not struggle at all

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

### School Climate

Perceptions of the overall social and learning climate of the school.

15. To what extent are teachers trusted to teach in the way they think is best?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not trusted at all
- Trusted a little bit
- Trusted somewhat
- Trusted quite a bit
- Trusted a tremendous amount

16. How positive are the attitudes of your colleagues?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all positive
- Slightly positive
- Somewhat positive
- Quite positive
- Extremely positive

17. How respectful are the relationships between teachers and students?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all respectful
- Slightly respectful
- Somewhat respectful
- Quite respectful
- Extremely respectful

18. How optimistic are you that your school will improve in the future?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all optimistic
- Slightly optimistic
- Somewhat optimistic
- Quite optimistic
- Extremely optimistic

19. When new initiatives to improve teaching are presented at your school, how supportive are your colleagues?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all supportive
- Slightly supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Quite supportive
- Extremely supportive

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

20. Overall, how positive is the working environment at your school?  
*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all positive
- Slightly positive
- Somewhat positive
- Quite positive
- Extremely positive

### School Leadership

Perceptions of the school leadership's effectiveness.

21. How clearly do your school leaders identify their goals for teachers?  
*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all clearly
- Slightly clearly
- Somewhat clearly
- Quite clearly
- Extremely clearly

22. How positive is the tone that school leaders set for the culture of the school?  
*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all positive
- Slightly positive
- Somewhat positive
- Quite positive
- Extremely positive

23. How effectively do school leaders communicate important information to teachers?  
*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all effectively
- Slightly effectively
- Somewhat effectively
- Quite effectively
- Extremely effectively

24. How knowledgeable are your school leaders about what is going on in teachers' classrooms?  
*Mark only one oval.*

- Not knowledgeable at all
- Slightly knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Quite knowledgeable
- Extremely knowledgeable

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

25. How responsive are school leaders to your feedback?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all responsive
- Slightly responsive
- Somewhat responsive
- Quite responsive
- Extremely responsive

26. For your school leaders, how important is teacher satisfaction?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Somewhat important
- Quite important
- Extremely important

27. When the school makes important decisions, how much input do teachers have?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost no input
- A little bit of input
- Some input
- Quite a bit of input
- A tremendous amount of input

28. Overall, how positive is the influence of the school leaders on the quality of your teaching?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all positive
- Slightly positive
- Somewhat positive
- Quite positive
- Extremely positive

### Staff-Leadership Relationships

Perceptions on faculty relationships with school leaders.

29. How friendly are your school leaders towards you?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all friendly
- Slightly friendly
- Somewhat friendly
- Quite friendly
- Extremely friendly

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

30. At your school, how motivating do you find working with the leadership team?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all motivating
- Slightly motivating
- Somewhat motivating
- Quite motivating
- Extremely motivating

31. How much trust exists between school leaders and staff?

*Mark only one oval.*

Almost no trust

- A little bit of trust
- Some trust
- Quite a bit of trust
- A tremendous amount of trust

32. How much do your school leaders care about you as an individual?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Do not care at all
- Care a little bit
- Care somewhat
- Care quite a bit
- Care a tremendous amount

33. How confident are you that your school leaders have the best interests of the school in mind?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all confident
- Slightly confident
- Somewhat confident
- Quite confident
- Extremely confident

34. How fairly does the school leadership treat the staff?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all fairly
- Slightly fairly
- Somewhat fairly
- Quite fairly
- Extremely fairly

35. When you face a challenge at work, how supportive are your school leaders?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all supportive
- Slightly supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Quite supportive

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

- Extremely supportive

36. How respectful are your school leaders towards you?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all respectful
- Slightly respectful
- Somewhat respectful
- Quite respectful
- Extremely respectful

### Well-Being

Faculty perceptions of their own professional well-being.

37. How effective do you feel at your job right now?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all effective
- Slightly effective
- Somewhat effective
- Quite effective
- Extremely effective

38. How much does your work matter to you?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Does not matter at all
- Matters a little bit
- Matters some
- Matters quite a lot
- Matters a tremendous amount

39. How meaningful for you is the work that you do?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all meaningful
- Slightly meaningful
- Somewhat meaningful
- Quite meaningful
- Extremely meaningful

40. Overall, how satisfied are you with your job right now?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Not at all satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Quite satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

### Appendix D

#### Educator Stay Survey

##### Educator Stay Survey

Thank you for participating in a research study about perceptions of teachers and the reasons why you choose to remain in the Border Collie School District as a classroom teacher. The Informed Consent Form has been provided to you. You can elect to stop responding to the survey at any point. Responses will only be recorded when you select the **SUBMIT** button at the end of the survey.

This survey is divided into two (2) sections:

- Section 1: Demographic Information
- Section 2: Constructed Response Questions

*Please Note: Google Forms is not secure survey software and it is not supported by the University.*

1. I am a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ teacher.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Elementary (K-6, Pk-4, N-3, OR Mid-Level 4-8 \*if teaching 4th, 5th, or 6th grade)
- Secondary (7-12, Mid-Level 7-9, OR Mid-Level 4-8 \*if teaching 7th or 8th grade)
- Special Education
- Related Arts (HPE, Art, Music, Technology etc.)
- Specialists / Other (School Counselor, School Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist)

2. I am a \_\_\_\_\_ teacher.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

3. I have been a teacher in the Bangor Area School District for:

*Mark only one oval.*

- 1 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 -15 years
- 16+ years

#### Educator Stay Questions

The following six (6) Educator Stay Questions highlight the following areas: factors that cause a teacher to stay, actions the district can take to increase the teacher's commitment and engagement within their district and causes for a teacher to leave their district.

4. What do you like about your job and why?

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

5. What would you like to be doing in 3 -5 years, and what would you need to get there?
6. Do you feel you are appropriately recognized for your contributions? Explain why or why not.
7. Do you have the right resources to perform successfully? Explain why or why not.
8. Do you feel as though you are treated with trust and respect in your position? Explain why or why not.
9. If you had the power, how would you change your day-to-day job to be more enjoyable?

**Appendix E**

**District Perception Survey Human Resources**

**District Perception Survey**

Thank you for participating in a research study about perceptions of teachers and reasons why they choose to remain in their respective school district as a classroom teacher. The District Perception Survey data will help identify research-based employee retention strategies being implemented across other school districts served by the same Intermediate Unit

The Informed Consent Form has been provided to you. You can elect to stop responding to the survey at any point. Responses will only be recorded when you select the **SUBMIT** button at the end of the survey.

**Survey Note:** *Google Forms is not secure survey software and it is not supported by the University.*

1. Our school district implements comprehensive Induction and Mentoring Programs.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost never ~ 0-10% of the time
- Once in a while ~ 11-30 % of the time
- Sometimes ~ 31-50% of the time
- Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time
- Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time

2. Our school district implements meaningful professional learning/development for our teachers.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost never ~ 0 -10% of the time
- Once in a while ~ 11-30% of the time
- Sometimes ~ 31-50 % of the time
- Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time
- Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time

3. Our school district provides leadership opportunities for teachers.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost never ~ 0 -10% of the time
- Once in a while ~ 11-30% of the time
- Sometimes ~ 31-50 % of the time
- Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time
- Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time

4. Our school district supports teacher well-being.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost never ~ 0 -10% of the time
- Once in a while ~ 11-30% of the time

## FACTORS TO REDUCE ATTRITION RATE AMONG TEACHERS

- Sometimes ~ 31-50 % of the time
- Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time
- Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time

5. Our school district promotes teacher engagement.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost never ~ 0 -10% of the time
- Once in a while ~ 11-30% of the time
- Sometimes ~ 31-50 % of the time
- Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time
- Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time

6. Our school district implements a competitive starting salary.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost never ~ 0 -10% of the time
- Once in a while ~ 11-30% of the time
- Sometimes ~ 31-50 % of the time
- Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time
- Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time

7. Our school district has a streamlined salary matrix that offers competitive compensation through a focused approach to step and column advancements.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost never ~ 0 -10% of the time
- Once in a while ~ 11-30% of the time
- Sometimes ~ 31-50 % of the time
- Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time
- Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time

8. Our school district promotes positive working conditions (ie: administrative support, resources, shared decision making, positive district/school culture).

*Mark only one oval.*

- Almost never ~ 0 -10% of the time
- Once in a while ~ 11-30% of the time
- Sometimes ~ 31-50 % of the time
- Frequently ~ 51-80% of the time
- Almost all the time ~ 81-100% of the time

9. What other strategies/approaches does your school district use to improve teacher retention?