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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS

Teacher Retention:  
An Appreciative Approach

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership (Joint Education – CSUSM)

by

Jennifer Jean Pesavento-Conway

Committee in Charge:

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Delores Lindsey

University of California, San Diego

Paula Levin

2010

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The Dissertation of Jennifer Jean Pesavento-Conway is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego  
California State University, San Marcos

2010

## DEDICATION

To my late grandmother, Arlene Burch, who loved me and always told me she was proud of me. I will never forget your advice to make something of myself. Like you, I will strive to find joy in everything.

To my husband, Kenneth Conway, who provided love, support, and encouragement through this entire dissertation process. Thank you for understanding my need to get away and write and thank you for providing distractions when you knew I really needed them. I am glad to be your partner in life.

To my parents, Jeffrey and Jean Pesavento, who instilled in me the value of education, through making postsecondary education an obligation, instead of an option. Thank you for reading with me when I was a child; thank you for checking my homework; thank you for being wonderful parents. I would not be the person I am today without your love.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Teacher Retention:  
An Appreciative Approach

by

Jennifer Jean Pesavento-Conway

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California, San Diego, 2010

California State University, San Marcos, 2010

Patricia Stall, Chair

Nationally, the problem of teacher retention compounds the unstable nature of the educational situation, especially in urban, high-needs schools. Much of the instability of urban schools is due to teacher movement, the migration of teachers from school to another school within or between school districts, particularly from high-needs schools. Existing quantitative research about teacher movement cites *working conditions* generally as an area for improvement; however, the voices of teachers and details about their experiences are missing from the existing body of research.

This qualitative study, situated in an approach of Appreciative Inquiry, was conducted in one small high school district that serves a mid-sized city in Southern California. This school district consisted of four high schools with the following variables: two comprehensive schools with higher percentages of students of color and lower socio-economic status; one comprehensive school with lower percentages of students of color and higher socio-economic status; and one continuation school with higher percentages of students of color and lower socio-economic status. Using similar representation from each high school, there are many individual variables concerning the fifteen participants: the variety of race and gender; the wide range in years of experience and the number of previous school sites of employment; and, the representation of many academic departments.

Participants identified the working conditions and support most influential to them. The following are the findings based on their input, listed in order of significance: colleague support, professional development, district hiring practices, site administrator support, district office support, autonomy, teaching assignments, workplace culture, personal satisfaction, communication, respect, and teacher induction support.

Implications regarding the employment of working conditions by school district personnel and school site administrators to increase teacher retention are discussed in chapter five. These implications include (a) the creation of a respectful workplace culture, (b) the utilization of communication with teachers, the provision of individualized and site-based support for novice teachers, (c) the distribution of an equitable schedule of classes to all teachers, (d) the implementation of information-rich hiring practices, (e) the emphasis of the focus on student learning, and (f) the presentation of constructive feedback about instructional practices to promote professional growth of teachers.



## Chapter One

### *Introduction*

The educational community, including administrators, researchers, and policymakers, engages in a constant cycle of reform to improve the public educational system and better meet the needs of all students. Specific and purposeful efforts of individual schools and school districts are meant to improve academic opportunities for all students, while closing the achievement gap between students in low poverty schools and those in high poverty, hard-to-staff schools, which tend serve large percentages of students of color. Research clearly indicates the correlation between more experienced teachers and increased student achievement (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2003). The inability to retain both highly qualified and high quality new teachers is a national problem which began before the twentieth century (Lortie, 1975), especially in urban, high-needs schools (Baltimore City Public School System, 2003; Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007). Such schools generally have more new and inexperienced teachers on their faculties (Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001). Therefore, if schools and districts do not retain new teachers that become experienced teachers, then closing the achievement gap will be more difficult.

According to Garrison (2006), over a five-year period, the national attrition rate for teachers is 40-50%; similarly, Ondrich, Pas, and Yinger (2008) remarked that in the US, 39% of new teachers attrite within the first five years with an 11% attrition rate in the first year alone. In their review of both qualitative and quantitative studies, Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) found that this attrition occurs in a U-shaped pattern, indicating that more teachers leave in the beginning of their careers and at retirement,

which is a factor in attrition. In a report from the United States Department of Education (2007) based on quantitative survey research of 7,429 current and former teachers, it was found that of teachers under 30, there was 15% migration and 9% attrition in the 2003-2004 school year. This means that of the sample in the study, only 76% of respondents under the age of 30 persisted and were retained in their teaching position in 2003-2004. Allensworth et al. (2009) found that retention rates are worse in secondary schools and that year-to-year retention rates do not shed light on the sobering fact that many urban schools have over 50% turnover within five years and some schools have that same turnover rate within three years.

This challenge to retain effective teachers is exacerbated when novices change schools after one or two years, often because they are forced to do so because of layoffs, or leave the teaching profession because they do not have the opportunity to grow as professionals through their work in the classroom (Allensworth et al., 2009). In his seminal, quantitative study, Ingersoll (2001) found that schools with poverty enrollment of 50% or more have higher turnover than do schools with poverty enrollment below 15%. “The evidence on teacher mobility patterns indicates that this is the type of school most teachers try to avoid” (Murnane, 1984, p. 518).

Many educational policies and programs of the past, such as those focusing on teacher recruitment, like California Teach, and those focusing on alternative paths to the classroom through the use of intern teachers, like Troops to Teachers and Teach for America, have not been successful at retaining teachers (Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor, 2008). Based upon individual state criteria, these programs do not bring a sufficient number of highly qualified teachers into high-needs schools, nor have they provided

sufficient support to keep these teachers in the teaching profession. According to Hausser's (2010) media release, the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court in California ruled that intern teachers cannot be classified as highly qualified because they are not fully credentialed. Further, "...more than half of California's interns are teaching in schools with 90-100% students of color, compared to only 3% of interns in schools with the lowest population of students of color" (p. 1). These intern teachers are replacing teachers who migrated to another site or district or left the profession. Clearly, the consistent novice teacher movement due to attrition and migration compounds the unstable educational situation, especially in urban, high-needs schools. This study examined how teachers understand their experiences and how this process leads to retention within the profession. If it were known why schools and districts retain teachers, the educational system could make changes that increase teacher retention significantly.

For educational institutions to build capacity for providing high quality education and improve academic achievement, they might begin applying research on issues of teacher retention, specifically the impact on teachers' employment decisions in regards to attrition, migration, and persistence. From a variety of credible sources, this agenda could be used as a means of improving retention, which would lead to a more experienced faculty, thus increasing teacher quality. Furthermore, recommendations based on sound research in educational policy should be applied whenever possible. Decision makers must also continue the research and policy cycle by encouraging the evaluation of teacher retention policies and utilizing that data in the future to reassess and address policy changes as needed (Futernick, 2007). Teacher retention policies need to compliment

teacher evaluation policies to ensure that quality teachers are retained (Reed, Rueben, & Barbour, 2006).

*Teacher placement.* Novice teacher retention, meaning retaining teachers more than five years, is a nation-wide problem that cannot be solved by increasing recruitment alone (Futernick, 2007). The movement of veteran teachers within the profession from school-to-school and district-to-district and to other professions creates challenging employment opportunities for new teachers. This means new teachers are often left to teach in the most difficult situations because more experienced teachers have (a) advanced qualifications, (b) more experience, and (c) teachers' union contract language which allow transfer elsewhere (Lortie, 1975). Schools most impacted by teacher movement are generally urban, high-needs schools (Farthing, 2006; Futernick, 2007; Guarino, et al., 2006; Hanuskek et al., 2003; Makkonen, 2005; Murnane, 1984; Ondrich et al., 2008; Reed et al., 2006; Scafidi et al., 2007; Tennessee Department of Education, 2007).

Teacher retention within a single school site is a larger problem in certain areas, especially in low-achieving urban schools with higher populations of students of color and lower socio-economic status (Allensworth et al., 2009; Scafidi et al., 2007). Both a secondary consequence and cause of the teacher movement phenomenon is the type of teaching assignment in which new teachers are placed. Because of the nature of their assignments, many novice teachers do not stay in their positions and a consequence of this teacher movement is that another novice teacher is hired in that position to continue the phenomenon. In the secondary education setting, new teachers are often assigned to teach lower-level classes in a tracked system and are given more variety of classes for

which they need to prepare lessons (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2004; DeBrabander, 2000; Xu et al., 2008). These conditions can decrease teacher satisfaction.

*Teacher preparation.* Teacher movement adversely contributes to the achievement gap because the students who need the assistance of experienced teachers are often taught by teachers with less experience (Tennessee Department of Education, 2007). These teachers tend to be less prepared to teach in the more challenging environments of urban schools. Due to the large turn-over in the teaching force in many of these types of schools, Olsen (2008) describes the difficulty of preparing teachers as a yearly struggle because of the complexity of a teacher's work, which is compounded by other factors, including those of socio-historical, economic, and political natures. In his mixed-methods study, Lortie (1975) found that even formal teacher preparation programs do not adequately prepare teachers for the number of tasks or amount of clerical work they encounter, and that teacher candidates underestimate the difficulty of the teaching profession. This is similar to Rosenholtz and Simpson's (1990) finding regarding new teachers' need for support with tasks outside of instruction itself.

Attracting teachers to certain regions, such as those with high poverty and low student achievement, can be a challenge; therefore, many teachers without full credentials are hired to fill positions. This statement remains true even after the U.S. Congress passed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 because teachers utilize provisional or emergency credentials in some schools. Frequently, teachers attain a teaching credential while working in a high-needs school and later migrate to a school site that often includes lower percentages of students of color and poverty. Situations like this contribute to the consistent cycling of teachers in high-needs schools where high-

quality teaching cannot be guaranteed for all students, as “the quality of education is sometimes determined by zip code” (Berry, Rasberry, & Williams, 2007, p. 6).

*Teacher support.* Based upon the research, novice teachers need support, such as mentors and support providers who must be committed to the work of helping new teachers personally with the adjustment (CTA, 2007; Moore Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Donaldson, 2004). In addition to understanding the increased anxiety teachers experience in the first months of a new assignment, these mentors and support providers must have expertise in content, classroom instruction, and student engagement to meet the professional needs of novice teachers (Lortie, 1975; Makkonen, 2005). Moreover, professional development that focuses on classroom instructional practices is necessary for seasoned teachers (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). In addition, new secondary level teachers need to have equitable class level assignments that do not place the new teacher in solely low-level tracks of classes because that increases the difficulty of the teaching assignment (Rosenholtz & Simpson). Appropriate teaching assignment distribution can work toward facilitating individual efficacy, which in turn can increase teacher retention.

Beginning teachers need support because they experience high levels of stress, related to being overwhelmed in a new, highly demanding job. They must plan all new lessons, sort through mountains of paperwork, search for materials, comply with the evaluation process to become familiar with the site and staff, and often perform extra assignments, such as coaching a sport or advising a club (DeBrabander, 2000; Lortie, 1975; Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2007), these are some factors that lead to teachers finding alternate employment as a way to increase balance in their lives.

Possible connections to the quality teacher retention challenge could be (a) language of teacher contracts that allows for more equity in teaching assignments; (b) administrative policies that limit extra assignments and multiple preparations; and (c) advocacy from teachers' unions to improve support of new teachers in the bargaining agreements between the union and the school district through explicit contractual language supporting effective new teacher practices that lead to higher teacher retention (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). However, contracts are often negotiated at a greater benefit to established teachers (Moore Johnson et al., 2004). In addition to higher salaries, tenure and seniority protect veteran teachers when schools have budget-driven cutbacks and the new teachers are the first school district employees laid off due to budgetary or attendance issues—regardless of job performance.

Moreover, administrators must remember that great teachers are not necessarily great mentors to new teachers (Makkonen, 2005) and finding the right mentor is imperative. New teachers need to feel the administration is on their side to assist them in improving instruction. Administrators may also fill the role of a teacher coach or critical friend. New teachers need to feel involved and that their voices matter, instead of feeling like another warm body in the classroom (Farthing, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001).

Administrators can improve their support of new teachers concerning student discipline, especially once teachers refer students to the office (Barth, 1990; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). If school districts and sites had stricter codes of student conduct, it could be easier for the administrators in those schools to support novice teachers with discipline issues.

### *Purpose of the Study*

A majority of the available research, including teacher employment pattern analysis, California Teachers' Association reports, and state retention reports, is based primarily on quantitative data focused on the phenomenon of teacher movement. The gaps in the research are detailed information and insights regarding how the experiences of the continuum of novice to seasoned teachers in high-needs schools fit into the high-quality teacher retention picture. Existing research documents teacher mobility and attrition, and some of the reasons, such as teachers' choices to migrate to schools in higher socio-economic areas are clear. However, other reasons, including those over which the teacher has no control or power, are not fully understood, as the teachers' voices are limited by the current research.

This study sought to examine the factors that influence the retention of teachers in the profession with Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperider & Whitney, 2005; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). The research questions are:

1. What are the working conditions at a site that impact teachers?
2. In what ways do district and school leadership influence teachers?

This study explored the research questions through an AI and narrative inquiry approach. Each research question in this study is significant to the phenomenon of teacher satisfaction and movement. Table 1.1 contains the following information regarding the research questions and their significance. Research question one explored the working conditions which impact the particular teachers in this study. This is significant because previous research includes many areas for information on working conditions, but only some of the conditions surfaced in the literature. Additionally, other



authors used the phrase *working conditions*, but they were never more specific about the identification of the conditions. After defining their specific working conditions, teachers shared their stories about how those conditions affected them, adding to the generativity of this proposed study.

Finally, research question two explored what district and school leaders can do to create the conditions that influence teachers. For example, when thinking of school culture, position matching to a potential teacher's individual culture could be important for retaining teachers; additionally, professional development can aid teachers in their understanding of student culture and decreasing feelings of fearfulness (Poplin & Weeres, 1994). This finding is significant because school and district leaders create conditions that influence teachers' desire to stay, migrate, or leave the profession.

Table 1.1. *Significance of the Research Questions.*

Research Question	Why is this question significant?
1. Conditions that Impact Teachers	Previous research includes many areas for information on working conditions, but only some of it overlapped. Other authors used the phrase <i>working conditions</i> , but were never more specific. After defining working conditions, teachers shared how those specific conditions did/did not affect them. They shared ideas about working conditions, which are not in previous research, including ideas that contradicted existing research.
2. District & School Leadership's Influence on Teachers	School and district leaders created working conditions and cultural conditions that influenced teachers.

### *Methods*

This qualitative research draws on phenomenological methodological epistemology through AI interviews. This work employs analysis of narratives as a

method to explore the experiences in a continuum of novice teachers to more experienced teachers regarding working conditions and experiences that influence job satisfaction and teacher retention (Grbich, 2007). Moreover, this work employs phenomenological analysis through “open-ended, detailed, and intensive data” to find how teachers in the sample understand their working conditions and experiences (Lortie, p. 110, 1975). This study explores teacher retention as a possible outcome after teachers have internalized lived experiences.

Through narratives from interview questions, AI is used with a purposeful sampling of participants (Yin, 2009) combined with snowball sampling techniques (Creswell, 2008; Rudestam & Newton, 2007) to increase the number of participants from the sampled participating high school district. This work begins to delve deeper into the roots of the teacher retention challenge, so teachers can experience more satisfaction with working conditions and students can have access to the right teachers in the right placements. This study also serves as a catalyst for change by educating school administrators and policy makers about teachers’ experiences in order to help recruit and retain both high-quality and highly-qualified teachers in all schools.

### *Significance of the Study*

An aspect of educational reform that directly affects many students is the need for experienced teachers because more experience is often correlated to an increase in positive academic growth of students (Hanuskek et al., 2003). This research disentangles the effects of teacher experience and the types of teaching assignments new teachers are given. Less experienced teachers and those with weaker credentials have a greater negative impact on student learning and tend to teach a greater number of *educationally*

*disadvantaged children* in the classroom, thus widening the achievement gap (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007). Additionally, increased teacher retention rates could help decrease school organizational problems, such as “discontinuity in professional development, shortages in key subjects, and loss of teacher leadership” (Allensworth et al., 2009, p. 1).

The retention of highly qualified and high quality teachers, as defined by Xu et al. (2008), is of great importance to society because teacher movement has effects that stretch beyond individual schools and districts. When high quality teachers are not retained, an opportunity gap for both students and teachers is created (Berry et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Social injustice appears as this opportunity gap because students in high-needs schools do not have equitable access to experienced teachers and novice teachers do not have access to teaching positions in schools with desirable working conditions (Berry et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Lankford et al., 2002).

#### *Definition of Terms*

For purposes of this study, **high-needs schools** are schools where the students are underperforming, as determined by NCLB, and are often identified as schools with both a high percentage (greater than 50%) of students of color and a higher percentage (greater than 50%) of students of lower socio-economic status. **Hard-to-staff schools** are typically high-needs schools that also have difficulty filling their teaching position openings with highly qualified candidates (Ingersoll, 2001). A **highly qualified teacher** is one who is fully credentialed and has sufficient education and/or experience and this designation depends upon individual states’ definitions to meet NCLB requirements;

however, this is not to be confused with the term high quality teacher. An effective teacher, also known as **high-quality teacher**, is defined as one who has demonstrated a positive effect upon student achievement in the classroom (Xu et al., 2008).

Futernick (2007) defined the term *stayers* as “those who remain in the classroom” (viii). Because of the nature of this study and the need for differentiation between those who move to another position and those who remain in their positions, a more specific group needs definition. **Persistence** is defined as remaining at the same school site for a minimum of five years because many states have tenure laws in their education codes that take effect prior to this amount of time; additionally, numerous research uses this time period when observing persistence.

Ingersoll (2001) defined the term **attrition** as leaving the teaching profession altogether, similar to Guarino et al.’s (2006) definition of “leaving the occupation” (p. 185). Ingersoll also defined **migration** as accepting a teaching position at another school in a teacher’s district or an entirely new school district, while Lankford et al. (2002) used the term *transfer* to define movement, and Guarino et al. (2006) used both *migration* and *mobility* to name this phenomenon. **Teacher movement**, a term that encompasses both migration and attrition, refers to the consistent changes in employment position within the teaching profession. According to Ingersoll (2001), essentially, teacher movement is the *revolving door* created when teachers repeatedly vacate positions for reasons other than retirement in certain types of schools.

#### *Personal Interest in the Topic*

In addition to a thorough search of the literature, my professional story as a beginning teacher brought me to this research topic. After completing my undergraduate

studies, I applied to teach at over seventy different schools before I was hired for my first teaching position. I was credentialed to teach sixth through twelfth grade English, but was hired to teach all subjects in an alternative school in a district for grades three to eight in suburban Chicago. Despite my success both inside and outside of the classroom, I lost my position to a teacher with more seniority.

The following school year, I taught high school English to sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the Chicago Public Schools. I enjoyed my time with the students, but the frequency of gang violence in the surrounding neighborhoods led me to search for employment in a safer area. I took the advantage of relocating to continue my education.

My next assignment was in California, and again, as a new teacher in the district with a temporary contract, I was not retained. This pattern occurred yet again in another California district, even though my evaluations were outstanding and I felt I had established a positive rapport with colleagues and the administration. Upon receiving the news of my release, I had to go right back into the classroom and teach as if nothing happened. Mine is not an isolated or even unusual story. In a profession where we are constantly dealing with people, including students and their social, emotional, and cognitive well-being, the manner in which novice teachers are released along with the reasons for that release, which often are not related to performance, seem almost macabre.

As discouraged as I felt, I persisted and obtained another position in a nearby district, but unfortunately, I was once again teaching on a temporary contract. Two more yearly rounds of the *pink slips*, reduction in force notices which informed me of my release, followed with this position, until I finally gained permanent status in that magical

third year. At last, I was able to follow a group of students from the beginning of their freshman year until they walked across the stage to receive their diplomas. I think I persisted in the profession because I loved the classroom and had complete confidence in my efficacy as a teacher, as was proven by my repeated positive evaluations. I just seemed to be always at the wrong place at the wrong time. My story is not atypical of many beginning teachers and suggests a need for better understanding of how this pattern along with other factors may be affecting novice teachers in their decisions to leave or to persist in the profession.

## Chapter Two

### *Review of Related Literature*

This chapter reviews the current research on new teachers, especially on secondary teachers, concerning retention, including empirical research on documented employment pattern analyses from multiple areas in the United States. This literature focuses primarily on secondary level teachers because there is a great difference in the nature of the position between secondary and elementary teachers; moreover, this research study is focused at the secondary level.

The content of this chapter is organized to enhance understanding about the general topic of teacher retention, explain teacher movement and its factors, and convey the effects of teacher movement on both teachers and students. Additionally, this chapter contains information on teacher support, policies and programs—including the efforts of selected individual school districts, and implications for leadership and social justice.

#### *Teacher Retention*

Nationally, increasing teacher retention is a very important issue in education. In California alone, almost twenty-five percent of new teachers are hired because of the lack of new teacher retention due to teachers leaving the profession (Reed et al., 2006). This is consistent with findings from the US Department of Education (2007) from research conducted in 2003-2004, meaning that the turnover rate in new teachers leaves a 25% gap in the teaching force each year. While efforts like salary increases may work to retain high quality teachers, these increases also help retain low quality teachers (Makkonen, 2005; Reed et al.). In order to correct for retaining low quality teachers, effective teacher evaluation procedures and policies must be in effect in order to retain only the highest

quality teachers (Reed et al.). Increasing emphasis on evaluation could positively correlate to increased effectiveness of both novice and experienced teachers, which could also benefit students academically. Additionally, not all teacher attrition is negative, as it lends to the possibility of replacing ineffective teachers with effective teachers who will benefit the students (Allensworth et al., 2009).

The conditions in which teachers work were addressed in the recommendations from the California Teachers' Association (CTA) and are identified as "time, quality school leadership, teacher empowerment, professional development, and adequate facilities and resources" (2007, p. 5). These factors affect teacher quality and student performance. The CTA particularly stressed that the presence of an effective principal is the key to an effective and supportive school. If the conditions of teaching and learning are improved, teachers will be supported in their efforts to focus on student learning. In some urban school districts, working conditions were a more powerful indicator of persistence than level of compensation (Allensworth et al., 2009). If teachers feel that they are meeting the needs of their students and receive positive feedback from site or district administrators, their self-efficacy increases, and they are more likely to persist in their position (Johnson & Birkeland, 2004; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Futernick (2007) employed the use of an online survey to gather data from California teachers to conduct quantitative research that determined causes for teacher attrition or retention across the state, including gathering data about low poverty and high poverty, high-needs schools. This study builds on Futernick's study by adding more details through teachers' stories about their experiences and work environments.



In Futernick's (2007) research, it was found that California's teacher shortage is a consequence of both a declining supply of new teachers and high levels of attrition, including retirements. He made a connection between the achievement gap and high teacher turnover in high-needs schools. Retention in high poverty, high-needs schools is not a new problem; there needs to be a change in the work environment for teachers, as well as students. In the online, web-based survey, current and former California teachers identified inadequate system supports, bureaucratic impediments, and lack of collegial support as reasons for teacher attrition (Futernick). Teachers also identified several requirements for increasing retention rates. There must be collaboration, opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making, the existence of quality relationships among staff, and a mutually supportive approach to leadership between the teachers and principal. These ideas were also reflected in the research of Barth (1990), Poplin and Weeres (1994), and Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990).

Based upon research and survey results, Futernick made six recommendations for improved teacher retention:

(a) assess teaching conditions locally and continuously, (b) elevate California's student funding to (at least) adequate levels, (c) resolve the bureaucratic conundrum, (d) refocus school leadership on instructional quality and high-quality teaching and learning conditions, (e) establish statewide standards for school teaching and learning conditions, and (f) assess and address specific challenges in retention of special education teachers. (2007, p. 52)

Ingersoll (2001) conducted survey research that examined organizational characteristics and conditions of schools as factors for teacher turnover and school staffing problems. He used the phrase *revolving door* when referring to the staffing problems that schools face when large numbers of teachers leave the profession, due to

organizational conditions, prior to retirement. Ingersoll found that schools with poverty enrollment of 50% or more have higher teacher turnover than do schools with poverty enrollment less than 15% (2001). This aligns with Allensworth et al.'s (2009) quantitative study using personnel records and population data from Chicago, which also conversely includes "...none of the high schools where less than half of the students were low-income had chronic problems with teacher loss" (p. 13).

In a qualitative, participant-observer study, Finley (1984) found that teachers were tracked in the educational system, especially newly migrated (as the school in the study was in a higher socio-economic area) or novice teachers were assigned the lowest, or less desirable, classes to teach. These findings align with Xu et al.'s (2008) study in that the new teachers in Teach for America (TFA) are purposely placed in high-needs and hard-to-staff schools, where few persist beyond the two-year commitment of the program. However, the purpose of TFA is not necessarily designed for candidates who intend to make a career in teaching. Rather, the purpose of TFA is to place highly educated individuals in schools of need where there are teacher shortages. Previous research has also demonstrated a tendency for teachers to migrate to schools with less poverty and lower minority student populations. In a seminal study, Finley (1984) noticed the tendency for teacher movement to higher tracks of classes through the large amount of competition for higher tracked classes and an obvious teacher disdain for remedial assignments.

### *Teacher Movement*

Teachers change positions for a variety of reasons, including those generally referred to as improved working conditions (Baltimore City Public School System, 2003;

Finley, 1984; Guarino et al., 2006; Hanuskek et al., 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2004; Kain & Singleton, 1996). This teacher movement has created patterns discovered through empirical research. Reed et al. (2006) completed a quantitative research project that utilized data developed in collaboration with the Labor Market Information Division of the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC); these sources were linked into a dataset, the New Teacher Administrative Records (NTAR). The NTAR was used to track employment patterns, including shifts to other districts or other professions, the effect of past policies, like class size reduction and new teacher mentoring, and the connection between teacher retention and the need for fully credentialed teachers, exacerbated in high-needs schools and districts. Findings from the study support the phenomenon of teacher movement: “If new teacher retention patterns from the 1990s still hold, then about one-fourth of the roughly 20,000 new public school teachers hired in California every year are replacing recently hired teachers who have left public school employment” (Reed et al., 2006, p. vi).

Lankford et al. (2002) also studied teacher movement, concerning attrition and migration. They conducted a quantitative study, which followed teachers’ employment patterns in New York State, and found that novice and experienced teachers were not evenly sorted or tracked throughout schools and districts. The problem of retention is magnified by the higher numbers of novice teachers in more challenging working environments (Lankford et al.). Similarly, working conditions played a factor in teacher movement in Hanuskek et al.’s (2003) quantitative study of Texas schools in which the researchers utilized a variety of datasets about school characteristics. This study points to

using salary as a type of equalizer of working conditions to retain teachers, like combat pay, meaning teacher in high-needs schools receive a higher salary than those in other schools. However, Hanushek et al. found another working condition more important to teachers. The pattern of changing schools within urban districts, especially to schools with fewer academically and economically disadvantaged students, is stronger than changes for higher salaries (Allensworth et al., 2009; Hanushek et al.).

### *Effects of Teacher Movement*

If the retention of high-quality teachers is improved, there could be less reliance on newly hired teachers. Since more experienced teachers usually have better student achievements results, the outcome should be improved learning. Teachers in American secondary school classrooms will have more experience, which is critical to meeting the academic needs of students in high needs schools. The CTA (2007) authored a theoretical policy brief to share previous research, coupled with CTA recommendations, to promote teacher quality through pre-service teacher preparation programs, professional development, and teaching conditions in order to advocate for novice teachers. A part of teacher preparation in California is demonstrating basic skills and subject matter competency, but these areas do not necessarily relate to a candidate's ability to be effective (CTA). Given this information, the connection can be made that some novice teachers who have the ability to be effective with the right amount of support are hired in high-needs schools where they are tracked into low-level classes, which may limit access to professional support, and leading to attrition or migration (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Talbert & Ennis, 1990).

Makkonen (2005) shares his scholarly opinion based upon research, including a multiyear Harvard Graduate School of Education study. He found that urban schools have high teacher turnover and because of teacher turnover, these schools are left with less qualified teachers in the classroom, like intern teachers. Moreover, the recent 9<sup>th</sup> federal circuit court decision, which ruled that these intern teachers are not considered highly qualified, recognized the “disservice to the public, students, and their parents to hide the fact that a high proportion of the less experienced intern teachers who are not yet fully certified, teach in low-income, high-minority schools” (Hausser, 2010, p. 2). In addition to the placement of less qualified teachers in high-needs schools, both highly qualified and high quality teachers are migrating from the schools that need them the most. The quantitative research of Allensworth et al. (2009) supports this with their finding that teachers who demonstrated increased skills in academics were more likely to leave schools where the student population needs academic improvement. If this cycle does not stop, achievement gaps will grow wider as more qualified and experienced teachers transfer out of high-needs schools.

When using the lenses of equity and diversity in a critical examination of teacher persistence, migration, and attrition, researchers have found that there are injustices to both novice teachers and economically disadvantaged students who are primarily students of color. These injustices, previously mentioned and captured in the work of Makkonen (2005), also contribute to the academic achievement gap throughout educational systems in the United States. Some researchers attribute educational inequity to additional issues, such as school funding. Kozol (1991) conducted qualitative, ethnographic research based upon interviews and participant researcher observations to study how inequitable funding

across six geographical areas in the United States contributed to the achievement gap and that litigation has not solved educational inequality issues for students and teachers. This research works to illuminate the fact that school working conditions are vital in order to retain teachers, and that teacher attrition and migration are the unfortunate effect of inequitable funding problems in districts with the most need for experienced teachers, which are mostly in urban areas that serve poor students (Kozol). Kozol's research also provided vivid details of the seriousness of the ethnic segregation between schools and within school districts, which could account for some teacher movement in segregated districts.

In addition to the general need for equitable opportunities in relation to access to highly qualified teachers, both teachers and students are also tracked, grouped, or sorted, thus differentiating their educational experiences. Finley (1984) conducted a case study of a suburban high school's English department through interviews and observations in order to examine the tracking phenomenon closely, in which she defined tracking as a "system of placing students by ability level in each subject separately" (p. 234). This study is an example of one of the few studies that utilizes teachers' experiences concerning tracking practices. Like Talbert and Ennis (1990), Finley's seminal study found that tracking is a way for schools to appear that they are serving the needs of a diverse population of students, while in reality they are merely reproducing the social order. Coincidentally, the school in the case study began its tracking program, specifically the addition of a remedial track, when there was a sudden "increase in the proportion of bused-in minority students" (p. 234).

Talbert and Ennis (1990) and Finley (1984) made the connection that teachers develop a reputation that is based upon the classes they teach, and as a result, a teacher's sense of self-efficacy is affected by the levels of classes that they teach, which the research supports is true for both novice and experienced teachers. Inexperienced teachers were sorted, or tracked, into less-desirable, high-needs areas (Kain & Singleton, 1996; Lankford et al., 2002; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). According to Reed et al. (2006), the fact that a majority of those novice teachers are in high-needs schools is evidence of inequitable distribution of resources, based upon the location of the school (Berry et al., 2007).

Kain and Singleton's (1996) research also addresses the equality of teacher assignments concerning educational opportunity. In a longitudinal, quantitative study in San Antonio, Texas, researchers critically examined the connections between school *inputs* such as the academic ability of teachers, teacher education, teacher experience, and class size and the effect of these inputs on student achievement. Findings of the study included a correlation between decreased teacher ability as the percentage of ethnic minority students increased; additionally, teachers with less experience in the classroom and less education had larger class sizes and taught in schools with higher percentages of socio-economically disadvantaged minority students (Kain & Singleton). These results were similar to the results from research conducted by the Tennessee Department of Education (2007). These studies addressed the ethnic segregation within and among school districts in the United States and the assignment of new teachers to schools and students for which they were not properly prepared. It also addresses how more

experienced teachers relocate to other schools in the district or other districts that serve fewer students of poverty and color.

Specifically in terms of teacher distribution, the authors maintain, “Low-income, low-achieving, and nonwhite students, particularly those in urban areas, find themselves in classes with many of the least skilled teachers” (Lankford et al., 2002, p. 38). Lortie (1975) specified that teachers exercise choice of school district, but that they lack choice when it comes to school site and teaching assignment. Additionally, depending on the part of the country teachers also may not have a district choice. The equity issue in teacher migration, which negatively influences the teacher-sorting situation, is addressed: “Teachers make choices that impact equity, not only when they choose their first teaching job, but also, when they decide to quit or transfer” (Lankford et al., p. 41). This issue of working conditions and how they affect teacher attrition or migration from areas with high poverty and high concentrations of minority students and the subsequent replacement with teachers who are inadequate for other positions, or new to the teaching profession as a whole, adds to the generalizability of the teacher sorting and tracking phenomenon in the United States.

The achievement gap is connected to a lack of retention of highly qualified teachers in areas where they are needed most (Makkonen, 2005). Urban student achievement is at risk whenever a less qualified teacher replaces a highly qualified teacher or when teachers leave urban school districts for suburban school districts (Finley, 1984; Kain & Singleton, 1996; Makkonen). Economically advantaged students are more likely to have teachers who are highly qualified for the content area, have formal preparation, and have more experience (Berry et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2001;



Lankford et al., 2002). These powerful findings provide a rationale for researchers and institutions to invest time and resources into identifying the reasons that explain why teachers leave the profession, migrate to other districts, or remain teaching in their schools. This knowledge could be used to develop policies and contract language to address those reasons in the hope of increasing equity in public education when it comes to having highly qualified teachers in all classrooms.

All students, no matter where their schools are located, deserve highly qualified and fully credentialed teachers. All teachers, no matter where their schools are located, deserve supportive work environments that are conducive to educating every student. Retaining teachers is an expensive endeavor because of the effort and funding it requires, but not attacking the problem with all available resources will be even more expensive, as the achievement gap will continue to grow. If the status quo remains, the unfortunate victims will be the children in our schools who are most in need of high-quality teachers to receive a high-quality education and the teachers who find themselves shuttled among schools.

### *Teacher Support*

To increase teacher retention, new teachers need to feel supported in order to remain in the schools and districts where they begin their careers. Makkonen (2005) states that new teachers need "...strong administrators, supportive colleagues, and an orderly, respectful environment" (p. 55). He also identified mentoring as a help to novice teachers, but emphasized the importance of both structure in the mentoring program, similar to information from the CTA (2007), and careful selection of mentors.

In the mixed-methods analysis of the progress of mentoring, Berry et al. (2007) found that not all mentoring programs are of high quality. Mentors should not only be recognized as great teachers, such as Nationally Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs), they should be teachers who also have the personality traits, specific professional development in mentoring, and desire to mentor novice teachers. Mentor teachers also need to help novice teachers engage in effective professional development in their schools, with their colleagues, and for their students. Professional development centered on cultural awareness is also important to help teachers better understand students.

The need for strong administrators (Makkonen, 2005) is also an implication for increasing teacher retention. Quality administrators use teacher expertise and stress the importance of NBCTs in high needs schools (Berry et al., 2007) and are effective in their use of teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and their support of teacher inquiry and reflective practice (CTA, 2007). Schools need leaders who support instructional capacity (CTA) and have a focus on instructional quality (Futernick, 2007). In addition, the formation of a career ladder to mimic other professions (Barth, 1990; Makkonen, 2005) and the decrease in *bureaucratic impediments*, such as paperwork, classroom interruptions, and teaching restrictions (Futernick) may be useful in the effort to retain quality teachers (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Teacher support has many different origins. At the university level and the school level, there is a difference in teaching philosophy and school priority when it comes to curricular aspects and the level of collaboration. This difference necessitates a focus on theory into practice in the university classroom, which should aid efforts in aligning teachers' philosophies with the needs of the schools and students (CTA, 2007). Better

assignment of teachers to schools and districts will also alleviate some of the mismatched teaching assignments. This does not refer to teacher tracking by ability level; rather, this statement refers to the hiring process. In a quantitative study of 486 teachers within their first two years of teaching from California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Michigan, Liu and Johnson (2006) examined teachers' hiring experiences and how they were matched appropriately or inappropriately, which led to retention or attrition. Specifically, hiring methods that require more of a time investment on the part of schools possibly ensured a better teacher-school match; however, most sites do not employ hiring practices that really give both parties the opportunity to see if there is a match to one another (Liu & Johnson). Like Farthing (2006) and Poplin and Weeres (1994), this study examined the importance of matching teachers' beliefs and values appropriately with schools to maximize retention efforts; however, Poplin and Weeres also pointed to the importance of race, culture, and socio-economic status.

Unlike much research, including some components of Farthing's (2006) work, Ingersoll's (2001) research did not focus on characteristics of individual teachers; conversely, this study focused on organizational conditions associated with the inability to retain teachers. In order to retain teachers and increase equity of educational opportunity, Ingersoll identified the following factors that led to lower teacher turnover rates and schools more likely to be staffed with teachers who are experienced, high quality, and highly qualified. These factors are (a) more administrative support provided to teachers, (b) lower levels of student discipline problems, (c) higher levels of faculty decision-making influence, and (d) higher levels of teacher autonomy in the classroom. The working conditions stated above are associated with teacher movement (Baltimore

City Public School System, 2003; Finley, 1984; Guarino et al., 2006; Hanuskek et al., 2003; Ingersoll; Kain, & Singleton, 1996).

Improving working conditions, also referred to as “teaching and learning conditions,” has important practice implications for improved teacher retention. These conditions include: administrative support generally and specifically for student discipline (Berry et al., 2007; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990), principal leadership (Allensworth et al., 2009; Barth, 1990), sufficient preparation time, ability to engage in decision-making, and proper facilities and resources (CTA, 2007; Futernick, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Kozol, 1991). The conditions also include an orderly, respectful environment (Makkonen, 2005), equitable class assignments (Finley, 1984; Kain & Singleton, 1996), characteristics of the student population (Allensworth et al.; Rosenholtz & Simpson), and levels of compensation (Allensworth et al.). Futernick supports the establishment of statewide standards for teaching and learning conditions that are assessed locally and continuously.

The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program is an example of California’s effort to address a national problem in a transformational manner because of its direct support of novice teachers. The mentoring and professional development components of the program align with the CTA’s (2007) recommendation of having professional development activities that are interconnected. A goal of the BTSA program is quality teacher retention, which is critical to all California school districts and all national school districts because every student deserves a highly qualified and high-quality teacher. The BTSA program can be an important professional development

program supporting high needs schools that have the most difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers.

Concerning professional development, the CTA (2007) posits that fragmented activities are unlikely to result in changes in practice; however, in the use of collaborative, distributed teacher leadership such as professional learning communities, teachers can engage in successful professional development in which they employ continuous Appreciative Inquiry on specific site needs. Although professional development opportunities for credentialed teachers are increasing in number and quality, there exists a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers without full credentials in California (Reed et al., 2006), which increases the teacher quality gap. Interestingly, these teachers need support such as that provided by BTSA; yet, they do not qualify because they do not have credentials. A teacher without a full teaching credential is not considered highly qualified. Because teacher shortage and attrition are substantial issues in high-needs areas (CTA), those schools are sites in which more interns and teachers without full credentials find employment. Professional development targeting the needs of interns and non-credentialed teachers would be an important component of staff development in a high poverty school.

#### *Policies and Programs to Improve Teacher Retention*

In addition to new teacher retention, teacher recruitment efforts are also important and often are related to the same factors (Berry et al., 2007) and historically, more attention has been given to recruitment efforts in the educational profession (Lortie, 1975). However, an increase in retention will lessen the burden on current recruitment efforts in California, especially in high poverty districts where there is more difficulty

recruiting fully credentialed teachers (Reed et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2001). Because a majority of the teacher retention data is based upon general education teachers, researchers also need to assess and address specific challenges in retention of special education teachers (Futernick, 2007). Futernick also shared that many teacher shortage solutions, such as recruiting more teachers, will not solve the retention problem; moreover, retention without recruitment will also not solve the problem.

*Incentive programs.* In their work for The Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ), Berry et al. (2007) used state, county, and school district case studies on education policy, results from CTQ teacher surveys, NBCT interviews, and results of NBCT policy recommendations from five state summits to address school staffing problems in areas with higher needs. The authors found that most teacher incentive programs do not have information organized in a way that would make policymakers able to make data-based decisions on programs. This finding means decisions cannot be made using research-proven strategies. Berry et al. found that working conditions, including administrator support, and teacher preparation have more to do with recruitment and retention than financial incentives. Teacher choice from a variety of recruitment incentives could be an option for school districts.

In urban areas, Makkonen (2005) and Reed et al. (2006) found that a substantial salary increase for high-needs schools helps teacher retention, but this temporary solution retains both high and low quality teachers. In addition, high quality teachers need an opportunity for promotion, such as curriculum work or professional development work (Barth, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Makkonen). Reed et al. want to use this data to inform policymakers. There needs to be a national focus on continuing use of policy in education

to retain experienced teachers through improved working conditions. Teacher retention policies also need to complement teacher evaluation policies to ensure that quality teachers are retained, not only focusing on the retention of more teachers.

Over the past few years, the use of incentives for teachers has gained much popularity. Some urban districts have brought creativity into incentives for recruitment and retention. Teacher housing has begun to play an important role in combating attrition. According to Zahniser (2008), Los Angeles Unified School District is attempting to build teacher rental housing on surplus, district-owned land. The intended outcome of this venture would increase teacher retention and save the school district \$20,000 each year in training costs due to attrition; the benefit to the teachers would be affordable rent and proximity to their place of employment. This same strategy was successful in Silicon Valley, where the increasing cost of housing had begun to harm Santa Clara Unified School District's teacher retention rate (Zahniser). Other large, urban districts, like the Chicago Public Schools, help their employees through housing purchases (Juarez & McGuire, 2008). In an online employee newsletter, Juarez and McGuire promoted financial fitness workshops, affordable housing options, a \$10,000 incentive for purchase, connections with *fiscally sound* mortgage institutions, and three different bus tours to accommodate a purchaser's geographical preferences within the city. These real-life examples are supported by Garrison's (2006) mixed-methods study, which utilized public data on teacher credentialing and interviews of random participants, and found that people committed to living in an area should be recruited to living in an area to increase teacher retention.

Appropriate financial support and financial policies concerning how resources could be more equitably distributed are also factors in teacher retention. There are blatant differences in per pupil funding within and between school districts, leading to an inadequate educational system of financial support, which one a reason teachers leave the profession or migrate to other schools or districts (Futernick, 2007; Kozol, 1991). In addition to examining the educational system as a whole, teacher salary increases should not be overlooked. Lankford et al. (2002) examined teacher salaries in New York State to find that “teachers of nonwhite, poor, or low-achieving students receive roughly the same salaries, as do teachers of white, nonpoor, and non-low achieving students” (p. 53). According to Berry et al. (2007), financial incentives are little help when dealing with teacher retention, but Ingersoll (2001), Kozol, and Makkonen (2005) claim the opposite, which is that an increase in salary increases the likeliness of teachers remaining in urban, high-needs schools.

*Professional development.* In addition to BTSA in California, there is a need for continued funding for on-going teacher development programs. Any new non-credentialed teachers who may need the most support actually get none. Teachers who are not credentialed are not considered to be highly qualified by NCLB standards, and are not eligible for BTSA support. Reed et al. (2006) suggests that teachers without full teaching credentials should participate in some form a development and assessment program, and that intern teachers should be considered highly qualified, merely for the purposes of receiving support. Although this contradicts the ninth federal circuit court decision that intern teachers are not considered highly qualified (Hausser, 2010), intern teachers do need professional development and support to become both fully credentialed



and highly qualified. Finally, Reed et al. proposes that the three-year intern limit and its effect on teacher retention should be monitored, and credentialing programs that serve high-needs districts should be expanded.

Teacher retention, or persistence, in urban school settings needs particular attention. Two approaches that should be considered are designing teacher preparation programs to meet the needs of urban teaching (Berry et al., 2007; Kain & Singleton, 1996) and helping pre-service teachers make connections and design applications in regard to putting theory into practice (CTA, 2007). Teacher preparation programs and professional development, especially development for novice teachers, are closely related in content because they focus on improving teacher quality and promote equity and social justice in education by increasing the opportunities that students have to be taught by a highly qualified educator.

Teacher interns are generally hired to teach in subject areas where there is a greater gap in the number of applicants, such as the fields of mathematics, science, and special education or in schools where there is a lack of teaching applicants altogether. One highly opposed policy by the CTA is possibly to allow intern teachers in California more than three years to become fully credentialed and to remain in the classroom to help decrease the teacher shortage. The problem with allowing intern teachers over three years to become fully credentialed is directly related to tenure, which is generally attained at the beginning of the third year of service within a single school district. The controversy over the quality of intern teachers exists because research indicates there are mixed results about whether novice fully credentialed teachers are better than teachers without full teaching credentials (Reed et al., 2006). Some states have alternative programs that

lead non-credentialed teachers through coursework to become fully credentialed (Kozol, 1991). Although these intern teachers have bachelor's degrees, they lack teaching credentials and educational pedagogy coursework, but work as teachers while simultaneously completing the requirements for a California preliminary teaching credential.

The following are professional development options and suggestions based upon research findings in this review of literature (a) induction programs, such as BTSA (CTA, 2007; Reed et al., 2006), (b) quality mentoring programs (Berry et al., 2007) which include structured mentoring with appropriate mentor choice (Makkonen, 2005), (c) certification programs, such as National Board Certification (NBC) to increase teacher quality in the classrooms and to improve mentoring of new teachers (Berry et al.), and (d) collegial support (Barth, 1990; Makkonen) to give the sense of a team (Futernick, 2007) or to work together to engage in continuous inquiry (CTA). The report by Berry et al. examined the idea of retaining teachers in high-needs areas who have majored in their subject area, but have no formal teacher training. Berry et al. reported that *will and ability* were not enough to retain such teachers; these *second career* teachers need additional and specialized teacher preparation, along with proper mentoring, to become highly-qualified teachers who remain in the profession.

### *Implications*

Based upon the review of literature on teacher retention, the following are implications for policy and leadership: (a) finalize state budgets earlier and (b) finalize district budgets earlier, which will decrease the amount of unnecessary layoff notices for novice teachers; (c) engage in an early, information-rich hiring process for teachers

which aids cultural awareness between teacher and school site; (d) continuously maintain favorable working conditions; (e) give teachers the opportunity to get involved; (f) balance adequate support with autonomy; (g) work for better personality matches between experienced teachers and mentors; and (h) work with unions to have contractual language that is more supportive of beginning teachers. The following are implications to increase social justice in education: (a) increase the quality of teaching practice; (b) have more experienced and high-quality teachers in high-needs schools; (c) close the opportunity gap for students in high-needs schools to be taught by both highly qualified and high-quality teachers; (d) have a larger variety of options, in regard to types of schools, from which novice teachers can choose to work; (e) attract a stronger, better applicant pool for high-needs schools; and (f) end the *revolving door* of teacher movement.

### *Conclusion*

When utilizing research on a topic from a variety of perspectives, policymakers and school district administrators can find overlapping ideas that warrant further study within the topic of teacher retention. Studies regarding the practices of administrators, teachers, and National Board Certified Teachers from urban, suburban, and rural areas, by East and West coast scholars, employees of the Center for Teaching Quality and the Center for Teacher Quality, the California Teacher Association, the National Education Association, and employees of the Public Policy Institute of California provide a variety of lenses. These lenses are necessary to view the many possible solutions to the problem of teacher attrition and migration, in order to focus on increasing retention of high-quality teachers. Improved working conditions, better teacher preparation, increased professional

development options, more quality administrators, and increased educational funding could be policy initiatives for improved teacher retention, less difficulty in recruitment, and higher teacher quality. In the research cycle, if these recommendations should become policy, they need to be evaluated and adjusted as necessary in order to promote educational equity in every school.

The problem of teacher movement within, between, and out of school districts is important because of numerous reasons supported in this literature review: (a) The impact on student achievement, (b) the impact on new teachers, (c) higher percentages of teacher turnover in high-needs schools, and (d) factors affecting job satisfaction, and thus teacher persistence. There is a need to learn more from the voices of teachers, which is the gap in the available literature on teacher retention that this study begins to fill.

## Chapter Three

### *Methods*

Preceding this chapter is a review of prior research literature on teacher retention, the phenomenon of teacher movement, and the effects of teacher movement. Quantitative studies dominate the available literature and the few surveys that have qualitative data generally do not go into detail. This study helps fill a gap in the literature by exploring the working conditions and experiences of teachers in both differing lengths of service in the profession and differing schools within one high school district in Southern California. Moreover, this study adds to the literature by aiding the understanding of how teachers understand these same working conditions and experiences and how that internal understanding may lead to their retention in the profession. To address this phenomenon, the following research questions were explored in an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach:

1. What are the working conditions at a site that impact teachers?
2. In what ways do district and school leadership influence teachers?

The literature review indicates that there are a lack of empirical studies of a qualitative nature regarding teachers' experiences and teacher retention. Qualitative studies are necessary to help research consumers understand what is not covered through quantitative research. This chapter presents the methodology used in addressing the research questions in addition to the research gaps. The components of this study's qualitative method include the overall research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

### *Overall Research Design*

The researcher determined that the AI research design was the appropriate method for this study because AI is described as the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). AI involves asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. The AI approach allowed participants to envision what might be; subsequently, participants shared dialogue of what should be, based on individual experiences.

The process of AI allowed the researcher to make personal connections with the teachers during the interviews by creating a climate of trust. AI was a non-threatening approach that reduced the development of leading questions and bias because some of the questions were framed with positive formats, while other questions in the protocol remained neutral. This was a meaningful format to enrich the depth and quality of data often difficult to obtain with traditional interview methods.

The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews of current teachers and former teachers from all four high schools in one small high school district that served a mid-sized city in Southern California. During the teacher interviews, the researcher utilized a protocol that included some specifically designed AI questions. This approach elicited teacher responses through stories, values, and wishes. This process produced data that was rich with examples and insights about teachers' working conditions.

One goal for the analysis of participants' narratives was to identify the working conditions each participant has experienced, as each participant's context will differ. The

specificity in identification of these working conditions adds generativity by acting as a bridge to previous research with specific details from participants in this study. This generative bridge then can be extended to subsequent research studies on the topic of working conditions and teacher retention. The researcher identified working conditions to fulfill a second goal, which was to better ascertain how participants understand and experience the previously identified working conditions from the exploratory component of this study. Although there are other reasons that determine employment decisions, this study focused primarily on working conditions of teachers in public high schools.

Analyses of narratives were used to explore how a group of participants experienced the interaction of significant factors characteristic of a phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon is teacher movement and in exploration of participants' experiences, the researcher attempted to identify factors that are characteristic of that phenomenon, specifically identifying factors that retained teachers described through their narratives.

The narrative research design was determined to be the appropriate method of analysis for this study because, according to Creswell (1998), "narrative research is the best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals" (p. 55). This design warranted a meaningful, comprehensive study to understand the phenomenon of teacher movement without using a large sample. Narrative research also enabled a holistic understanding of this phenomenon as the participants experienced it.

*Participants.* Fourteen current teachers and one former teacher from multiple sites within one Southern California high school district were included for ease of access to the

researcher and for purposes of consistency. One reason the study of teacher retention was valuable in this district was due to its district-wide designation of Program Improvement (PI). The PI designation is given to schools that receive Title I funding when Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is not maintained, based on the aggregation of all student scores in the same content area over a period of two years. Schools also are designated as PI schools if AYP is not maintained, based on the disaggregation of all student scores by grade span in the same content area over a period of two years.

The participating high school district was in PI and included two schools with larger percentages of English learners in comparison to the other two sites. Additionally, although the continuation high school and all three comprehensive high schools in the district qualify for Title I services, one of the participating comprehensive high schools serves a population of students of higher socio-economic status than the other three participating sites. The setting of this particular school district was conducive for studying teacher retention in the context of teachers' experiences. Like the previous work of Allensworth et al. (2009) and Scafidi et al. (2007) on characteristics of large school systems, this small district had two comprehensive sites with a low-achieving population of students of color and low socio-economic status. In addition to one continuation high school, this district had one comprehensive site that was overall higher achieving, had smaller percentage of low socio-economic students, and smaller population of students of color.

General student demographics, layoff procedures, and tenure policies vary from region to region and certainly from state to state. Focusing on the teacher retention phenomenon through teachers' experiences in one school district helped focus the study



and led to conclusions that could be pertinent to other similar high school districts.

Further narrowing the parameters of the study for consistency, the participants were all secondary level current teachers and former teachers because many aspects of a secondary teaching position are different from a primary teaching position. Additionally, the literature review primarily focused on research about secondary schools in the United States.

Purposive sampling (Rudestam & Newton, 2007) to identify potential participants and criterion sampling was employed using an initial contact to potential participants. According to Rudestam and Newton, criterion sampling is used when the researcher requires "...participants who closely match the criteria of the study" (p. 107). The initial contact occurred through electronic communication to recent teaching credential recipients over the last five years. This electronic communication included an attachment of the information sheet for the study (see Appendix A for the draft of the electronic communication and Appendix B for the study's information sheet.) In addition to the electronic communication, this study employed the snowball sampling (Creswell, 2008) of identified participants from personal contacts, graduate school programs, and social networking.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent letter includes permission to participate in this interview for more detailed information based on qualifying criteria from the initial contact. (see Appendix C for the consent letter.) The initial contact was utilized to identify secondary teachers at multiple stages in their teaching careers from one Southern California small high school district. These included teachers who have stayed at their site, moved to another site in their district, moved to another school

district, or left the profession, and were willing to participate in the study. The purpose of this is to reach a balance of perspectives in the interviews and to contribute to the robustness of this study. After identification and received consent, participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality.

For this study, the participant groups were initially categorized into four groups to ensure similar participation rates for each of the four sites in the participating school district; however, the participants' narratives were coded together to add understanding to how teachers in one small high school district identify with their workplaces. These experiences helped shed light on the phenomenon of teacher movement. To meet the criteria for participation in this study, potential participants must (a) reside in Southern California; (b) be a present/past teacher with experience at the secondary level; and, (c) have made the decision, or have had the decision made for them, to stay at one school site, migrate to another school site within or outside of their district, or left the profession. Once the researcher received sufficient signed consent and conducted a minimum of fifteen interviews, participants were excluded from the study.

*Instrumentation.* For this study, the instrumentation was a semi-structured interview protocol, which included specific AI questions, as the nature of socio-cultural narrative analysis requires eliciting personal experiences (Grbich, 2007). Participants were asked a series of questions regarding their work place environment, support from administration and colleagues, position movement they have or have not made within the profession, general demographics, an evaluation of the interview, and a snowball-sampling question (see Appendix D for a detailed list of interview questions.) To increase

validity, the interview questions were purposefully written to probe for this study's research questions (see Table 3.1).

Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) champion the effort to make analyzing qualitative data more transparent, and Table 3.1 demonstrates how interview questions and research questions are related.

Table 3.1. *Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions.*

Research Question	Interview Question Numbers
1) Conditions that Impact Teachers	1-17
2) District & School Leadership's Influence on Teachers	1-4, 6-15, 20, 22, 28, 32-33

To increase reliability, the interview questions were written in a similar style to Lortie's (1975) seminal study about teachers. Additionally, all participants were asked questions directly from the interview protocol, unless more clarification was needed to answer a particular question completely. This procedure prevented interviewer bias from compromising the robustness of this research, and it promoted consistency when coding responses. Moreover, all participants received an electronic copy of their interview transcript to review and make any additions they deemed necessary for their responses to the interview protocol.

*Data collection procedures.* After participants were identified and informed consent was received, data was collected during one initial personal interview by electronic audio recording. These interviews were conducted in numerous locations that were suggested by the participant and agreed upon by the researcher. Interviews were conducted in the spring of 2010.

The audio recordings of the interviews were then transcribed using the Casting Words transcription service. Participants received an electronic copy of their transcript to review to provide the opportunity for clarification on any aspects they thought were important to the study two to three weeks after the interviews were conducted. The member checking process concluded in early summer of 2010. These member checks add triangulation to the study, thus increasing the validity of this study and validating the participants' time and participation in this research. The researcher then engaged in a postori coding of the data from the transcripts during the summer of 2010. Whenever any questions arose during the analytical process, the researcher contacted that participant by phone or email.

#### *Data Analysis*

This study employed the analysis of narratives that were in response to AI interview questions. The purpose of this was to explore the experiences in a continuum of novice teachers to veteran teachers regarding working conditions and experiences that influence employment decisions (Creswell, 2007; Grbich, 2007). A combination of descriptive coding, interpretive coding, simultaneous coding, and values coding for teachers' beliefs was utilized to address both of the research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). In the following chapter, the data are reported in an organized manner with themes as headings. The sections contain both short quotations and long excerpts of stories from AI participant interviews, which is the goal of narrative analysis.

HyperRESEARCH software was used to aid in the analysis of the transcribed interviews. First, the researcher engaged in a postori analysis, reading for codes and then

finding overarching themes that arose organically from the transcriptions through the form of repetitive words, phrases, or ideas. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), these in vivo codes are “phrases that are used repeatedly by informants” (p. 61).

#### *Limitations of the Study*

Since the nature of participation in this study was on a volunteer basis, it was difficult to find a similar number of participants from each of the four school sites in the participating high school district. It was also very difficult to find participants who had migrated from the school district or left the profession. The participants in the study represented a sample of the teachers at each site in the participating high school district. Finally, the sample did not reflect the voices of all teachers at any participating school site or in the participating school district as a whole.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Data Presentation and Analyses

The purpose of this study was to examine the teacher retention phenomenon in an small secondary school district through teachers' experiences. Teacher retention plays a critical role in increasing educational opportunities for students in urban school districts. This chapter presents findings from the data collection process and analysis of that data. The research identified conditions that promote teacher retention as well as identified aspects of both district and school leadership's influence on teachers. The teachers in the study discussed a range of influences that positively and negatively affected them in the participating school district. Using the methodological design described in chapter three, the researcher employed interview questions including Appreciative Inquiry (AI) techniques. This chapter reveals the analyses of the data collection as the following themes that influence teacher retention: *colleague support, professional development, district hiring practices, site administrator support, district office support, autonomy, teaching assignments, workplace culture, personal satisfaction, communication, respect, and teacher induction support.*

#### *Context*

The participating small school district included two schools with larger percentages of English learners in comparison to the other two. Although all comprehensive schools in the district qualify for Title I services, one of the participating high schools serves a population of students of higher socio-economic status than the other three participating sites. The fourth participating site, also qualifying for Title I

services, is the continuation high school for the district, which has been recognized for instructional practices in alternative education.

Participants in this teacher retention study were from four high schools in one small high school district that serves a mid-sized city in Southern California. To protect the confidentiality of participants, the name of the school district was not used in the study. Each teacher chose or was given a pseudonym and the names of all of the participating school sites were replaced with letters (see Table 4.1). Finally, the positions of the teachers at the participating sites were not disclosed.

Table 4.1. *Summary of Study Participants.*

Pseudonym	Race	Gender	School Location	Years of Experience	Previous Sites
Jessica	White	Female	A	12	6
Megan	White	Female	A	3	1
Max	Asian	Male	A	2	1
Harriet	White	Female	B	8	1
Karl	White	Male	B	18	2
Mattie	White	Female	B	2	1
Hallee	White	Female	B	7	3
Jean	White	Female	C	18	1
Carol	White	Female	C	10	2
Monica	White	Female	C	9	4
Rebecca	Asian	Female	C	6	1
Amanda	White	Female	C	7	4
Judy	White	Female	D	16	3
Steve	Hispanic	Male	D	5	1
Moozer	White	Female	D	34	3

The sample consisted of three to five participants from each school. Of the fifteen participants, 12 were female and three were male. The participating teachers were predominantly white and female. They represented a wide range of teaching experience from 2-34 years, and a range of previous schools where they have taught, which ranged from one to six school sites. The teachers also represented a variety of academic subject

areas: math teachers were 40% of the sample, English teachers were 33% of the sample, social studies teachers were 20% of the sample, and specialist teachers were 7% of the sample. Nearly 50% (7 of 15) had spent their entire careers at one school site (see Table 4.1).

### *Procedure and Findings*

The researcher conducted an iterative a postori coding process with all 15 interviews of the participants. The primary analysis was to identify codes. The secondary and tertiary analyses were to connect selections of dialogue from the teacher interviews to representative codes. This process included the use of HyperRESEARCH software to aid analysis through organization of data by *chunking* ideas, words, or phrases of the participants with codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data were initially organized into 59 different codes. Then, similar codes were reduced; for example, hiring practices, late hiring, temporary contract, employment limbo, and pre-service days were reduced into the code hiring practices. In addition, the code discipline support was reduced to site administrator support. Any code with at least a frequency of occurrence of 30 was included as a major outcome of the study on teachers' experiences (see Table 4.2).



Table 4.2. *Codes and Frequencies.*

Code	Frequency
Colleague Support	111
Professional Development	99
District Hiring Practices	97
Site Administrator Support	93
District Office Support	77
Autonomy	70
Teaching Assignments	70
Workplace Culture	69
Personal Satisfaction	65
Communication	63
Respect	42
Teacher Induction Support	35

Table 4.2 lists the 12 most frequent codes about which teachers spoke during their interviews. The codes demonstrate how the teachers in this study view various aspects of their workplace.

For purposes of transparency and repetition, the researcher included examples of coded dialogue for the 12 codes from table 4.2 in table 4.3. All excerpts in Table 4.3 are from participant interviews between March 29, 2010 and April 10, 2010. All of the final major themes based on coding and corresponding quotations from multiple teacher participants were included.

Table 4.3. *Codes and Dialogue Examples.*

Codes	Dialogue Examples
Colleague Support	“All of my interactions have supported me in one way or another. Communicating with my colleagues helps us get things off my/our chests(s). It also helps me see what I can do in my class to support them with theirs;” “What helped me move out of survival mode was the support of my colleagues;” “I got better as a teacher because of other caring teachers that mentored me;” “I really appreciate the interaction between staff members”
Professional Development	“...learning about developmentally appropriate behavior for teens;” “There’s a great deal of professional development available on two levels...long term and...strategies you can use in your classroom tomorrow;” “I have had incredible professional development;” “We have Professional Learning Communities time. That’s a formal time where we definitely talk about formal business, but the groups are very small;” “A lot of the reflective practice that I do is in terms of talking to math teachers and [other] content [teachers], making sure that our assessment score are comparable and our kids are learning the same things, or goals are the same;” “Once a month at our site the advanced SDAIE team [made up of teachers with support from the Literacy Specialist] teaches SDAIE techniques, which is helpful because I have a lot of ELD students”
District Hiring Practices	“I was hired voluntarily, so I didn’t get a pink slip, I just got a ‘You’re not hired;” “You’re temporary, you don’t count;” “I put in my application, was called in for a panel interview, and then a few days later [I] was asked if I would take the position;” “The job really appealed to me the most because it had the best feel and personal chemistry;” “I actually got interviewed the first day of school and hired nine days into the school year”
Site Administrator Support	“I think my admin support is pretty good. Overall, I’m happy with my admin;” “And there’s an environment there that the principal creates a culture that she knows that her teachers are competent, and so go and do your job and we’re not going to bug you;” “I know that if I need something, the feedback is going to come to me in a very non-threatening, non-punitive way;” “...I thought I couldn’t write any referrals. Then when the admin came into my class one day and said, ‘You need to write referrals for them,’ and all of the sudden it’s like, ‘Oh, okay, I’m okay to write referrals.’ At least I know I can do something about the students when they’re out of hand”
District Office Support	“My first year being in the school district, I walked into the district office and people knew me by name...I feel valued;” “...they want to know what they can do to help us;” “We were also given some district initiatives, like using benchmarks, which is good, but, we had to learn about when they were coming and how to schedule them”

Table 4.3. *Codes and Dialogue Examples, Continued.*

Codes	Dialogue Examples
Autonomy	“I control what I have in my classroom, I control the actual lessons;” “We do have control over curriculum; however, we have somewhat flexible timeframe, make sure we cover particular subjects and units; how we do that is up to us;” “I have implemented a pretty radical grading system—a standards based grading instead of normal, and I haven’t run into any resistance”
Teaching Assignments	“I am a math teacher with a multiple subjects credential and I had to write or organize or put together an English 12A class;” “My second year, I taught sheltered general math, algebra, and sheltered algebra;” “I’m currently doing ELD and I’ve been an AP director for five of those years, so while teaching English, I’ve also done ASB;” “My position was supposed to be a science teacher...they hired me on and then three weeks into school, they changed their mind and...gave my classes to [another] teacher”
Workplace Culture	“This district is wonderful. I would not have said that 15 years ago, because that’s a top level change;” “I strongly value education and growing as an educator, and that is definitely supported at the school and the district;” “I think we are in sync in terms of personal ideals at my site;” “Things have improved quite a bit in 17 years in this district with regard to relations between teachers and the district office management”
Personal Satisfaction	“I feel like what I’m doing is important, and that I’m valued in my district. I feel like they see us teachers as being incredibly important...What I do is important to me that they [the school district] value what I do, and they think that we’re the most important, us teachers;” “The rewards from the students [are] that they learn, that they understand the material, [and] that they are going to college;” “I like truly making a difference in young peoples’ lives”
Communication	“We are able to give our vote and/or input on things such as what courses will/will not be taught, how the school’s money is spent, and the next school year’s calendar, etc;” “The principal gets input from departments. There’s a traditional hierarchy of administrative/teacher positions, but this principal pulls input from everyone;” “When we have district level meetings, representation from our school is always wanted. If one of us isn’t there, we get a phone call;” “I must have four people a day interrupt my class for me to hand out some note to a student. There’s got to be a better way”

Table 4.3. *Codes and Dialogue Examples, Continued.*

Codes	Dialogue Examples
Respect	“I think that one of the most important experiences that I have had is having somebody value what I have to say and knowing that when I’m listened to that what I have to say is actually going to make it into the classroom;” “The majority of the faculty and staff make me want to go to work every day. For the most part, 99% of the people I work with, I absolutely adore. I respect them, and I respect their input”
Teacher Induction Support	“It is always challenging in the beginning, no matter where a person teaches;” “We do have, of course, the [CA] state mandate that first and second year teachers go through the BTSA program. So those policies help shape the first two years for our new teachers;” “I had a wonderful mentor teacher my first year and second year;” “I think [being reflective about my practice] was another one of those things that BTSA really helped me do”

Subsequently, the researcher organized and reorganized the substantial themes in a manner to answer the research questions. This organization is presented in the following section, where the data analysis revealed how participants described which working conditions most impact them and how the district and site administrators influence teachers. In this study, when the working conditions and the support interactions were both in place, the result was the participants’ retention in the teaching profession for 14 out of 15 teachers in the sample.

#### *Interpretation*

This section connects the major themes from teachers’ interview dialogue, which was coded. These themes answer the study’s research questions while the teachers’ voices serve as evidence of the themes. These themes of the study are that various levels and specific types of support, professional development, district hiring practices, autonomy, teaching assignments, workplace culture, personal satisfaction, communication, and respect are conditions that teachers identify as positively impacting

themselves and that school and district administrators are responsible for creating a workplace environment with these conditions. Because many of these conditions are interdependent, some of the dialogue warranted a double-coding process, which is reflected through the level of interconnectedness within this section.

*What Are the Working Conditions that Impact Teachers?*

Of all of the topics about which the participating teachers shared their stories, support was the most significant, as it was the most commonly mentioned. Within the general category of support, teachers identified colleague support and teacher induction support as the most meaningful types of support in their work environments. Teachers also gave input about professional development, autonomy, teaching assignments, workplace culture, personal satisfaction, communication, and respect.

*Colleague support.* Supportive relationships at school sites are vital. When asked about advice for someone new to the profession, one of the participating teachers said, “Build relationships. I think that’s huge” (Interview, March 30, 2010). Colleague support through relationships helps a school site function more cohesively, as one teacher explained, “Being able to work together makes it a great school” (Interview, April 2, 2010). These supportive relationships benefit teachers internally, personally, and professionally.

When speaking of the internal rewards of generally of having support, one teacher commented that it “makes me feel wanted, makes me feel accepted, [and] makes me feel like they want me to be here” (Interview, April 6, 2010). Another teacher said that having support “really helps you feel like you’re not on an island” (Interview, April 5, 2010). Workplace friendships make some teachers look forward to work. One teacher explained,

“I have a couple of really good friends now at work, so it’s always fun to see them and hang out with them, catch up and eat lunch together...those things make me excited [to come to work every day]” (Interview, April 6, 2010). This colleague support fosters a connection to teaching peers that can help retain teachers at a site. One teacher shared, “Almost every year that I have been at [my site], I’ve had the chance to move sites and I’ve never gone because I really can’t imagine working with other people...it’s like a family” (Interview, March 31, 2010).

The personal benefits of colleague support through friendship extend to informal interactions outside of work. These interactions help teachers separate their personal and professional lives, while providing companionship and an outlet from stress. The following are some examples of these informal interactions of colleague support:

“Sometimes the math teachers will get together and we’ll do a movie night or we will go to dinner. We’ll have happy hour somewhere” (Interview, March 30, 2010); “We meet up at Disneyland pretty often, and it’s actually a lot of fun. While there, we’re not allowed to talk about work” (Interview, April 7, 2010); and “We go out and have drinks sometimes. I think it’s sometimes needed after a long week. Nothing is required ever, but it helps us feel more like a team, more like family” (Interview, April 6, 2010). This type of interaction brings teachers together in a personal and social way.

Professionally, colleague support and communication are fostered through teacher relations at school sites. The following is an example of how this benefitted a group of geometry teachers:

We have one teacher in particular that’s been the geometry lead teacher this year. He has helped do the pacing, he has helped make homework

assignments, and he has helped organize us for who is making what test. That is wonderful. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

These math teachers had new textbooks and were able to work together, dividing the organizational demands of the new curriculum, which had productive results. Common planning and sharing of materials acknowledges the professional competency and respect colleagues have for one another. Teachers enjoy working with competent professionals who can enhance their own work as well as maximize time and energy spent on curriculum development.

Lunchtime can also important for colleague support and communication:

One of the things that my math department does that is really awesome is they do a lunch club, where one person brings lunch for everyone. You only have to bring lunch in every three weeks. It's a salad, usually, or something else, but that keeps all the math teachers connected and talking. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

These supportive, communicative relationships also benefit a department's professional development:

When your department gets along, it's a lot easier to ask for help. When you need something and you like the person, it's a lot easier to come on in and say, "Hey, I'm not getting this. What are you doing because your kids are talking better than mine. I need to hear what you are doing." And when you like each other and respect each other on a personal level, that's a lot easier to do. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

These supportive relationships have benefitted teachers emotionally, personally, and professionally. Moreover, these rewards also extend to students through instructional practices and, as one participant shared, the retention of teachers at their school sites.

*Teacher induction support.* In the beginning of their careers, teachers need support to grow in their teaching practice. Some of this support comes from state mandated teacher induction programs like Beginning Teachers Support and Assessment

(BTSA). This support is needed because “it is always challenging in the beginning, no matter where a person teaches” (Interview, April 2, 2010) and “new teachers need more guidance. When you’re new to a school and you do all the classroom management and they throw a whole new system at you and new curriculum. It’s too much in the beginning” (Interview, April 7, 2010). Developing relationships between new and experienced teachers is an outcome of BTSA because without it, “a lot of times new teachers aren’t reached out to at all. And it’s so difficult for them to feel connected in any way, which I think is really important in any line of work that we choose” (Interview, April 6, 2010).

It is also beneficial for someone from a teacher’s own school district or site to provide that support. One teacher said, “...working with other teachers who have been there before, I think that helps” (Interview, April 6, 2010). Novice teachers recognize that the best help is from someone who knows what they are going through.

Some teachers reported benefitting from the BTSA program. “My BTSA coordinator has played a really important part in my teaching development. She is very supportive” (Interview, April 2, 2010). A first year teacher who was in BTSA at the time of the interview said, “this district has a really good BTSA program and the way they have it set up is good and the BTSA support providers are really helpful and getting me through it and everything” (Interview, April 2, 2010). One teacher described how teacher induction through BTSA helped concerning professional development:

If I hadn’t had that, then I wouldn’t have been able to assess kids properly because I think when you’re going through the credential program, it’s just like you’re getting a whirlwind of things thrown at you quickly and I think BTSA really helped me. (Interview, March 31, 2010)



Not all teachers in this study, however, reported on the benefits of teacher induction. “I had to finish BTSA when I got here and that was just painful—that whole program” (Interview, April 7, 2010). A more experienced teacher said,

The one thing that I think is ridiculous is the BTSA program. All that is taught in the program is taught in college—and better. New teachers have enough on their plate and now they have to be pulled out of their first set of classes one to two times a week. [They have to] create sub plans, and deal with behavior before and after they return from BTSA training. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

Some teachers in this study also talked about having a mentor teacher who was not necessarily a BTSA support provider:

The first few years, one of the biggest things that helped me was having my mentor and talking to her about all of the issues. Whether it was a parent issue, or a curriculum issue, or how to get paper or whatever—that was wonderful. Or even just going and having coffee afterwards and chilling. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

The idea of having someone to talk through issues is significant. Similarly, another teacher said,

I think because it was a new school and in a new area, because I moved here, it helped me immensely to have that one person where I could be like, “I had a really bad day. Here is what happened...” (Interview, April 6, 2010)

Other teachers talked about a more colleague support approach to teacher induction, “What helped me in the first couple of years was having mentor teachers, having people who truly wanted to see me succeed” (Interview, April 1, 2010). Here is how one novice teacher described the colleague support, “I got no end of support and answers and suggestions from [my colleagues]. There’s no [negative] criticism or anything about how I’m doing, so that’s been really good” (Interview, April 2, 2010). This colleague support can also foster professional development and personal satisfaction:

The couple of teachers that I found who are patient and willing to give me ideas, help me with things and bounce ideas off and that sort of thing has been the most important [to my development as a teacher] because it's just helped me to get a whole bunch of ideas and to feel like I'm in a good place where I'm valued. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

Teachers identified the importance of being valued. Novice teachers need to feel they are a part of something on an academic and performance level with their more experienced peers.

*Professional development.* The sample of teachers in the participating high school district clearly understood the role of being a life-long learner in the field of education. "I think that when we stop trying to learn, our teaching gets stagnant" (Interview, March 31, 2010). Change is necessary for success:

Teaching isn't the kind of profession that you can just rely on what you did in the past. There are always new developments, new lessons, somebody having a new idea that you should be trying. And if you're teaching the exact same way you did the year before, it gets boring and you'll burn out. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

Like change, reflection is also an important component of professional development. "I don't know how you can be a successful teacher and not reflect on how things are doing and what would be better and what you should not do anymore" (Interview, April 5, 2010). Most importantly, teachers understand their purpose is to reach students, and the role of professional development is to help them better serve their clientele:

If you aren't trying to grow professionally, I think you're going to get left behind, and you are not going to be able to reach kids. I think that how we teach has to evolve because how kids learn and the stimulus kids get from the media changes. And, if we are not changing with the times, I don't think we are going to be able to reach kids and be effective in the classroom. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

In the study, it is clear that colleague support was an important part of professional development. "I got better as a teacher because of other caring teachers that

mentored me” (Interview, April 7, 2010). One teacher described how much more important colleague support was to her professional development, compared to her pre-service education:

I think the collaboration with other staff members is actually the best way of developing strong teachers. Credentialing programs provide a strong base, but for the differentiation of experiences with which people come into credentialing programs, they are not always effective. I happen to come in with a lot more experience because of my family background, so a lot of the classroom management and method organization was not very helpful for me because I had already seen that so much of my entire life. Whereas, actual lessons, like how to develop a unit for the high school level, would have been much more effective for me and that’s the part that was really left out from my particular program. Once I got the chance to talk with other teachers and immediately try what I was going within my classroom that was where I was able to really develop the skills necessary to teach and not just manage. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

Choice in professional development is also implicated here. A BTSA program with choice might lead to increased teacher retention because teachers, depending on prior experiences, have differing needs.

*Autonomy.* In their interviews, teachers expressed general appreciation for autonomy in their classrooms. One teacher stated, “At the classroom level, we have a lot of freedom to do what we need to do” (Interview, April 2, 2010). Later, this teacher expounded upon the previous statement:

I have a lot of control in my classroom. I have implemented a pretty radical grading system—a standards-based grading system, instead of normal. And I haven’t run into any resistance, and most people have been in great support of it. But it is just big that I can do something totally different from what everyone else is doing, and that I’ve been able to do that. (April 2, 2010)

That teacher described being able to do what he/she “needed to do” in the classroom. In this case, it was to institute a standards-based grading system, instead of using total points or percent weights. Some school districts or sites have standardized grading policies to

which teachers are required to adhere. If that existed in the participating school district, this teacher would lack the autonomy to determine the best assessment method of students for him/her, which in this case is a standards-based grading system. Later in the interview, he/she shared that other teachers in the department have committed to using this system during the next school year, based on the success of the feedback received from this new standards-based grading policy.

A teacher from a different school site explained how some of teachers as his/her site have autonomy in some aspects of curriculum, while they do not have autonomy in other parts of the curriculum:

For the most part, we have curricular control. Department and classroom are not too different from each other. We do have control over curriculum; however, we have to follow a somewhat flexible time frame, making sure we cover particular subjects and units; how we do it is up to us. I do like that. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

This teacher described how the district has particular subjects and units, which must be covered in a certain timeframe, but the teachers, have autonomy in the methods they use, the content they use to deliver the information from the subjects and units, and the pacing of the content.

Another participant compared autonomy with competency, “We are pretty much in our own autonomous little world. Unless you are having major problems, nobody is coming to see you” (Interview, March 31, 2010). This teacher understood autonomy as no involvement from site or district administrators in the classroom, which was a new idea from the participants. Some view support from district employees other than colleagues as a sign of weakness of a teacher’s ability in the classroom. However, many

teachers viewed colleague support as a positive experience. The following is an example of how autonomy and colleague support have worked together at one of the school sites:

What I do is based on the California Standards, supplemented pretty much as I see fit, but because we are constantly working with our colleagues in the department, what I do on any given day has very often been created or dreamed up by somebody else. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

In the participating school district, teachers valued colleague support and innovation in the classroom based on this support.

*Workplace culture.* In their descriptions of workplace culture, teachers' attitudes about colleagues and perceptions of a school site were important. For one experienced teacher, finding a position at a site that matched his/her needs was desired, "I was looking for a place that fit me the best, knowing that was where I would be able to do my best work" (Interview, March 31, 2010). After he/she accepted the teaching position, this teacher described the cultural match of various components at the school site:

We discovered that all of us in the department had a similar attitude, so the chemistry has been brilliant. This worked out because of the fact that this department reflects the personality of this school. And I fit in this school, the other folks in the department fit in this school, so we fit with each other and it has been absolutely brilliant. The best thing is the chemistry, having a whole bunch of highly dedicated, highly motivated, highly intelligent, and highly generous teachers on the faculty. We share ideas; we share commiseration; we share everything. It really is an intellectual family. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

The idea of an "intellectual family" is at a juncture of workplace culture, colleague support, respect, personal satisfaction, and professional development. The following are two examples of how these themes work together in harmony, according to one participant:

The colleagues that I work with are so strong in terms of personality and dedication and creativity. I'm excited to come to school to see what answers, what creative solution somebody is going to come up with to

some goofy problem that we have. So, it is fun to tie into that creativity.  
(Interview, March 31, 2010)

“It comes down to colleagues because to understand content material, you have to teach it. The best way to learn something is to teach it. Well, the best way to become a teacher is to work with real teachers. And I have been tremendously fortunate to have both senior teachers, and in the case of our one newbie, an absolute goddess who is so creative, and so sharp, and so fast to come up with solutions that I will use the next period after I observe her. I work with a bunch of folks that are educational geniuses. I just sponge that stuff up, and try to squeeze out a little of my own as payback. And that is the most important thing, developing as a teacher.  
(Interview, March 31, 2010)

This teacher described how demonstrating appreciation for colleagues, sharing a culture of openness to share ideas, sustaining professional growth of peers, and maintaining a willingness to learn work in conjunction for progress toward a goal and intrinsically motivate him/her as a teacher.

Similarly, when asked about the perfect school for him/her, one teacher from another site described, “One with highly intelligent, truly dedicated individuals that are more interested in the development and success of their students, then they are of themselves. I am exquisitely fortunate to be in such a school” (Interview, March 30, 2010). While the ultimate goal is the increase of learning for students, teachers understand that their attitude toward their work and colleague support is vital:

I think this school has a great history behind it. It also has teachers that have been there for thirty plus years and are able to provide the newer teachers with knowledge and history and background to help us assist with student population background. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

This teacher explained how his/her veteran peers work on culturally supportive teaching practices because of high population of Hispanic students that contrasts with the low percentage of Hispanic teachers, which is persistent throughout all sites in the

participating school district. Sometimes teachers described a workplace culture match of beliefs to increase student motivation. For example,

You should enjoy what you're doing in the classroom. You should enjoy what you're doing outside of the classroom. You should be learning something that you can take out to the world, and make an impact on other people's lives. And I believe highly that the school that I am at matches that. And I believe that [my colleagues] feel it's important that students are given a well-balanced education with things to do to keep them stimulated and keep them excited about coming to school each day. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

Culturally proficient teaching strategies, as described above, are vital because they maintain student engagement. As the students' academic needs evolve, so must the manner in which they are taught. Some teachers shared about how their site works on the environment of the school to increase student learning, and that there exists a shared belief that the state assessments cannot measure a student's real learning:

I love that the school is very unified, and that the teachers will all come together for whatever it is that they are doing. I love that the teachers are very intent on growing and changing the environment for the students. And that, while we know that it's important that our test results are good and all, that's not the thing that is always focused on. We are just focused on the students and their actual learning, rather than always the number and the testing. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

Teachers also explained how being a teacher is an identity, not merely a profession. One teacher expounded upon the idea of teachers' identity and how that identity positively affects students:

The best teachers are the ones who realize that they have to teach. It's what they are, and not what they do. And one of the things that is most rewarding to me is that I am in a school full of those people...I think what has really happened is that the personality of that school is such that it is full of honest-to-goodness teachers, not just folks doing a job, and these folks hire more honest-to-goodness teachers, and these folks influence the people they teach. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

The idea of position matching of a teacher candidate to a school site is paramount for some teachers. In fact, more teachers at school sites are involved in the hiring process for new staff, which allows for more of an information-rich hiring process:

I think it is an important thing, when you are looking for a new teacher for our school, that they know how to teach the standards is important, but there has to be a balance between standards and their outcome. There is a huge amount of flexibility that we need to have in our population and if you are inflexible, you will turn the kids off, and you will not get anywhere with them. So, we have been very fortunate in when we are hiring, that we have been able to build these new positions with people who have been able to offer that flexibility in their ability to teach.  
(Interview, March 31, 2010)

As demonstrated in the previous example, this information-rich hiring process, which includes current teachers, has been successful in the pursuit of new hires who fit the needs of the student population and workplace culture of the school site.

Regarding workplace culture, many teachers in the sample described how the beliefs of their colleagues matched their personal beliefs about education and their work as teachers. According to the participants, focusing on students is a key component of workplace culture: “I think for the most part people, my colleagues, would be in line with me” (Interview, April 2, 2010); “I believe every kid can learn and should have equal access to everything we can offer them to make the learning more effective for them. My school believes in that and they support me in that” (Interview, April 7, 2010); “In general, I think my personal values are that every student can learn, but especially in math you have to be in the right place to learn...I think that matched very much with what the department thought” (Interview, April 6, 2010); “Our ultimate goal is to get these students to be educated in a field of study, whether it’s history, science, or English” (Interview, April 6, 2010); and, “Occasionally, there still are some teachers who don’t



hold those high standards, but I think in general, that's where we're at" (Interview, April 5, 2010). These ideas encompassed teachers from across the district, including the one teacher from the sample who is no longer in the teaching profession.

One teacher described sharing beliefs at his/her site about Advanced Placement (AP) testing, in light of a contrasting belief held at a different site in the participating school district:

All of our kids take the [AP] exam because we tell them straight up that if you don't take the exam, you're only kidding yourself about having a college-like experience, and that will hurt you getting into college rather than help you. Some of the other schools in the district don't have the same philosophy. One of the high schools has almost 300 kids sign up and take the AP class, and then only sixty took the AP exam. That's a travesty and that's not intellectually or academically honest, in my view. We always have a high percentage of our kids taking the AP exam because they realize that doing so is a good signal to a college admissions officer that, "Yes, I am willing to take on the challenge of higher level work, and willing to put myself on the line. Bring it on!" (Interview, March 30, 2010)

This shared belief in students' abilities, resultant from a culturally proficient workplace culture, was viewed as a direct benefit for the future of students, especially those who are planning postsecondary studies. Another teacher in the sample spoke of educating the whole child, "I am a firm believer that not all of our students are going to succeed on the academics, and sometimes what's keeping those kids afloat is the extra-curricular activities that they're involved with" (Interview, April 6, 2010). This teacher works with other teachers and students to provide non-academic motivation for students to remain successful academically, which for some students is the cornerstone of their positive educational experiences.

This shared workplace culture has led to high teacher involvement at some of the school sites in the participating district. This extra involvement has led to some aspects of colleague support and respect of teaching peers:

One of the things that stands out about the math department, too, is that everybody seems to have something else that they're involved in, in terms of athletics, or a club. So we're very leader-based in our group, so that everybody has time constraints and different things, and we try to make it efficient and value each other's work. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

Teachers at one site in the school district expanded this involvement to include weekend academic support for students:

We started a Saturday Scholars program because the kids wanted it. The kids wanted a place to have a tutorial-like session Saturday morning, so we run it four hours every Saturday. We average over 500 kids out of 2,000 kids that come to school an extra four hours every week, and before finals, we'll have up to 1,200. Volunteer faculty [and] volunteer students studying for four hours on Saturday on whatever subject they want because that is the nature and personality of the school. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

It is clear that teachers from this site who donate their time for tutoring on weekends have a shared workplace culture to do what students identify will increase learning, which is the ultimate goal of education.

However, this was not the case at every site in the participating school district. One teacher was very vocal about aspects of the workplace culture that were not a match with all teachers, and sometimes staff members, including site administrators, district administrators, and school district policies. Connections could be drawn between the existence of the achievement gap for certain demographic groups of students and fundamental differences in motivational and opportunistic beliefs of teachers in the participating school district. The following are examples of teachers' beliefs that were not

embraced as core beliefs in the workplace culture for a majority of teachers at a site or in a department:

We make a lot of waves in the [Advancement Via Individual Determination] AVID department at our school for a lot of reasons. One of the reasons is because we are almost fifty percent Hispanic and fifty percent white, but the white population gets a lot more say in a lot of things, whether it's programs, support classes, parent programs, or other activities. So we have had, for probably five or six years, open enrollment into the AP classes, but we still have AP teachers that have some bias as to whom should be in their classes. We've continued to push teachers to train the students to be AP students. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

The first issue that this teacher described was a racial issue, where not all student groups are allowed opportunity for their voices to be heard about programs, support, or activities.

The second issue this teacher shared was about the presence of bias in the teaching staff about who should be prepared for more rigorous coursework. The third issue, which is in line with preparing students for AP classes, is supporting students to continue taking courses that would give them the opportunity to attend college. This same teacher explained how this affected him/her in the context of one academic department:

My big thing is getting kids ready for college. I spent a whole two days talking to my math kids about their classes and what kind of math class they should take. Geometry is the last of the graduation requirements, but I would say when I walked around and asked kids about the math classes after we talked about it, after speaking to my classes, and seeing all of the college stuff around, I think there was only one kid who didn't sign up for math next year. But there are math teachers who don't have that conversation, so their kids aren't signing up for more math. Some of them will because they have the self-determination and stuff, but if you are not pushing kids and their parents aren't pushing them, they're not going to do it. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

Here, the teacher described a mismatch between graduation requirements and college entrance requirements. He/she explored the lack of a match of workplace culture around the topic of motivating students and allowing for the opportunity for students to be able

to decide to attend postsecondary education at a state university. “There’s just a disconnect about which kids should go to college or which kids should take more of the practical experience kind of a thing” (Interview, March 30, 2010). This teacher perceives that certain students, or groups of students, are denied opportunities through the types of courses in which they are enrolled. If a student does not have the required courses for admission to a state university and has the desire to attend college, then that student would have to first attend a community college and transfer to a university. However, if students are not exposed to rigorous coursework in high school, postsecondary studies will present more of a challenge.

The fourth workplace culture issue about which this teacher shared was about student grades:

We thought of the Ds as dangerous because they are not qualified for summer school anymore. They have to retake those classes. We want all the teachers to realize that if you don’t push those kids with the Ds, they’re not going to have the chance to take those extra electives because they have to retake courses in order to get Cs. If you can push your kids to get Cs, then they can take extra classes and we have a lot of kids who think that Ds are okay because it’s for graduation, which hurts them in the long run. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

While a earning a grade of D is enough for credit in course, which counts toward graduation, current district policies do not allow students to make up those courses for a higher grade in summer school. Only if a student fails a course can he/she take summer school. This interferes with any classes a student would take the subsequent school year because retaking a course eliminates a class period, which would be available for another class, such as a more rigorous or higher level course, or an elective course.

In that same area, teachers from the participating district expressed a necessity to share a workplace culture around expectations and standards for students. A teacher from a comprehensive site in the district wished for a common culture regarding expectations for student behaviors:

I would like a greater school-wide acceptance of what expectations should be from among the staff: the high expectations for students; making sure that everyone's on board so that if we decide that getting to class on time is important, that all teachers are holding up standards; and not letting kids cuss in the classroom. Whatever those standards are, it's be great if everybody believed in them as a whole, so that students can't turn to you and say, "That teacher doesn't...". (Interview, April 5, 2010)

Similarly, a teacher from the district's continuation site wished for a common culture, but this teacher wished for a common workplace culture around standards for rigorous coursework:

If I could think of anything that's been hard to grow in [at my site] is offering rigor and support for rigorous teaching from some of my colleagues. It's really hard to require—ethics, for example. You try to get a kid to write a paper in your class and they say, "Why are we doing this in here? If I take X teacher's class, they don't make us do this." We get that kind of stuff. That's probably the part that's hard because we're not all doing the same thing. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

What these teachers from very different sites have in common is that they wish for a shared workplace culture with common values. They demonstrated what happens when common values are not held, and students challenge what some teachers attempt to uphold in their classrooms. Establishing a shared workplace culture would help both teachers and students succeed; however, this yearning for what teachers consider a shared workplace culture is contradictory to maintaining their own autonomy, which could decrease feelings of personal satisfaction.

Sometimes, the generational gap between teachers affects the establishment of a shared workplace culture. A teacher from the continuation site described how this happens at his/her site:

The new teachers that we have at our site are right on in terms of meeting standards, and holding the kids to the standards. Then you have the teachers that are still teaching with 30+ years at the district...But after talking to this person about teaching standards, "Standards? What do you mean standards? These kids don't need to learn standards, they need to know how to add and subtract, and balance checkbooks." While I think those things are important, we still need to go through standards. The person said, "Well, I've been teaching for X amount of years. I don't have time to be lesson planning and all this." So, there are a few people still stuck in that...Continuation high school has evolved over the past ten or fifteen years. They used to do packet instruction in schools. Our high school is a model school, and in order to become a model school, you have to do direct instruction. That's why we have so many teachers. Usually, continuation high schools are a lot smaller than ours. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

It is clear from the description that both of these teachers have valid points to support their different beliefs about how a social science class should be taught and what content should be taught. Perhaps continued professional development and colleague support can help establish a compromise between these very different viewpoints, so that both standards are taught and students receive the education they need to be financially independent as adults. One of the comprehensive sites had a problem of differing beliefs surrounding assessments, and establishing a workplace culture of compromise led to a successful end to one conflict regarding fundamental philosophy:

We just recently had a meeting because we had a cheating issue and a lot of us were giving the same test. So, we came to the conclusion that some of us really had different philosophies. I'm really big on the philosophy that we need to give the test back and another group didn't mind giving the test back for them to look at and collecting it back, so they had it in their possession. Now, we have two groups of the different tests—the ones that you can give back and the ones that you need to pull out to make sure

that you can be in possession. But we all came to that consensus and it was a decision that I felt was important for my classroom. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

This example demonstrates how teachers can successfully compromise, so the teachers' beliefs are upheld and the students' needs are met. The conundrum of shared workplace culture and autonomy can end in a place where all teachers experience personal satisfaction with the results.

Sharing a workplace culture is not just an issue with teachers. Some school sites in the participating district have workplace culture issues with support staff. For example, "I have had issues with certain counselors not putting forth all his/her effort in regard to English language learners. I have literally been told, 'Oh, I guess he fell through the cracks'" (Interview, April 2, 2010). In this example, the teacher expressed frustration because he/she genuinely wanted to help a group of students, but perceived a workplace culture of bias toward the student population he/she was attempting to help.

In addition to differences in beliefs about certain demographic groups, special programs have workplace culture difficulties, too. One program specialist teacher from the district shared her experience regarding workplace culture:

I feel like the site where we're located—we probably get the least amount of support from the faculty and staff. Where we are, the site has the highest number of AP students and the highest socio-economic status, and then you bring in my students who are at the bottom of the barrel, 99 percent of them qualify for free or reduced lunch... When I go to other sites in our district, we are warmly welcomed. We are given top priority on having a place to meet with students; getting information out to students; having the opportunity to really serve the students; and help them because those sites recognize that what we're going is helping the kids stay in school and to graduate. At our site, I've found that we have a lot of resistance, and I don't think it's so much administrative. I think it's more of a culture of the teachers and staff who've been there for a long time who view the students that I bring into the school site are the ones

who are bringing the test scores down and, therefore, are kind of looked down upon as “those students.” So, that’s hard. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

This teacher expressed the desire for his/her students to be educated at a school site where they would feel like they belonged. When asked about the existence of a site in the district that would be a better cultural match, the teacher replied,

Probably the continuation site would be better for me and for my student population. It’s a smaller environment. It’s more student-oriented. It’s less about policy, procedure, and strict adherence to this, that, and the other. They look at the students and how can we serve the student and help him/her succeed within the parameters of the rules. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

Overall, the teachers in this study valued a shared workplace culture where they are supported and where their students are supported and depending on the needs of individual teachers and/or students, sometimes compromises are necessary to be able to do what is best for all parties involved in a situation.

*Personal satisfaction.* The teachers who participated in this study spoke about how numerous aspects in their work promoted feelings of personal satisfaction. For one veteran teacher, his/her match to the school site overpowered shifting academic departments, “Even though I’m teaching an entirely different subject than I was originally hired to teach, the chemistry of the school still works! I think that’s probably the most rewarding thing about my situation” (Interview, March 31, 2010). A novice teacher from the same comprehensive high school cited how empowerment in the mathematics department brought personal satisfaction, “It’s cool that it’s so easy for me to influence things that are going on in our department” (Interview, April 2, 2010).

One catalyst for the experience of personal satisfaction was the teacher-student relationship. Many teachers described their enjoyment of relating with students in



positive ways, “I think the kids, and the relationships I made with other teachers were absolutely rewarding, and just when I see some kids increase two or three grade levels in that year that they’re with me” (Interview, April 6, 2010). Another teacher said, “I like the relationships that you get to establish with different students. And the ways that we get to help them both inside and outside the classroom” (Interview, April 6, 2010).

Participants felt personal satisfaction through their work, which sometimes encompasses more than learning in the classroom. Specifically, many teachers viewed themselves as advocates for their students: “My kids come first. I do whatever I can for my kids. I love being at work—I love being a teacher, finally” (Interview, April 7, 2010); “Teaching my AVID students is probably the best, the most rewarding thing I have to say for my school, and for myself” (Interview, March 30, 2010); “The rewards from the students are that they learn, that they understand the material, and they’re going to college” (Interview, March 30, 2010). Prioritizing student learning and encouraging students for postsecondary education were not the only ways teachers described their impact on students. One teacher described a larger influence that he/she felt he/she has on students. The teacher remarked upon his/her own pleasure when students get what are often referred to as “aha moments,” those times when a sudden understanding emerges. However, this teacher’s greatest satisfaction was not with academic content “aha moments.” Rather, it was when his/her students understood that through knowledge, they did not have to be a “victim of [their] own situations and had control over [their own lives.” The teacher appreciated the moments when students realized that they could “exercise some of that control, and graduate” (Interview, April 7, 2010). This novice

teacher described his/her personal satisfaction journey as a bridge from content understanding to life lesson understanding and sharing empowerment with students.

Evidence of student learning was another source of personal satisfaction. When asked about what makes a site a good place in which to work, one experienced teacher said, “What makes it a good place are those kids that you see the light bulb go off, you know that they understand” (Interview, March 30, 2010). The light bulb and aha moments have similar rewards for teachers. To this teacher, student learning was the core reward. To one novice teacher, aiding the students who struggle with mathematics was the core reward:

The rewards have mostly been in the lower math classes, which surprised me because my higher math classes are much easier [to teach] and more fun. But in the lower math classes, there are so many more people who need help, as so I can actually do things and I can actually change their perspective on math and change the course of their education more. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

Although the teacher described teaching the higher math classes as more enjoyable, he/she experienced the most personal satisfaction from teaching the lower level courses.

A different novice mathematics teacher from another comprehensive site shared the same idea. The following is a description about changing students’ perceptions:

I love what was happening last semester and I guess they caught on to that. I love seeing students find success, especially in math, because a lot of them come in with really bad math experiences and they don’t feel like they’re capable. When I can show a student that they really are capable. Not only that, when they start taking the initiative, instead of looking to me for ultimately giving them the answers, that to me is my biggest success—to get them invested, and get them motivated. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

These teachers not only had to teach the content, but work at changing the students' perspective of mathematics, which demonstrates successfully challenging negative student beliefs and replacing them with positive student beliefs.

In regard to learning, teachers described a change in students' attitudes about school, "I think seeing them start understanding stuff and seeing them actually enjoy coming to school sometimes is a big deal" (Interview, April 6, 2010). The feeling of motivation from students brings teachers personal satisfaction in the form of excitement for everyone involved. "I get excited for my ELD students when they're so excited to be there, that they get there a half an hour before school starts" (Interview, April 6, 2010). Sometimes experiencing students' excitement because of their diligent work brings personal satisfaction. "Enjoying my subject matter, sharing it, putting a new spin on things, and having them, the students, look at something that they think is dry as crackers, and actually get excited about it. That is what I enjoy" (Interview, April 2, 2010).

Many teachers experienced personal satisfaction because of their participation in a culture of caring that promotes students' growth for a better future. For an experienced teacher, maintaining discipline and proper behavior in certain situations promoted personal satisfaction:

Rewarding is when they thank me, when they do well, and when I can kick them out of my class for behavior issues and they still visit me, because they know I care about them, their education, and, ultimately their future. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

For others, knowing their daily work contributes to student growth promoted personal satisfaction: "[I like] making a difference in the students' lives—definitely" (Interview, April 2, 2010); "I like truly making a difference in young people's lives" (Interview,

April 1, 2010). One veteran teacher from the continuation school spoke about personal satisfaction in helping students visualize and then achieve their goal of graduation:

I have a “race to the top” chart where, when kids come in with however many credits, we put them on that credit ladder. There are some that fall off because they drop out or go to adult education, but then there are the ones that reach the top, and I know that I have had a tremendous importance in getting them to reach the top. They’re grateful, they’re thankful, and they appreciate it. And while I do feel they did it, they did it with my help. I have had a tremendous impact in them reaching the top. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

Similarly, another teacher from the continuation school said,

I think every time a kid finishes a course, I think it’s awesome. Especially seeing them go through graduation, that’s the biggest thing. It’s what they did, certainly nothing I did, but it just—you have that satisfaction for helping them along the way. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

In addition to finding personal satisfaction through supporting students to graduation, helping them enter postsecondary education was also important. When describing how he/she experiences value, one special program teacher explained,

I have 90 percent of my seniors, who attend the annual Palomar College field trip, go onto postsecondary education, which is a huge accomplishment. I feel like I have played a part in that because we take an annual field trip with all our seniors. We take them to Palomar College, and do the FAFSA online. I do follow up and give them a timeline of what they need to do, and I’m always giving them a heads up on scholarships and encouraging them, and helping them write their essays. So yes, I definitely experience that. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

Clearly, the experience of personal satisfaction has many facets. For teachers in this sample, these facets included position matching, empowerment for teachers and students, relationships, advocacy, increased learning, positively changing perceptions, spreading enjoyment of a subject area, graduation support, and postsecondary education support.

*Communication.* Teachers from the sample stressed the importance of communication in their work environment. At times, this communication was with peers and was a component of teacher support, especially with teachers new to a site or new to the profession. One teacher described how he/she received support with his/her adjustment to a new site and his/her manner of communication with parents:

They [my colleagues] helped me learn this new population of kids because I was not used to working with the English speaking, white affluent kids or their parents. [laughs] I tend to be a little blunt and sometimes that can be new to people [laughs] when they're not used to it. So I learned how to communicate better with parents in a less upfront manner which goes against what I think they need. But eventually, if you work at it, you get what you want, and the parents realize that you are there for the better good of their kid. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

In addition to colleague support with adjustment to a new population, one teacher described a workplace culture of support, where he/she felt comfortable asking his/her peers for support: “Do you have another idea, or something else for me to look at to help me?” That’s what’s nice about working here: the people I work with” (Interview, March 31, 2010). Here, this teacher described how colleague support contributed much to the enjoyment of the workplace culture and the school site itself.

One teacher in the sample described how communication with peers benefits students. The following is an example of this successful communication in regard to student scheduling, “We are always having conversations or making sure that the kids are in the right classes—that they get through their courses before they go anywhere else” (Interview, March 31, 2010). It is clear that the workplace culture at the continuation site values communication of teaching peers and students, so that each student’s academic needs are met.

Teachers also appreciated communication within their academic departments. One teacher talked about decision-making in his/her department, specifically this teacher referred to a department workplace culture that valued each teacher's voice, "All teachers agree that we get to talk things out, so everything is agreed" (Interview, April 2, 2010). This also demonstrated the existence of respect for colleagues' ideas. Another teacher described his/her site's method of how individual academic department communication was spread throughout the school: "I know that after department meetings, our department chairs report back at the department chairs meeting, so if there is something that we feel is important, our chair brings that to the school's attention at that time" (Interview, April 5, 2010). This teacher thought his/her site's protocol for spreading communication between departments was important and timely, demonstrating the workplace culture of sharing ideas at this site. Overall, teachers described how an increase in communication, or the existence of a protocol for communication, benefitted new teachers with their adjustment to a site; it benefitted teachers through colleague support with aspects of their teaching; it benefitted students; it benefitted departments and supported colleague respect; and, this use of communication benefitted entire schools.

*Respect.* A significant working condition in this study was identified as respect. This respect of peers was repeatedly mentioned by participants. The following is an example of how one teacher described the extracurricular involvement and appreciation of teachers in the math department at his/her site:

One of the things that stands out about the math department, too, is that everybody seems to have something else that they're involved in, in terms of athletics, or a club. So we're very leader-based in our group, so that everybody has time constraints and different things, and we try to make it

[our work together] efficient and value each other's work. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

For some teachers, the respect led to positivity regarding work. "The majority of the faculty and staff make me want to go to work every day. For the most part, 99 percent of the people I work with, I absolutely adore. I respect them, and I respect their input" (Interview, April 2, 2010). For others, the respect led to both colleague support and friendship. "I really do enjoy my colleagues. I love my math department. There's so many great people and they've helped me out a lot. I love working with them and collaborating and just hanging out" (Interview, April 5, 2010). Sometimes, the mutual respect led to feelings of closeness and personal satisfaction, "The support and the feeling of family" (Interview, April 2, 2010). Respect has also led to professional development, colleague support, and personal satisfaction:

The couple of teachers that I found who are patient and willing to give me ideas, help me with things and bounce ideas off and that sort of thing have been the most important because it's just helped me to get a whole bunch of ideas and to feel like I'm in a good place where I am valued. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

This respect has also led to the discovery of a common identity and the personal satisfaction of sharing workplace culture. "The best teachers are the ones that realize that they have to teach. It is what they are, and not what they do. And one of the things that is most rewarding to me is that I am in a school full of those people" (Interview, March 31, 2010).

The presence of mutual respect has also aided teacher retention through personal satisfaction. "The high school's community has influenced my decision [to stay at my site] by making me feel comfortable and valued. I love teaching and I love [my school

site]” (Interview, April 2, 2010). Fostering a workplace culture of respect also helped maintain teacher retention. “I wouldn’t be at my site if it wasn’t a match with my beliefs. I appreciate my colleagues that I’m working with and I really feel the majority of the staff has the students’ best interests at heart” (Interview, April 5, 2010). This workplace culture of respect has spread throughout sites in the participating district. “I love working for this district and I can’t see myself working anywhere else...the environment is awesome” (Interview, March 31, 2010).

Although the overall feelings of teachers from the participating school district are positive, there are still some areas for improvement when colleague respect is concerned.

One teacher described an interaction at a district meeting:

I’ve been called a little girl by another teacher on the other site. “I want to sit next to the little girl.” And when I explained to her that she was being rude and demeaning, she says, “Oh no, it’s just because you’re so sweet,” like I’m not sweet. [laughs] So, that’s been probably my biggest frustration—that I’m not heard and not respected. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

Professionalism was a very important topic during interviews. Teachers desire professional relationships with colleagues and for issues in the workplace to be handled in a professional manner. The following is an example of how a novice teacher felt when a colleague made a complaint to the administration, instead of talking through an issue with the participating teacher.

I have had difficult relationships with other teachers. Other teachers would go talk to the administration about this or that issue, instead of talking to me. It just seems like an unprofessional way to handle it. It made me pretty annoyed, in general, and probably has ruined relationships. (Interview, April 2, 2010)



If the teaching profession is supposed to be that—a profession—then teachers should behave as respectful professionals, especially when interacting with their colleagues.

*In What Ways Do District and School Leadership Influence Teachers?*

*Conditions facilitating colleague support.* As previously stated of all of the topics about which the participating teachers shared their stories, support was the most significant. Regarding colleague support and communication, one teacher commented,

I have a really close-knit group of AVID teachers and we talk throughout the day. Three of our classrooms are right next to each other and they connect with an adjoining room. So anytime that we have a break, we are talking to each other. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

For this condition of proximity to exist, district administrators needed foresight concerning facilities planning in designing the adjoining space for the teachers. Site leaders also needed to assign teachers to classrooms by proximity of subject taught or program involvement, which in this case was AVID.

A similar sentiment came from a teacher at another site:

Throughout the days, I'll drop in and, for example, talk with the algebra teacher next door to me to discuss where we're at and how we're doing, how we're teaching things, and what's been going successfully and what hasn't been. That helps a lot during the days. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

However, this close classroom proximity for similar content teachers was not the case for all teachers in the sample, as one teacher described, "I work in the science building and I eat lunch with the science teachers, though I am a math teacher right now" (Interview, March 30, 2010). The teacher described how this has allowed him/her to create personally fulfilling colleague relationships, but this colleague support has not led to the teacher's professional development as a math teacher. Moreover, this teacher's frustration with teaching math in a science classroom has begun to reach a high point. When

speaking of the location of the classroom, “if they don’t figure it out—putting math classes in science classrooms—then I won’t have any problem going somewhere else because I have a gift of teaching and I’m not going to waste it” (Interview, March 30, 2010). Particularly, this teacher described a classroom with stools and tables as not being conducive to learning mathematics; in addition, there were not enough tables and students had to use other stools as writing surfaces. As demonstrated, not only is the presence of site administrator support through proximity to similar content teachers, but the location and the type of classroom also can play a role in teacher retention.

Scheduling is also important for colleague support and communication. The same teacher also talked about having Professional Learning Communities (PLC) “collaboration time built into our schedules on Wednesday afternoons at our school” (Interview, March 30, 2010). The site leaders had created a schedule to facilitate this collaboration time, but this was not in place at all schools in the district:

Our site just this semester changed our schedule and built in PLC time so we have early release Mondays. We are able to do that twice a month and then do staff meetings. I really think that those have been successful, and I appreciate that a lot, because it’s so hard to find time to talk to your colleagues. I feel that you’re not alone when you have them as a resource. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

Regarding collaboration time, one teacher remarked, “I wished our school was able to have PLC time where we could all work together, but we don’t have that time built into our schedule, so our working together is much more on an individual basis” (Interview, April 2, 2010). Another teacher shared,

[This] is not entirely [the perfect match of a school site] for me because my site is one of the few in our district that doesn’t have any special learning community time built in, and so we all have wonderful ideas of things we would love to do with the department or school, and we can’t

because there's just not time built in for us to be together talking.  
(Interview, April 2, 2010)

These differences demonstrate a need for the district administrators to aid the calendar and schedule-building process so site administrators can have the structure for such time to facilitate colleague support, professional development, and communication.

There is a need for district and site administrators to schedule individualized professional development time for teachers, as well as establishing a priority for that time. As one teacher said, "Reflective practice requires time. Time to go back [after teaching and reflect] and reteach and, unfortunately, with the time schedule we're given, there's not always that time" (Interview, March 30, 2010). Here is what another teacher said about the loss of this time:

We actually are short on minutes so we've lost all our collaboration [time] for the rest of the year, because we had to add in the minutes and also an extra day at the end of the year, so they [the teachers] have lost some level of it [collaboration]. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

Concerning colleague support across the entire district, there are some endeavors that are district-led, but there is a need for more of the structures to better connect various departments or program teachers between the schools:

We have some reading classes that are started up and they [teachers] must sign up and [there is] intensive [training for a particular reading program], where they [the district literacy coach and the teachers] have some great collaborations going between schools. But, when you look at the entire English department, that's not the case. That's simply a matter of numbers. English is so large [of] a department that to get collaboration between the schools I think is very difficult. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

The participating teachers recognize both the need for collaboration and the difficulties associated with that collaboration, and admit that "getting that many teachers together would be a bit harder to do" (Interview, March 30, 2010); however, if district-wide

efforts are not made, “You end up very isolated between schools” (Interview, April 1, 2010).

A second problem to which teachers repeatedly referred was how the current California budget crisis has affected schools, including their professional development efforts. “There are quite a few opportunities for professional development in this district, [but] we are losing those three days next year due to budget cuts” (Interview, April 1, 2010). As previously supported, teachers understand the significance of growth in their profession, and how the loss of growth because of reduced professional development funding will eventually affect their students.

*Site administrator support.* In discussing the ideal administrator, teachers often referred to dedication to educational work, particularly the students’ needs. Here is how one teacher expressed the desire for site administrator support that matched the workplace culture at his/her site:

One wish would be for an administrative staff that was as committed to the students as the faculty are [dedicated]. We have a whole bunch of ferocious teachers who are absolutely dedicated to their students. If we had a consistency of administrative support on our site that had that same instinct and that same approach, I think that would be absolutely brilliant. (March 31, 2010)

Another teacher described how mismatched site administrator support to the workplace culture could lead to teacher migration and attrition:

To me what supports the school is the administration. And the administration, other than one brief period of time over all these years when we had a principal who only cared about looking good rather than really doing good for students, have been fabulously supportive of teachers. I outlasted the ineffective principal. Unfortunately, [some of my colleagues] left the school to go to other schools in the district when we had that four to five year period where we had a horrific administrator. I

outlasted the difficulty, but these people were not willing to do that, and so went to other schools. (April 1, 2010)

A teacher from another site described what it is like to have site administrative support which matches workplace culture:

The [site leadership] staff truly feels like it has the best interests of the kids at heart, which is refreshing. They have got a lot of programs and they're willing to try a lot of different things. When something is working they use it, when something's not working they give it up. So that is helpful. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

The teachers in the sample valued site administrative support of maintaining workplace culture using communication. "At the school level, the support is very strong. The administration definitely is a strong supporter of the teachers. When concerns are brought up, they're addressed pretty regularly" (Interview, April 1, 2010). Teachers shared their feelings about having a supportive workplace culture:

I think my administrative support is pretty good. Overall, I'm happy with my administrative support. I know that if I have any issues, I know I can go to them. I know if I just need to cool off, I can go into one office or another and talk it out. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

Site administrative support integrating professional development and colleague support can begin before a teacher starts the school year. After he/she was hired in the district,

During summer [site leaders] invited me to join them [representative from my site] at the AVID Summer Institute in San Diego. They knew I was there. They knew I was interested in AVID after volunteering all year in AVID at my student teaching sites [in other districts]. I joined them and it was great to know the teachers in a social setting before going up for the first day of teaching. [It made me] feel welcome. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

Few teachers have the opportunity to meet their new colleagues prior to the teacher workdays before the school year begins. This teacher recognized and took advantage of

the opportunity. That professional development opportunity was not the only example of site administrative support for this particular teacher:

I really liked the fact that [the principal] would come observe my classroom for my evaluations and [he/she] would write very positive things. [He/she] would also give good advice [for example], “I would do some kind of vocabulary instruction. That was not enough.” Then, all of a sudden, I was invited to a conference about content vocabulary instruction, the English International Reading Association conference, with [him/her] and a few of the other teachers. I thought that was wonderful because [he/she] actually took something I was doing and said, “You know what? You’re doing this well. I know you’re interested in this.” I was able to go to a few conferences with [him/her] and some other teachers, which was really nice to know them, as well as outside of school, but also that [he/she] valued my teaching and what I was doing in the classroom. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

This principal sought learning opportunities for teachers and through his actions, demonstrated his concern for students by learning about pedagogy with teachers to support their practice. While most site administrative support is directed toward increasing student achievement, some site administrative support is needed for tasks that are peripheral to classroom instruction. While all teachers deal with peripheral clerical tasks, there exist instances, especially when teachers are navigating a new program, like a computer-based learning center, when teachers need support with peripheral tasks:

Our assistant principal, the one that’s in charge of the learning center, has been hugely supportive. He/she went to the conferences with us to learn how to do the accountability. [This assistant principal] sits down and listens to our needs. [He/she has] been awesome. Even if it’s just as a sounding board, you know, how do we figure this out because there are a whole lot of new processes that we’ve been trying to put together to make it work and [he/she is] really good at knowing the departments in the office. And [he/she is] really open to learning about what we need and kind of helping us make it all happen, so [he/she has] been fantastic. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

The examples of site administrative support above led to professional development for this teacher because those administrators provided direction for the

professional development of teachers at their sites. While some administrators have the ability to recognize an appropriate professional development need in a timely manner, this was not the case at all sites. As described in the following example, not all professional development strategies work for all sites.

We're doing professional learning communities, which is good. It's not as effective as it would be at a regular high school because in economics, there's [one teacher] teaching economics, another teacher teaching history, [and] another teacher teaching world cultures, so I don't think it is as effective as if we were all teaching history. But, I think it's good to be able to chat with your colleagues and see what's going on. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

While it is beneficial that teachers did participate in communication with their colleagues, this PLC time did not result in professional development, as described by the teacher.

Teachers need site administrative support that is visible. They want their site administrators to be known by everyone on campus. For example, one teacher described a current principal, "[He/she] is a very good leader, manager for teachers, but student-wise, a lot of them don't even know who [the principal] is" (Interview, March 30, 2010). To be an effective instructional leader, site administrators should frequently visit classrooms, but one school site in this study seemed to have issues with the frequency of classroom visits, as one teacher described using a metaphor, comparing his/her school to a factory. "Our administration does not spend time on the factory floor, and that is just unbelievably arrogant and stupid" (Interview, March 31, 2010). Though the administrators could have been attending to other tasks, such as student discipline or those related to site accountability, this participant did not perceived visibility as most important. This perception of the lack of visibility, site administrative support, and

communication has damaged the teacher-administration relationships at this site, according to one of the teachers:

Because we have very little contact with our administration, our new principal is visiting classrooms. One previous principal visited classrooms constantly and tried to force his assistant principals to do so. The current assistant principals don't visit at all. Well, they're not interested in doing so because they want to move up the district hierarchy, and they feel they could better spend their time on more visible activities. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

Fortunately, this is not the case at the other sites in the participating high school district. Here is how a teacher described his/her site administrative support, "Our administrators are constantly in the classroom, constantly visible on campus at extracurricular events, so the support that this district has is big" (Interview, April 6, 2010). Another teacher describes how his/her site administrative support exceeds visibility:

At the site level, I think that our administrators have gotten better. We have a new principal who has been there for the last three years and [this principal has] done a much better job in getting the teachers involved. [The principal has] more of an open door policy. He/she is more present than our previous administrator, who basically was never there. I think I was there for two years before I really, really knew what he looked like. [laughs] But he/she's always asking for feedback and he/she is open. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

Site administrative support can foster colleague support concerning making changes at a site. One teacher described site change through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation process. "Our WASC [staff] focus groups, for instance, have generated real change on campus. When we've had a principal that recognizes the power and creativity of the staff, those changes have been dramatic and very effective" (Interview, March 31, 2010).



Site administrative support can also foster colleague support in regard to making decisions at a site through communication, as one participant described, “My ideal school would be a school that has open communication, but also has a leader that is willing to make decisions without making everybody happy, appeasing everybody” (Interview, March 30, 2010). Many teachers talked about the importance of communication and the desire to have input around site decision-making: “They have teachers involved with every aspect of making decisions, no decision is made without our input and that is at all levels—district level, site level, department level, and classroom level” (Interview, April 6, 2010); “At the site, the principal is really open-minded, but he’s afraid to make changes. At the department level, there’s no problem. Teachers all give input and the department chair is very good in both the math and science departments” (Interview, March 30, 2010); and,

The principal is very supportive and also looks for consensus. You never get a directive from the principal, “You have to do this now.” Even with my teaching assignment, when we go to do the master schedule, [he/she asks], “Are you going to want to continue teaching this course next year or do you want to do something else?” (Interview, March 31, 2010)

The preceding examples all demonstrate site administrative support through communication concerning decision-making. However, some teachers in the study described being a part of the communicative process, but their voices were not heard, leading to frustration:

In the department, the math department chair took in a lot of input from the other teachers. I think pretty much the math department chair made the decisions with the input from the teachers. We at least felt like we were involved in the decision. Some decisions were, “What should I bring on to the site? To the principal? To the scheduling specialist?” We had basic input into them, but [our input] basically got thrown out of the window when it got to that level. When the chair of the math department says,

“This is what needs to happen,” and the administrator, who from what I could tell was not a math teacher at any point—when they ignore the recommendation of the teachers, that’s a problem. And don’t be blaming teachers for low test scores when you ignore the teachers’ recommendations. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

The same teacher describes how he/she believed decisions with teacher input should be made:

A supportive administration would put students and teachers alike in positions where they were ready to succeed, which means accurately placing students in the classes they need to be in, looking at teachers’ wishes, and not making decisions just based solely on numbers. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

Site administrative support through student discipline was a popular topic. This is what one novice teacher described:

At the beginning, I thought I couldn’t write any referrals. Then [one day] the admin came into my class one day and said, “You need to write referrals for them.” And all of a sudden, it’s like, “Oh, okay, I’m okay to write referrals.” At least I know I can do something about the students when they’re out of hand and that sort of thing. All the support is what helped me continue on [in the teaching profession]. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

As demonstrated above, discipline support can help increase teacher retention. Site administrators must also protect their teachers from extraneous problems, which can hamper teacher performance and focus on instruction. The following is an example of how a teacher benefitted from having this type of site administrative support, in dealing with a repetitively irate parent, “[The assistant principal] told him [a student’s parent] that if he had any other issues, he needed to go through her, and that was really nice” (Interview, March 30, 2010).

When speaking of site administrative support about discipline, one teacher described the following as important, “Being stern, having support of the administration,

[and having] the three strikes you're out policy. That's worked really well" (Interview, April 2, 2010). Teachers want administrators to support their side on disciplinary issues:

If you have an issue with a student and you have to send them to the office, they're really good about backing the teachers up, in my opinion. I really feel like there are processes in place that work. And, if a student is not going to make it, then there [are procedures], which can really help. I think those are good policies. I feel supported as far as discipline is concerned. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

Teachers also want disciplinary site administrator support that is timely. The following is how two teachers at different sites described their experiences:

I rarely have to send a kid up to the office on a referral. But if I do, it gets handled promptly. If I have a kid come into the room crying, the counselor or the principal takes on that role, so I'm allowed to continue on with me teaching. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

One thing that I have seen this year different in administration and classroom management is referrals are looked at a lot faster this year than they were in the past. The last couple of years, referrals could be down in the office for two or three days, and the student hadn't been talked to. [That was] not very effective for changing a behavior. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

In the opinions of many teachers in the study, it is important that student sanctions are timely, so students understand that there are consequences for bad choices concerning their behavior. Also, most of the teachers in the study felt that any emotional or disciplinary distractions need to be removed, as to not adversely affect the teaching and learning in the classroom for the rest of the students. The previous examples demonstrate that teachers from the sample appreciate support when urgent student emotional issues or behavioral issues need counseling during class time.

The sample of teachers from the participating school district also described areas where site administrative support regarding discipline was lacking:

I think administration needs to come down a little harder on student discipline issues. When a teacher hands a students to the administration and there are legitimate reasons for it, they shouldn't come back and say, "Oh, the teacher was wrong," which is what I got a couple of times. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

Teachers need to feel supported by their site administrators, much like being members on the same team. As one teacher described, the lack of site administrative support concerning discipline has made him/her question being in the teaching profession:

Once I was in [my current] position, if a student got unruly and if I referred them, the message was, "Send a referral for the unruly students." But then this year, we have a new principal, as last year's principal was an interim principal. This year's principal came out and got upset, "If you send too many referrals, we are not going to keep you." I said, "What do I do with unruly students?" And he said, "Well, you have to manage them in the classroom." The discipline issue, you know, that has to change. Because if I am told to give a referral, and I'm yelled at for giving the same referral, that doesn't match. Because it is a new administration, they have some things to work out, as far as what is okay to refer and what is not okay to refer. This misunderstanding with the administration about discipline did make me think of leaving the profession. My capabilities are questioned and that bothers me a bit. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

In both of the preceding participants' statements, it is clear that there needs to be a common understanding of what constitutes disciplinary action. Professional development around classroom management issues and colleague support could create a common workplace culture concerning aspects of student discipline.

Sometimes, policies at a site can be the problem. The following examples all express the need for school staff to provide input, have discussions, arrive at a common understanding, and be on board with policies. These aspects support relationships, respect, and positive workplace culture. One issue at some school sites is both the perceived lack of good disciplinary policies and the enforcement of such policies. A teacher expressed a need to review policies at the school sites, "I think for this particular

district that some of their policies are outdated. And, I believe the administration team also recognizes that they're outdated" (Interview, April 6, 2010). When asked about school and district policies, one experienced teacher referred to the tardy policy at his/her site:

Students can be late to a class seven times. A card is filled out, and then it goes to many different people to sign off on it, and while the card is going from person to person or waiting to be addressed, the student can continue to be late without penalty. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

The tardy policy is an example of the need to rethink, secure input, and discuss issues relevant to both faculty and administrators. The disciplinary policy was also perceived to share the same need as the tardy policy. A novice teacher reflected about student behavior policy and enforcement at his/her site:

I think that policies in regard to students and student behavior, and especially student discipline, are good, but the enforcement isn't good. So, a lot of times teachers know that in our classrooms we don't have anything we can do about these students. Whatever happens [students] can be sent back to our class. So the policies are probably good, but the enforcement isn't happening in those. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

The following are some of the teachers' wishes, concerning discipline:

"I wish for a real tardy policy that does not coddle the students. Seven tardies is seven tardies—not seven tardies, a two-week wait, then we'll get back to you. If teachers can't be late, neither can students" (Interview, April 2, 2010); "I wish for some kind of constant disciplinary procedure where if a student disrupts a class, there is a consequence for that—that they don't just get a slap on the hand and [are sent] back to the classroom" (Interview, March 30, 2010); "I wish for a detention room. The strike process is awesome, but we need something for less serious violations—like excessive talking, not doing homework/classwork, etc. An in-school suspension idea should be explored"

(Interview, April 2, 2010). In general, teachers at some schools have input concerning decision making when it comes to site procedures. Site administrators, particularly those in the samples district, should consider these teachers' ideas when reflecting on the level of disciplinary support they provide.

Site administrative support can come in other forms, too. One of these is to have a balance of perspectives, so the *whole child* can be educated. A teacher recounted his/her experience, "We have a very strong academic administrator [and] we have a very strong athletic administrator, but I've been to schools where it's all been on the academic side and they've let the extra-curriculars [go] completely ignored" (Interview, April 6, 2010). This balance is increasingly important, especially in today's society of high stakes testing where it is easy for site administrators to overemphasize academics. To meet the needs of the whole child, there is a need for well-rounded student support at all schools.

While teachers need to feel supported, they also understand that site administrators have numerous responsibilities:

They're usually available if you need them. They're usually able to help you out when it's needed. Things don't always happen as fast as you want. But they also have a lot of jobs and there's less of them then there used to be. And, as the school grows and the administration gets smaller, there's going to be more of a constraint on their time. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

Teachers recognize the inverse correlation between budget and administrators' responsibilities. As a school's operating budget decreases, the list of administrators' responsibilities grow.

*District office support.* Support for teachers in a school district is a vital component for success. District office support is at many levels and is evidenced through some decision-making efforts, "They have teachers involved with every aspect of making

decisions. No decision is made without our input and that's at all levels: district level, site level, department level, classroom level" (Interview, April 6, 2010). Teachers appreciated inclusion when decisions were made about aspects of the site that affect them and/or their students.

Teachers desire district office support that is physically manifested on all sites and in all classrooms within the school district. An example of district office support could be evidenced by frequent site visits:

Support is huge in this district. In my last district, I never once saw the district superintendent, not once. I've seen our superintendent at least a couple time a month, [and] our assistant superintendent, I see him once a week. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

For some teachers, it is important to be a part of superintendent classroom visitations, or take part in interactions with district office administrators. This builds relationships where district employees, no matter their titles or locations of employment, begin to know each other personally. This can decrease negative feelings stemming from a vertical employment relationship. Some teachers feel supported in the district because they do not necessarily feel subordinate to district office administrators and they know each other:

Over the last four years, [there has been] tremendous district support. I love being in a small district. I feel the people at the top don't put themselves above anybody. They know us. They know the people. [They are] very supportive of continuing education. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

In addition to the rewards of building relationships, the most important work and purpose of the work is supporting students. In working together, teachers and administrators can easier see that each group is doing what they can in their capacities to aid students. Getting to know school district staff personally as a form of district office support is a

time-consuming endeavor; however, neglecting these relationships can have negative consequences.

Not only do teachers receive district office support when dealing with issues at the sites. Programs need support, too:

[One of the assistant superintendents] felt bad and thought we needed more site support, so this year, she assigned an assistant principal to be available to our program on a more consistent basis to help with the day to day operations and issues that come up, like when we have cougars on the grounds who like the smell of children, or we have foxes, or we have a flood, or different issues that come up. We now have somebody who we can go to, and the assistant principal over us is established. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

As the needs within a school district evolve, so should the level of support. Here, the vigilance of one district office administrator led to his/her identification of a need and a solution for that need. This solution allowed teachers in that program to focus on teaching their students, while providing support for dealing with any issues peripheral to student instruction that would previously have taken attention away from students.

Support for teachers does not only mean professional support; it also has to come in ways that help the teacher as a person. One teacher described district office support when dealing with a personal issue:

When I had a specific medical insurance issue, [one of the assistant superintendents] really jumped in and really cared and really handled it. I think they care about people. They care about their employees, and I truly believe they do care about kids. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

Parallel to the idea of teachers educating the “whole child,” district office administrators should support the “whole teacher.” In this example, the teacher understood his/her personal supportive experience as a demonstration of genuinely working for the wellbeing of employees; moreover, this idea of a culture of caring from



the district office was extended to the students in the district. Through the act of teacher support from one powerful interaction with a district office administrator, this teacher acknowledged the pursuit of a common mission to benefit students.

Some teachers described district office support with teaching practices in their classrooms. One novice math teacher, who was not rehired in the district, described the district office support he/she had at one site while employed in the participating school district:

The district has a dedicated math—I don't know what you would call it—a curriculum specialist, but I don't necessarily see that in a lot of other districts. She contributed new ideas—a lot of new ideas. I think two heads are better than one. And the math teacher, the support person, doesn't only have her ideas, but she brings in other ideas that other teachers from other school sites that we don't necessarily get to see. I as a teacher at [one site], may not know what they are doing at [another site]. We have our meetings every now and then, but when the math person comes and says, "Hey, this is what they're doing. Why don't you try this?" I think it helps out.  
(Interview, April 6, 2010)

This teacher described a system of support through teacher coaching. This curriculum specialist acted as a liaison for colleague support between teachers in the mathematics department because he/she gathered the ideas for good instructional strategies and shared them with teachers throughout the school district.

Another example of district office support for teachers was demonstrated through the updating of curriculum, as evidenced through a description from a teacher in a special program:

From the district level on down, our director of curriculum was really helpful because the curriculum I had when I first started teaching here was from the 1970s, which was really ancient, so I had to rewrite the whole entire curriculum. [One of the assistant superintendents] was very helpful in letting me bring in ideas from different districts. I meet with the other program coordinators in the county and [during] one meeting; we got to

discuss what curriculum everyone was using. We all shared. It was very open and the suggestions were very well received by the district.  
(Interview, April 2, 2010)

Similar to the idea of sharing the best instructional practices within a district, curricular practices and materials can improve with communication and colleague support. In this quotation, a special program teacher described how he/she made improvements in one subject area's curriculum because of what was learned from colleagues in other school districts. If the district office was not supportive of this teacher's autonomy, the successful curriculum upgrade would not have occurred and students would not have their needs met.

District office support regarding curriculum was shown in other content areas, too. Teachers shared their opinions about district office support regarding curriculum adoption in core subjects:

We actually are in a curriculum adoption year for English language development and we've had some really good conversations going from the district level at choosing the new curriculum. And we'll be meeting right after spring break to actually write the curriculum. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

That is a positive example of teachers working together to write curriculum for a new textbook adoption. It included teachers in a discussion, built common understanding, and supported a respectful and positive workplace culture where teachers' voices were acknowledged on a continuing basis and the work was directed at supporting students.

While the previous curricular examples were largely positive, not all teacher talk about curricular changes was positive:

We have people in the district office who are in charge of curriculum and they threw out all of the independent study curriculum because it was bad. I get that, but they didn't replace it. So now, we have kids who don't have technology at home and they have no option. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

Here, the teacher identified with a person at the district office that changes definitely needed to occur to benefit students. However, the vision for change lacked the important step of having a better option to which the change would lead. While it is important to update curriculum, it is a necessity to replace outdated curriculum, too.

Although teachers described personal and site support from the district office, they sometimes described a lack of support regarding content and curriculum. A teacher leader from one of the learning centers in the participating school district explained,

I also think they've got people in the district office who say they have one job but aren't actually helping me in that capacity. Like we have a math lead curriculum in the district office and I've asked her to help me just to write a precalculus independent study class. Because when you teach independent study you're not responsible for creating the actual work that goes to the kids. You're responsible for facilitating that because if you're creating the curriculum for each kid, you wouldn't have time to facilitate it and take care of massive amounts of paperwork that go along with recording the average daily attendance and making sure we don't get audited by the state and lose our jobs. She [the math curriculum support from the district office] referred me to other people and to the district pacing guide for that course and I handled all that because I'm a math teacher. My credential is in foundational mathematics. It's not in precalculus, so while I am intelligent enough to do this, I shouldn't have to do it. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

While a novice teacher previously described support received from the district office about teaching strategies used by other teachers in the district, this district office administrator's level of support was not perceived as consistent in all aspects of teacher support. Specifically, this teacher needed support when writing curriculum for a higher-level course and did not receive the assistance he/she felt was necessary. In addition, the teacher described a separate demand of important clerical tasks; these curriculum writing tasks and clerical tasks were described as interfering with the teacher's job—facilitating the curriculum.

The need for curricular support from the district office was echoed in other pathways, too. A teacher leader from the math department at a different school site described his/her experience with the same district office administrator:

Because of the new textbook adoption, we have a math—I don't even know what [his/her] title is—[he/she is] a math leader at the district office. It has been a source of conversation in the last couple of months because we don't really know what [his/her] job is. [He/she] is not effective at communicating with us and we have issues... [he/she] hasn't been to one department meeting and [he/she] is supposed to be the math leader of the district. That's been a big gripe for me... We had a math person five or six years ago and [he/she] works for the county now. [He/she] actually did math lessons with us and was very into supporting us in the classroom and that is a big thing—when I see it in the classroom and the effects in the classroom, it makes sense. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

This is another example of the need for the manifestation of district office support at every site and in every classroom. Having information similar to what this participant shared is beneficial because the school district can make informed decisions and best use the person at the district office to support mathematics teachers throughout the district by integrating more support with teaching strategies.

Mathematics teachers were not the only group to describe difficulties with district office support where curriculum or professional development practices are concerned. An English teacher describes the pursuit of support on the inside of his/her school because it was lacking from the district office. “From the district level, there is definitely support, but they're not quite as direct in their support. Things tend to get filtered down to the school level” (Interview, April 1, 2010). Regarding district office support, a social studies teacher from another site said,

The support and understanding from the administration at the district level is virtually nonexistent. At our school, however, because we have a history of mentorship, both informal and formal, it's part of the personality of the

school, and it's a very tight-knit group. It's a very creative group.  
(Interview, March 31, 2010)

This explains one avenue where teachers have adapted to supporting each other because of the lack, or perceived lack, of district office support.

Teachers from the participating school district want district office support that listens to ideas from within the school district. Some teachers, like in the following example, have great experiences or ideas and want to help the school district, but their suggestions are dismissed:

When I sat down with the director of interventions and said, "Okay, I have questions about this because I was an expert in accountability at my last district when I did an independent study." I know this stuff and I'm looking at it and thinking it might be a little too easy for teachers to fudge things and it might be hard for the auditor to see what's going on. "Could you explain what you are doing and why? How do you want it done, so that I can either match it or suggest something to make it easier?" And I wasn't heard there. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

Teachers also wanted their voices to be heard in the process of creating the math common assessments in the school district. Sometimes, the teachers felt a loss of autonomy because there was a lack of transparency in the creation process and the purpose was not fully disseminated to the teaching staff:

This year, it has been all about common assessment district-wide, which has caused some friction because some of our district got input. Our lead geometry teacher got input into it—into the process—and our whole team would give input to put on rough drafts and stuff, and then none of our input would be used. We've been frustrated because we now have a common assessment that now takes a whole class period, and then we don't get any feedback for the students. So we're kind of floundering in that purpose right now and that's one of the things we said in our last professional development meeting is that we want a clear purpose as to why we're doing the test. Are we doing it just to conform to state testing? Or, are we actually supposed to show that they've learned something in the last six weeks? (Interview, March 30, 2010)

The lack of inclusion led to feelings of the district office imposing on the classroom teachers, even though the teachers recognize that the efforts are to benefit students. “We were given some district initiatives, like using benchmarks, which is good, but we had to learn about when they were coming, and how to schedule time” (Interview, April 5, 2010). Teachers should be involved in creating the testing schedule and there should be clear communication between the involved parties.

When the district office makes changes around content and pacing, teachers lose autonomy if they are not included in the process:

I think that the classroom level is so individual that it's kind of like everyone's doing their own thing. As far as decision making about pacing and that sort of thing, and what's actually taught...there is a group for teachers that actually plans out these pacing guides. Unfortunately, often times, it's been going to the district, and gets changed around, reworked and all that. Only at the initial level is teacher involvement...The district seems to have some issues such as teachers make some decision, then that decision goes in front of the district, and the district changes it. It is not what the teachers were wanting. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

It is clear that the participating school district wants teacher input when making decisions that affect teachers; however, if there is genuine desire for teacher input, then this input needs to maintain some level of consistency throughout the process. In addition to curricular and assessment issues, one teacher spoke about issues specific to the district office. “I've heard that if we suggest changes in the calendar or changes in policy, it pretty much goes in one ear and out the other. Teacher input is minimal” (Interview, March 30, 2010). While it is important to know that this teacher did not experience that personally, what is more important is that this attitude of not being heard is pervading some of the sites in the school district. It is also possible that the teachers were heard, but their ideas might not have been the best for the district as a whole. What is known,

however, is that visible and genuine efforts must be made, so all parties can work toward a common goal.

Teachers also shared suggestions about what type of district office support would most benefit themselves or their school sites. Some teachers focused on data, especially based on students who have moved onto postsecondary education. “I wish I had more data about how many of our students or the students that I taught are actually graduating college” (Interview, March 30, 2010). If this data were available, the teacher could look for correlations of success to meet the needs of current and future students.

Other teachers desired a well-rounded administrative team at all of the sites:

I think that sometimes administration teams are put together at the district level without taking into consideration the different, you know, experiences that administrators have or different personalities that administrators have and sometimes I'd like to see a little bit more care taken in to make sure that an administrative team doesn't all have strengths in one area and then there's lacks and weaknesses in other areas. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

Some school districts attempt to provide this balance with pre-employment surveys or essays, but more focus should be placed on strengths of potential candidates and how those strengths will benefit the site administrative team, the teachers, and the students.

*Professional development.* Teacher support should be both consistent and it should address the needs of teachers at various levels of their careers to aid professional development. “I think the district is very proactive in supporting teachers in whatever way they can. They listen. I mean they really do” (Interview, April 1, 2010). This support should begin before a newly hired teacher starts teaching. As one teacher described the hiring practices at the participating high school district, “My district is sensible now. We have three pre-service days at the beginning of school where you can actually get

acquainted” (Interview, April 6, 2010). This orientation is important for new hires to “meet other new teachers [and learn] procedures. I have met my first friends [in this district] that way” (Interview, March 30, 2010). These new friendships help foster the beginning of colleague support.

Professional development as district office support to school sites must be appropriate. Naturally, each school is different, so the same activities will not benefit all sites. Here is how this situation played out regarding professional development at one site, “Last year, they [the district office] paid \$18,000 to hire [consultants] to come out and give a presentation in which they said, “You ought to do what you, or at least [my site], has already been doing” (Interview, March 31, 2010). This teacher expressed frustration with the district’s inability to assess what his/her site needed correctly. Because this teacher’s site was already working together in what he/she considered learning communities of teachers, he/she perceived this professional development as unnecessary. Furthermore, because the teacher described how consultants told staff from his/her site to continue what they were currently doing, he/she felt the district’s money and the time of teachers from his/her site was not well spent.

Just as the implementation of appropriate professional development opportunities are necessary, there must be a professional development vision, which includes a plan for pedagogical and curricular support. Many teachers in the sample mentioned a lack of follow through with implementation after professional development in-services. “The problem is that even when some of these [professional development] folks have some cool ideas, there is not follow up, so we never have been able to make them real in our classrooms, which is very, very frustrating” (Interview, March 31, 2010). Because of the



lack of district office support and site administrative support following professional development activities, some teachers have begun to question the intentions behind professional development:

The district support is based on empire building and checking off the boxes with no ongoing support. I think I have [an instructional practice's author] entire library on my shelf, along with [a language consultant's book] and [a professional learning communities consultant's book] and you name it. We've had all these talking heads come in and there's absolutely no follow up. No time was ever given by the district for PLC's after our two-day professional development seminar at Camp Pendleton. There has been no follow up since then. No comment from the district office on PLCs, no implementation, no time given in the school day, no any request from the district to make time in the school day for people to actually do this. So, it really strikes me as a case of check off the box, show the school board what the administrators at the district office are doing to support their jobs and their never-ending requests for more administrative staff. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

Some of the participating teachers have expressed the need for choices concerning professional development. The lack of choice, as exemplified by the teacher, has created a rift between administrator and teachers:

There have been some professional development opportunities that I have been forced to attend that have been entirely unhelpful and unfortunately since they were already paid for, the district had us continue to go for over two years which angered quite a few people. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

The fact that I had already been trained on [this instructional practice author's] book was not taken into account. The fact that someone else [in the district] had been trained by [the instructional practice author] himself was not taken into account and the entire program was run like a BTSA program for a brand new teacher and at that point, I had been teaching for six years, and I was in the program with people who had been teaching for up to 35 years. It was not addressing the needs of teachers who had been in the profession longer. It was addressing the needs of brand new teachers and that was not where we were. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

While the former experiences were negative, the following mandatory professional development was beneficial. In this case, the professional development aided issues

where many novice teachers need support, so while it was mandatory, it was also appropriate:

They make every first and second year teacher to the district go to these trainings [known as tier one and tier two] where they kind of indoctrinate you to the district ideals, and they go through special learning stuff. I went to one of their trainings. It was classroom management with [a consultant on effective classroom management] and that was fantastic. I got a great book by [another professional development author]. I can utilize that. That was useful and I enjoyed that training. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

Novice teachers need more professional development regarding management issues and organization, and more experienced teachers desire pedagogical and technological professional development:

I think the biggest thing I want to work on is learning how to teach my subject areas even more effectively every year, how to use the technology that I am now beginning to get into my classroom, how to continue to intervene with the kids that come in [who are] not expecting to be successful. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

The professional development intention for the district office support of teachers through mandatory trainings is a good one. However, mandating professional development for all new teachers or new to the site teachers, regardless of their years of service in the profession, is not a practice with which many teachers in the sample agreed was beneficial. From the perspective of a teacher who had been teaching at least five years, “I got to avoid the tier one, tier two trainings, thankfully. Because I’ve heard that they really weren’t that effective” (Interview, April 7, 2010). Regarding the tier one and tier two professional development, one participant said,

They [district office leaders] had us join up for pull out days for training, which weren’t always the best material, [but] you could tell they really believed in making sure that teachers who were new to the profession were very supported. In that, they [the novice teachers] were being equipped to be successful and how to be a good teacher. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

Many teachers expressed disdain for time they were losing with their students because of professional development. As one teacher described, “A thing that has to change is the massive amount of pullout training” (Interview, March 30, 2010). This teacher later elaborated on the previous statement:

Last year, I was pulled out for nine days to learn how to teach algebra, although I had taught it several times before. It was called algebra textbook training. In those nine days, I can honestly say that one day was useful, so the others were just wasted time, just time out of the classroom. That was extremely frustrating. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

Some professional development is too time-consuming by taking teachers out of their classrooms on instructional days; moreover, this professional development did not meet the needs of all participating teachers for time it consumed. When teachers perceive professional development negatively because of the loss of instructional time, instead of the positive perception that it is to improve instruction by making the most of class time with students, therein lies the detriment of not allowing teachers’ choice for professional development.

The following is what another math teacher said about the same textbook training:

I went to a new textbook training and that was useful to have it in your hand and look through it—that was useful to the teachers. I think I needed more one on one time with that to figure it out on my own because that is the way I learn things. I didn’t get enough playtime. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

Any professional development time that takes teachers out of the classroom needs to be maximized and the existence of a choice of pathways for follow through on professional development is necessary. Just as students need differentiated instruction because they learn through different modalities, teachers are also diverse learners. This teacher needed more time with the materials, but another teacher thought that condensing

the material is the answer. “It seems like everything that they [district office professional development personnel] left you with could have been condensed into a much smaller time schedule” (Interview, April 2, 2010).

While some teachers realize that the district might have good intentions, those intentions do not make up for the lack of relevance in professional development that some teachers perceive. Having the opportunity to choose professional development was an idea many teachers liked when speaking about district office support and professional development. The following are some examples of voluntary professional development, which did not remove teachers on instructional days, and enhanced the workplace culture of the district because it supported the learning organization culture. “I’ve taken some pretty interesting workshops at conferences and those have really helped. Those have been pretty important to me. They’ve given me a new insight or new strategies, and they weren’t things I already knew” (Interview, April 2, 2010). Teachers recognize the effect of the current budgetary situation and that the district could remove emphasis on continuing to offer professional development:

And the district actually provides me...they have even offered it over the summer, which with the way the economy is, it surprised me that they would offer, “Hey, come in over the summer,” and guest speakers from across the nation would come in. So, I am able to attend those. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

However, if this professional development was discontinued, teachers would not have the opportunity to learn about their clientele and possibly the workplace culture would suffer:

I think the summer professional development I went to—they gave us seven textbooks or whatever from various authors and stuff. And a lot of it was just like about the area and dealing with the population. So, it helped me a lot. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

District office support also comes in the form of teacher induction. “They [district leaders] also have for new teachers in the district free courses for us to go out and about. And, we, of course, accept professional development as well. (Interview, April 6, 2010) BTSA provides new teachers professional development through courses in technology and in meeting the diverse needs of students in their classes. BTSA also provides each participating teacher with a support provider who is an experienced teacher and is trained to implement the BTSA curriculum. The structure for BTSA in the participating district is that there is a BTSA coordinator based out of the district office and that person serves as the support provider for all teachers in the district. Some teachers shared positive experiences from the teacher induction, “It was never, never combative. It was always supportive and that made a big difference” (Interview, March 30, 2010). However, other teachers in the sample reported that having a site-based mentor was the best arrangement for teacher induction:

A teacher mentor program would be so much better [than BTSA]. Assign each new teacher to a seasoned veteran teacher to help [or] be there when he/she needs them, even have them meet once a month or maybe twice a month. [They could] meet during lunch, or after school, or during the PLC time to discuss what is going on and to answer any questions or concerns. They could end it with a small report to the administration for a check-up. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

One teacher, recognizing a need for better teacher induction support, gave this advice to novice teachers, “If there is any way get your school to assign you a mentor or a helping teacher or whatever they want to call it, that would be ideal because that does give you a place to turn” (Interview, March 30, 2010). A veteran teacher originally from another state said this about his/her teacher induction, “I had a mentor teacher that had a period off a day that worked with me and was very, very helpful” (Interview, April 1, 2010).

Based on the participants' interviews, more than just a BTSA coordinator based out of the district office is needed. If the district office is going to provide teacher induction, novice teachers also need colleague support from their content areas. These mentors should be based at each site and there should be scheduling structures in place to support the improvement of teacher induction.

*Teachers' professional development suggestions.* Not only did participating teachers have suggestions about teacher induction, they also had suggestions regarding professional development in general. Teachers in the sample recognized and encouraged the use of talent from within the district. The participating school district has begun to train its teachers to provide support at the school sites. Teachers benefit from both receiving and giving colleague support. The themes district office support, site administrator support, colleague support and professional development work together:

We have teachers within our school holding workshops for other teachers about something that they are an expert on, such as the special education teachers holding a workshop so that all of us can learn about what special education is doing. Just anything like that. Those are very helpful. You get to decide which one you go to, and those really show you what's going on inside our own school. And we get to learn from our colleagues.  
(Interview, April 2, 2010)

That teacher appreciated the opportunity to make a decision about which workshop to attend. Additionally, the teacher enjoyed learning from colleagues. One teacher described this involvement as colleague support for professional development:

I am also a member of the SDAIE team for specially designed academic instruction in English where I was trained last year on separate pull out days on how to be more effective as a SDAIE teacher. And now I am actually on the advanced SDAIE team, training other teachers that have been pulled out of class. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

This seems to be a great scenario for the school district because the teacher who has the SDAIE training to be a teacher trainer becomes an expert in his/her own classroom. This teacher then works in the district to help other teachers learn and use these strategies. In addition, this teacher is on campus and is easily accessible for answering any follow-up questions or for peer coaching. All of this could bring better teaching strategies into the classroom to affect students positively.

While teachers recognize the district's current professional development efforts, many teachers have some ideas for improvement. When asked about wishes for improvement, one teacher described,

One wish would be a little more collaboration time and real collaboration, not something driven by the district that looks like collaboration, but is just intended to keep somebody's job—something where we actually get to talk to one another instead of being talked to. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

The teachers understand what PLCs are and how PLCs should function, as they have received extensive training about PLCs. District and site administrators need to work with PLC team leaders, so that each team generates its own goals for learning and works to attain them. Another suggestion for district and site administrators regarding PLCs is to be transparent about the purpose for PLCs as professional development. This transparency could lessen teacher misunderstanding, as one novice teacher experienced:

If they [the district leaders] are serious about pushing professional learning communities, I think it's a great help...I think it's really the way to go so that one teacher is not off on their own doing stuff that they not necessarily should be. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

This novice teacher seemed to understand PLCs as a way of monitoring what occurs in the classroom. PLCs are designed to increase communication and sharing of best practices; however, this novice teacher was not employed in the participating school

district when teachers were given professional development about PLCs. This situation exemplifies issues that arise when new hires are not adequately educated about site or district specific protocols, procedures, programs, or professional development.

Another teacher wished for the increase in the number of teachers who are Spanish speakers. The participating high school district has a large population of students from Spanish-speaking homes; however, a majority of the teachers in the district is not of Hispanic or Latino decent and is not fluent in Spanish:

If our district ever found extra money, they should send teachers who aren't fluent [in Spanish] to get them fluent. That would be amazing. It would just be amazing in the classroom. We all teach English language learners and the majority are Spanish speakers. That would be a great help. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

This teacher believes that teacher-student rapport would increase if there were a common language, other than English.

Finally, teachers want district and site administrators to understand that large-scale changes are not always necessary. As one teacher described, the simplest changes can reap great rewards:

This is actually a strategy I got this year from the district. They revised the lesson plan format that we have. And on it, really it's the simplest reflective thing that I've been given in my seven years of teaching. And so it's funny that it has come this late and crap, this late in teaching. But simply at the bottom of the lesson plan that I fill out, it just simply says, "How did it go today? Good, bad, ugly?" And it gives us room to say things that will change next year and so on and so forth. So it's very easy. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

The lesson from this teacher is that district and site administrators need to take a closer look at what they already have, utilize input from teachers, and make the necessary adjustments to maximize the results.



*District hiring practices.* Teachers in the participating school district described an active pursuit of their current positions. This pursuit included a variety of methods, such as targeting site leaders and taking other positions in the district that did not require a teaching credential. “I just sent in applications, and went to the interview, and bugged the principal that I would be the best” (Interview, April 1, 2010); “Because I wanted to teach just high school, I put in my application at the [participating] school district and I started subbing there, too” (Interview, April 2, 2010); “I had to petition and really push myself with the district...contact each individual principal and make myself known” (Interview, April 7, 2010). Each of these teachers sought employment through different, yet successful, means.

While some of the teachers in the participating school district had to pursue their positions actively, numerous teachers in the sample from the participating school district described a quick hiring process. One teacher’s hiring process began with a phone interview, which led to a personal interview:

We had a phone conversation where I explained what was on my resume and then it was a group interview I had, but the department chairs were there and another vice principal was there. So it was after that one interview, but they needed to fill it. When you have a math opening, you need to fill it and it had been open for three weeks, so they actually hired me after one interview. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

Another teacher had a phone interview, but did not have a personal interview. “They hired me after a phone interview and actually called me back the next day and offered me a job” (Interview, April 1, 2010). More of the teachers described a traditional hiring approach of one personal interview, followed by a job offer shortly thereafter: “I applied and was called in for an interview and shortly after that, they accepted me and I got my

job” (Interview, March 30, 2010); “I put in my application, was called in for a panel interview, and then a few days later, I was asked if I would take the position” (Interview, April 2, 2010); “I was interviewed in July and two days later, they called and offered me the job, and I went to work the next week” (Interview, April 6, 2010).

It is known that schools need to have highly qualified teachers in the classrooms because of NCLB. Due to that mandate, the result is focusing on hiring to fill open positions, and often an information-rich hiring process focused on position matching between an applicant and site, district, or position is overlooked. While a candidate may have met the professional requirements for hiring, there exist gaps when meeting personal requirements of school sites. One experienced teacher talked about how he/she was offered positions in two districts, but chose to work at a site where he/she felt there was a better match. “I was looking for good chemistry when I was looking at schools...for the place that fit me best, knowing that was where I would be able to do my best work” (Interview, March 31, 2010). One novice teacher described how the conversation in his/her interview went to topics of sports and philosophy of teaching mathematics. The teacher said, “They were very welcoming in the interview and knew I’d fit in” (Interview, March 30, 2010). That is an example of the interviewers understanding the position matching needs of the department and site. According to the participant, the interviewers then took this information in mind when engaging the applicant during the interview process and the results were successful.

While some teachers have the drive to find the right place for them, and some interview panels strive to hire the right applicant for their site and department, the attempt of an information-rich hiring process, which includes position matching, is not always

successful. The following is an example of what can happen when there is a lack of position matching between a teacher and his/her teaching position:

In this district, I feel expendable, even though this year I will be tenured. I feel that because I was moved into math... I feel like I have been jockeyed around... They gave the classes to somebody else. That really rubs me the wrong way... I felt betrayed. I really had to think twice about going back after that because I thought, "I hired on here as a science teacher." I know the math. I didn't want that. If I had wanted that, I would have applied somewhere else. And when they asked me if I would teach math, I said, "Yes, but understand I'm a science teacher." (Interview, March 30, 2010)

In the preceding example, the teacher had a passion for teaching science, but site administrators reassigned him/her to teach math classes. The teacher vocalized his/her wishes to teach science numerous times, but site administrators did not give him/her the opportunity—even in the subsequent school year. Site administrators need to keep in mind that although a teacher may be credentialed to teach more than one subject, they need to be aware of what the teacher wishes to teach and then do their best to act upon those wishes.

Some of the teachers in the sample also talked about how they were hired after the start of the school year for students. One teacher said, "My interview was the first day of school" (Interview, April 6, 2010). Another teacher said, "I started a week into the school year" (Interview, April 6, 2010). Some teachers took the opportunity to share their varied experiences of start dates in the participating school district:

The first year, I applied for the job, interviewed on the first day of school, and got the job eight days later. Then I got my pink slip. This year, I got the job one weekend in the summer. They had their interviews and everything setup and I went and interviewed again for my same job and got it. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

It is interesting that after one successful year of teaching, a teacher would have to go through the hiring process again, but this is the procedure in some school districts until a teacher attains a tenured status.

Any teacher who begins teaching after the school year has begun will have some difficulties. However, a novice teacher's difficulties are magnified,

I actually got interviewed the first day of school and hired nine days into the school year. Students had already had a sub or two in each class. They thought I was just another sub. I was like, "No, I'm really here to stay," and I didn't know what they had learned yet. I didn't know if I should assume they hadn't learned or if I should just go on. I just got thrown into my very first teaching experience completely not knowing what was going on. That was one of the biggest challenges. I felt like I was slow to get to know the students because of that. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

While it is understood that there exists a learning curve during one's first year as a teacher, beginning the school year in a timely and appropriate manner is vital. The following is what the same novice teacher experienced the subsequent school year:

My second year, I started off just exactly as you're supposed to start—on the first day of school. I taught procedures; I had lots of fun systems in place: systems that rewarded students, as well as systems for discipline. I think that setup of a classroom management system really enabled me to teach. As soon as I had all that under control, I felt like the rest of it just kind of came easily. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

School districts do not purposely hire teachers late into the school year. There are circumstances beyond the school district's control, like increased student enrollment or class size reduction in certain subject areas. Sometimes these circumstances are created when teachers choose to leave a school:

I took over for a teacher who just left. He picked up and left one day—said he couldn't handle it anymore. The kids had a sub for three weeks and you know what having a sub for three weeks does to a group of teenagers [laughs]. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

While the teacher in the preceding example had a few years of teaching experience prior to his/her experience in the participating district, the adjustment for both the students and the newly hired teacher was not easy. While some late-starting teachers had issues, not all teachers who were hired late into the school year talked about issues with adjustment. “I was hired as a teacher one month into school, because the teacher that I was replacing had just decided, ‘I’m done. I washed my hands. I’m done.’ I replaced her and took over five classes” (Interview, March 30, 2010). This teacher was successfully able to take over the leaving teacher’s classes, and experienced a healthy adjustment at the school site. One teacher, who is now fully credentialed, originally was hired as a substitute teacher for his/her current position. Then, the district hired a credentialed teacher for that position, but that teacher chose to vacate the position. “The teacher they had hired resigned her position...so, they hired me back to finish up the year as a long term sub” (Interview, April 2, 2010). This teacher described how the experience of employment uncertainty motivated him/her to enroll into a teaching credential program, so he/she would never experience that again.

Participating teachers also talked about transferring within the participating school district and teacher turnover in general. Teachers described a workplace culture of pride for individual sites in their school district, which is evidenced by little movement between schools. “There isn’t movement between schools very often, unless someone makes a direct request or there is a huge change in numbers, people don’t move schools” (Interview, April 1, 2010). However, this is not the case when looking at district employment trends in the continuation school. “Every year, teachers seem to be moving out, and we are hiring new teachers” (Interview, March 31, 2010). This teacher described

how newly hired teachers in the continuation school use their experience to move to other school sites in the district. Of newly hired teachers and employment trends, one novice teacher made the following comment: “When there is so much turnover with the teaching staff, it just doesn’t make sense” (Interview, April 6, 2010). Clearly, district and site administrators should examine employment trends within their district and at the individual sites to learn what works best to keep high-quality teachers in their classrooms to benefit the students. Once again, it seems important to match personalities with particular sites, both with teachers and site administrators. In a district workplace culture, it would be important to pay attention to this matching, as opposed to merely opting for employability and allowing certain schools to become stepping-stones to other schools.

Another important issue regarding district hiring practices that district and site administrators should examine is their use of temporary contracts and the issuance of layoff notices, also referred to as pink slips. The following are some comments from teachers regarding the issuance of temporary contracts, layoff notices, and their effect on teachers professionally and personally: “I was hired voluntarily [on a temporary contract], so I didn’t get a pink slip, I just got a ‘You’re not hired’” (Interview, April 7, 2010); “You’re temporary—you don’t count” (Interview, April 7, 2010); “I’m only on a temporary contract right now...When you’re on a temporary contract, that just only for that one year” (Interview, April 6, 2010); “The pink slip was expected because I was on a temporary [contract], so I knew I’d be getting pink slipped. They just said, ‘You were hired for a year. And look at that, your year is up’” (Interview, April 2, 2010); “I’ve gotten that pink slip—no job, so it sucks” Interview, April 7, 2010); and, “It was scary because I didn’t know how I was going to pay bills and stuff. They assured me that I was

getting a job next year, but there were a couple of [subject area] teachers who didn't” (Interview, March 30, 2010).

Some teachers in the sample had repeated experiences with layoff notices:

The first round of pink slipping that's on March 15<sup>th</sup> doesn't scare me anymore because I know it's just a preliminary of the district being scared. It's the second one you get at the end of May, that's the scary one because that means there actually, really is a budget issue. If your pink slip hasn't been rescinded by the end of May, that's when it gets scary. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

Even though layoff notices have become a part of the workplace culture in school districts, especially in times of economic distress, teachers that are even more senior see the need for a change. One veteran teacher said, “I don't like less [experienced] teachers being in temporary roles where they're worried about getting laid off, even though they're great teachers” (Interview, April 1, 2010).

For some teachers, employment uncertainty has become a yearly fear. The following is how one teacher described the participating school district and his/her experience of not receiving a layoff notice:

They are also very fiscally sound which has been calming when it comes to March 15<sup>th</sup> and if I get my pink slip or not. When March 15<sup>th</sup> came and went and I didn't get a pink slip, I was celebrating and the stress level just reduced. I could actually focus on my work again. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

Although the stress of receiving a layoff notice was relieved, this same teacher was dealing with the stress of attempting to maintain employment. “Right now, because I'm not tenured I'm getting dumped on...I feel compelled to prove to the district that they need me, so I take on more than I should and it's been difficult” (Interview, April 7, 2010). This issue of seniority for security, no matter the quality of teacher in some cases, is an imposing issue in the teaching profession. “It's weird being the one at the bottom

[of the seniority list] year after year, and not knowing what was going to happen”

(Interview, April 5, 2010). One teacher recounted the employment uncertainty experience of a former colleague, who is a close friend:

She’s been through the kind of roller coaster of hiring: have a job, don’t have a job, how to switch sites to keep a job. And, they still let her go. There are probably a billion people in this district who have gone through the same thing. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

Conversely, when speaking of attaining tenure, the teachers’ mood changed toward positivity. After being tenured, “You feel the weight off your shoulders, and you’re able to move a little bit easier” (Interview, April 6, 2010). This feeling is similar to the feeling teachers described previously about surviving the school year without receiving a layoff notice. The teachers in the participating district shared their experiences around seniority and employment uncertainty because they hope for positive changes in the future, which would better protect the profession as a whole. This could begin with changes in bargaining agreements between the school district and the local teachers’ union.

*Autonomy.* Autonomy given from site and district administrators can lead to teacher retention. This was demonstrated through how one teacher described his/her school site. “My school site now is a perfect match [because] I have autonomy and support...at this site, the administration trusts the professionals in their learning centers to make decisions based on what they know. I love it” (Interview, April 7, 2010). Teachers really demonstrated appreciation when referring to the ability to make curricular decisions about what they think is best. Another teacher said, “We’re not micromanaged. We’re not told this is what you must teach on a daily basis...all the decisions, though, are left up to teachers, ‘it’s your classroom, we’re going to support how you want to do it””



(Interview, April 6, 2010). This teacher connected the idea of autonomy with site administrator support.

Decision-making in general at school sites was spoken about as an important piece when concerning autonomy. One teacher described site administrator support, “I knew that even if he wasn’t in my classroom, like he supported me in my decisions, you know, with parents and stuff when we did have issues” (Interview, March 30, 2010). This teacher described support in decision-making that was outside of the curricular realm, but was related to the classroom and issues that arise in a department on campus. Teachers also reflected on how decisions on various campuses are made: “Within the site decision-making, there’s a lot of different ways, but of course, teachers can participate in it during staff meetings and all of that...decisions are made at department meetings and they’re easily made” (Interview, April 2, 2010). This teacher described that there are avenues for teachers to become involved in decision-making and that in the department, there is much consensus and respect during the decision-making process, as evidenced by the absence of difficulty in the decision-making process. At a different site, a teacher described how decisions affecting the site are made during staff or committee meetings: “At the site level, [there is] very shared decision-making. The principal throws things out for us to discuss, talk about, takes consensus votes” (Interview, April 1, 2010). This exemplifies site administrator support regarding autonomy through inclusion in the decision-making process and colleague respect because there is a forum for everyone to be heard, if that is the desire of a teacher. However, regarding autonomy and district office support, the participants described a continuum of teacher involvement in the

district's decision-making process, which allows for the inclusion of certain chosen individuals:

From the district level, there are a few teachers that are involved in district decisions, if they are on committees—if they are asked to join things. They are very influential in some of the decisions. Some of the decisions are not—teachers are not acknowledged at all in some of the decisions. Again, it depends on the subject. (Interview, April 1, 2010)

Teachers in the study expressed a desire to be more involved in district decision-making, but they also want their involvement to be recognized. One teacher in the sample described how the teachers at his/her site were not given decision-making autonomy for items they decided were necessary. This led to the teachers giving themselves the freedom to make decisions they deemed necessary because they felt unsupported concerning autonomy:

We have a history of simply doing what we think is best anyway, regardless of what the district thinks and we apologize for it later after we've already had success. For instance, the PLC that we created, the district eventually caught up on. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

The same participant described how teachers from his/her site really did not want much, if any, district office support. “At the district level, the best aspect of the district is that they leave us alone. They are not very effective at controlling us” (Interview, March 31, 2010). It seems that this teacher is describing an overall negative attitude when describing district office support at the school sites because he/she described the support as “control.” The absence of autonomy and communication of teachers' ideas in decision-making was also evidenced at another site in the participating school district:

I would say if I was at another one of the high schools in this district, even right now, the administration isn't always listening to them about their math processes and such. Even at [another site], their last department staff development meeting where they were talking about how some of the students who didn't pass Algebra 1 got put in a Plato class without [the

teachers'] input. That's something that is horrible for the kids and the teachers to not know why some of the decisions are being made. So, I'm glad that our site has that communication and that it's not always the decision that people want to make, but it is something that is at least communicated with us most of the time. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

The preceding example described a lack of decision-making autonomy regarding how student placements were made, but the perceived minimal level autonomy in the school district also included decisions about district assessments:

I think part of the problem is that there is a culture at our district office of empire building and there is a very different culture at the school sites. All three [comprehensive] school sites are very, very different from each other which is just probably a good thing, but that kind of diversity is not seen as a strength by the district. Their entire approach to common assessments, for instance, was a top-down thing, where the assessments were written by an individual who is not even in our discipline. So it was a district-wide disaster, but we made it work at our site. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

That teacher described how the district office support is similar for all schools in the district, even though they are all different. The teachers were able to adjust to the district-imposed student assessments, but the process was unnatural for them. The final type of autonomy about which some teachers shared was teaching style autonomy within district office support:

Or to have some district position that you thought that person would be doing more harm than good. They're trying to say how things should be done in the classroom. That sort of thing, when they haven't been in the classroom in a long time. You feel like they are trying to tell us what to do, but they are not really sure what it is that is going on in our classrooms. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

While district office support is generally appreciated, when teachers experience a reduction in autonomy in their own classrooms, they could perceive that change as a threat. Perhaps when giving teachers support with classroom issues, like pedagogy or

behavior, lead teachers at a site would be better received by their peers than someone from the district office providing that same support.

*Teaching assignments.* The distribution of courses is an important aspect of both district administrator support and site administrator support. As one teacher said, “administrators need to put teachers and students in a position for success which means accurately placing students in the classes they need to be in, looking at teachers’ wishes and not making decisions just based solely on numbers” (Interview, April 6, 2010). Proper enrollment of students in courses and equitable assignment of courses to new teachers are important for success. For example, the following is a description of one lower level mathematics course from a novice teacher who is no longer employed in the participating school district:

At [my site] Algebra Readiness is the lowest math class available. I will say this; within Algebra Readiness, the kids had a wide range of abilities. Some were third grade level. Some were basically ready for Algebra and they were placed in my class because they were fresh from Mexico and the district didn’t do their due diligence on how good these kids were, and they just shuffled them into my class when they were certainly ready for the next level of math. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

Another teacher, who is still teaching in the participating school district described a similar scenario, “My first year of teaching, I was teaching repeating Algebra classes and it was a very, very, very low achieving group of students and [they were] very, very low motivated” (Interview, April 5, 2010).

In addition to teaching lower level courses, some teachers, particularly new or new-to-a-site teachers, tend to have a larger variety of courses taught within their teaching schedules:

My first year, I taught Algebra II, Algebra I, and Algebra Readiness. Now, I teach really low-level math in the CAHSEE prep classes which is to help them pass their exit exam. Then, I teach the medium level Algebra II, and the students are only in Algebra II if they're applying to college—so the college prep thing—and then the Informal Geometry is made up of juniors and seniors in a low level of Geometry. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

This second year teacher described multiple grade levels for his/her teaching assignment, but he/she did have one more advanced course as a part of the workload. In another interview, a third year teacher described his/her teaching schedule:

I teach Algebra...I teach mainly freshmen, usually freshman entry-level classes currently. I also teach Algebra Support, which is an extra class for students who have struggled with math. Specifically, I teach the sheltered classes for those who are English language learners. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

While the previous teacher's course load included at least one college preparatory class, not all novice teachers had the same opportunity. This teacher had a two period block of students for a low-level course and taught students who were English learners. The deficient exposure of teachers to college preparatory level courses affects personal satisfaction. These difficult teaching assignments can foster a dislike of teaching. For example, one teacher said, "It was hard to get up in the morning and go [to work], knowing that I wasn't looking forward to teaching, which was a surprise because I love my job" (Interview, April 5, 2010). A variety of courses, such as "teaching two completely brand new subjects and three different preps" (Interview, April 6, 2010), can lead novice teachers into difficulties adjusting to the teaching profession.

The course content and students for which courses are designed can also decrease course desirability. In speaking about the Algebra Readiness course, "Nobody wants my job; nobody wants to teach that class. From what I understand, everybody's still arguing about who's going to teach that class" (Interview, April 6, 2010). Teachers also

referenced their experiences with mid-year teaching schedule changes to which included teaching less desirable courses. One mathematics teacher described his/her experience:

I taught very low classes for repeating Algebra classes. I had four of five classes my second semester of my first year. These were all students who had failed. I couldn't get them to bring a pencil, let alone study for a test or complete their homework. That was really depressing at times. That was definitely one of those survival modes where I had to kind of know that would end eventually and I had to remember the good things that happened. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

A mathematics teacher from a different comprehensive site had a similar experience, “The second semester, I was told that I would not be teaching the Algebra Readiness anymore. I would be teaching what's called Informal Geometry, which is Geometry for kids who already failed Geometry I, so second time around Geometry” (Interview, April 2, 2010). When one of the participants was about to experience the second semester schedule change a second time, one of his/her coworkers took the lower level courses. The following is an example of how teacher assignments and colleague support was demonstrated:

I had a colleague who stepped up and said, “That's not right to give our newest teachers [more difficult classes],” and she traded her three passing algebra classes for the three they were going to give me. That also was important to me as a teacher because it showed me how to be a professional, how to be a colleague, how to protect your own and to really watch out for the newer teachers. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

Because no teachers in the sample from other content areas described this occurrence, it is possible that these types of scheduling changes are limited to mathematics; nevertheless, teachers who experiences the changes described in the preceding examples were not appreciative of their experiences. District and site administrators should have what is best for both students and teachers when designing teaching assignments.

Teachers, including both veteran teachers and novice teachers, referred to the importance of being prepared for their teaching assignments. One veteran teacher reported, “That was the scariest thing, that I was put in a situation where I was required to teach a subject that I had very little proficiency in, or felt that I had little proficiency in. That was terrifying” (Interview, March 31, 2010). Sometimes the fact that a teacher is highly qualified according to NCLB does not affect that teacher’s self-efficacy or relate to the teacher being considered a high-quality teacher. The following is a novice teacher’s description of how the lack of preparedness, although he/she was highly qualified, led to a decreased efficacy in course products that he/she created:

I had to put together a government class and an economics class. These are not in my job description. I understand that teachers do more than what is in their job description, but it came at the exact price of my kids because the courses aren’t adequate. They’re just not—the kids deserve better. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

Preparedness can affect teacher retention, too. One teacher shared his/her feelings, “I would suspect that having to teach things that you aren’t comfortable with or that are outside your own knowledge base could be a big challenges for new teachers. This is certainly what scared me the most” (Interview, March 31, 2010).

One teacher also described how his/her teaching assignment affected his/her decision-making process regarding his/her retention at the current site:

I think that the first year when I taught that second semester—I was teaching those four repeating Algebra classes—that was important. There is the typical: when you take the challenge, and you overcome it, and you learn from it, but this happened to me again in my second year of teaching at the end of the first semester because [site administrators] were going to do that again to me. It wasn’t a personal thing and I know that I was the lowest on the seniority list. I am sure that [site administrators] just felt a little bit of pressure, but I pretty much decided—with my [significant other] especially because I started crying that I wasn’t happy—when push

came to shove, I would rather leave the district, leave the school and quit, than to face that again. It was kind of important to me to go through that because that experience taught me a boundary and I know what I could take and what was worth it. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

A veteran colleague of this teacher recognized how the second impending schedule change was going to affect this novice teacher. That veteran volunteered to take the repeating Algebra classes, which spared the novice teacher from that mid-year schedule change. It also created a positive atmosphere in the mathematics department, where that novice teacher is still employed. However, in a mathematics department at a different school site, the story was not the same:

You don't necessarily want to give the new teachers the toughest classes in the entire school because that's going to make them less likely to come back. That is absolutely for certain. There's also the fact that those kids in the lowest classes have the most needs—they've got the biggest needs. And it's probably better for a veteran teacher to take it. (Interview, April 6, 2010).

This novice teacher, while recognizing that veteran teachers are more experienced and thus have more tools to better aid the neediest of students, did not have the colleague support of taking the more difficult classes. He/she reported this as one of most crucial reasons for leaving the teaching profession.

*Workplace culture.* The teachers in the sample expressed appreciation with certain aspects of the workplace culture in the district as a whole. One of these areas includes a computer-based learning program. "The district is forward with thinking. They're inclusive and just to even have this [independent study] program at all says a lot about our district. To be open to web-based online learning, self-paced—it's remarkable" (Interview, April 7, 2010). This teacher is referring to the new learning centers the school district recently added to the school sites to incorporate new educational technology.



Another aspect of the district about which a teacher shared appreciation of workplace culture is the communication between the high schools and the middle schools that feed into them. The following is an example of the preference of teachers to communicate both horizontally and vertically:

We need to have a better solution for the kids that have flunked for three years in middle school and are being passed along to us. We need to have common discipline policies. We need to have a common culture...I guess my real third wish would be to develop a common culture with our feeder schools, so that the kids coming into our school have had the kind of experience that really prepares them for the kind of experience that we want them to have in high school. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

This teacher perceived a communicative barrier and recognized the importance of a common culture for success in education. Without the facilitation of an open line of communication, this common culture cannot be established. Now that there is availability of communication between the middle school and high schools, district office support from both the elementary district and the high school district is vital to begin the critical conversations about school culture and begin a plan to implement those changes.

One teacher in the district shared his/her perspective that the district office administrators tend to take easier routes of completion of initiatives, which included one recent textbook adoption. "The textbook decision was thus made based on the convenience of the teachers, not the effectiveness of the text for the students. This is an ethic that flows downward from the district" (Interview, March 30, 2010). This teacher disagreed with the decision of the committee of teachers, which the district upheld, because he/she believed that the choice of a textbook from a different publisher was the best choice for students, based on a pilot study that his/her site ran with students. According to the participating teacher, the committee decided to use a newer version of

the current textbook because the teachers already had lessons, lectures, and presentations that matched both the old edition and the new edition of the text. Perhaps if each site was able to choose their own textbooks, district-wide pilot studies were conducted, or if students were allowed to share about their experiences during textbook adoption, there would be a workplace culture that is more transparent about meeting the needs of students.

The teachers in the sample also gave feedback about workplace culture at their individual sites. One teacher in the study, who has worked at multiple schools prior to his/her current site, recognized how his/her site administrators carry out the vision of the participating school district: “My school takes that vision of the district even further. I think they’re well organized. They care about the kids. They care about the teachers. They seemed to have found a way for every teacher to find their niche” (Interview, April 7, 2010). However, a teacher at a different site did not have the same experience with his/her site administration:

We have a whole bunch of ferocious teachers who are absolutely dedicated to their students. If we had a consistency of administrative support on our site that had the same instinct and that same approach, I think that would be absolutely brilliant. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

This teacher did not perceive the site administrators to have the same level of dedication to students as the teaching staff. Perhaps the use of more staff input, like crafting interview questions for the panel that will interview an administrative candidate, can help the administrative hiring process to be more information-rich and transparent. This process would ideally help ensure the right administrator is hired to match the existing workplace culture.

School site administrators can foster a workplace culture of valued input on important topics, but this is not always the case. For example, one teacher, who is no longer in the teaching profession, described an important issue with which the math department at one of the sites was dealing:

There are a lot of issues with what to do with kids who fail a semester. Do we move them onto second semester, or do we make them retake first semester stuff, or worse? And I think the administration just said, “We’re going to move them onto the second semester of work,” which was a disaster because, especially in math, everything builds on itself. If you try to move them forward, it’s not going to work. When kids failed first semester, why are they moving on? It’s not rocket science. If you don’t do well in the first half of something, chances are you’re not going to do well in the second half, either. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

As mathematics is organizationally different from many other subject areas, policies that work in other disciplines will not suffice in relation to mathematics and the teaching of mathematics. This novice teacher understood this, and so did his/her department, but site administrators would not listen to teacher input about how best to help students. This situation led to frustration, especially during the second semester when students who failed the first semester of a course were unsuccessful.

The same participant shared about his/her experience with student placement and how his/her beliefs did not match the workplace culture of the administration at that time:

In math, you have to be in the right place to learn. I don’t think that matched what the administration thought. My kids succeeded, but you want to put them in a position to succeed throughout, not just, “Well, this kid doesn’t speak English, let’s just throw him into that class with a bunch of other kids who don’t speak English.” That just seemed wrong to me. And then they wound up moving a lot of those kids into Algebra I the next semester, which is where they should have been to begin with. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

It was clear that this teacher identified bias, or what could be an inability to assess students properly, when placing students who are English learners in mathematics courses, particularly low-level mathematics courses. The mismatch in beliefs was one of the reasons that led to the departure of this teacher from the district.

Finally, another one of the teachers in the sample spoke of the establishment of a professional workplace culture at his/her site: “We have certain guidelines we have to follow for writing referrals. We are asked to keep a record of the parents we call. We are expected to be professionals” (Interview, April 2, 2010). This teacher appreciated how administration supported a professional workplace culture by implementing certain protocols and maintaining that every teacher at the site is a professional who will follow the protocols set forth at the school site.

*Personal satisfaction.* Teachers described the experience of personal satisfaction from the opportunities to participate in professional development and other personal growth activities. Specifically, “[The district] provides a lot of [professional development] opportunities. There’s always emails going out about different opportunities and our district is very supportive when someone wants to go” (Interview, April 2, 2010). This example demonstrates how district office support, professional development, and communication can work in conjunction with personal satisfaction, as a positive outcome.

Opportunities for growth, a hallmark of district office support and site administrator support, were a key component for personal satisfaction and teacher retention. “As a teacher, I need to feel wanted, valued [by the adults], and have opportunities for leadership and growth. If I didn’t have those opportunities, then I

wouldn't have stayed" (Interview, March 30, 2010). This teacher connects his/her choice to remain at his/her school district because of the personal satisfaction that came from professional development and various levels of available support.

The experience of personal satisfaction through acceptance and appreciation was important, too. "The high school's community has influenced my decision [to stay] by making me feel comfortable and valued. I love teaching and I love [my site]" (Interview, April 2, 2010). This teacher credited the community as his/her reason for staying at his/her site. Even though this teacher first described the community's component to his/her experiences of personal satisfaction, he/she later described how site administrator support and district office support also led to feelings of personal satisfaction:

I feel like what I'm doing is important, and that I'm valued by my district. I feel like they see us teachers as being incredibly important and they want to know what they can do to help us. What I do is important to me and that they value what I do, and they think that we're the most important part, us teachers. (Interview, April 2, 2010)

A veteran teacher from the continuation site gave a specific example of what his/her site administrator does to convey value: "My principal says, 'Thank you,' or 'good job'" (Interview, April 1, 2010). According to that teacher, some quick words of appreciation that remind a teacher that the site or district administrator values their efforts is an immediate way to increase feelings of personal satisfaction, which can lead to an increase in teacher retention.

*Communication.* The sample of teachers described communication at various levels of the district. Their comments illustrate that site and district administrators can promote or impede communicative efforts throughout a district. At the site level, one teacher shared his/her experience around student credits and scheduling of courses:

The protocols with assigning classes and credits are still being worked out and they could get in the way of our kids making progress. But I think we've been able to talk to them in a very open way. They express their needs and responsibilities; we express our needs and responsibilities and just meet. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

This teacher talked about communication as an evolving process, and in this case, he/she spoke about communication between teachers, counselors, and site administrators. The importance of both the communication and inclusion of each party's needs and responsibilities led to a successful compromise. The idea of compromise pervaded the district in many ways. The following is one teacher's description of how site-based decisions are made:

At the site level, I guess it's all consensus. If we're going to make a huge global change, we want to make sure that the majority is on board with it before we do it, so that we don't get any hiccups. (Interview, March 31, 2010)

This exemplifies how site administrators supported teacher involvement through existing site protocols for communication. At some sites, teachers described communication through elected members of a committee. For example, one teacher said, "The leadership team, I should mention, is elected by the entire school. Faculty, staff, and administrators elect the leadership team, who are then also the focus group leaders" (Interview, March 31, 2010). The focus group leaders are in place for the WASC process, which determines accreditation for high schools. This process facilitates communication between teachers, administrators, staff, students, parents and community members with goals toward improving academic achievement. One teacher, regarding the communication of ideas, said, "I know that there is input happening that gets reported back by the WASC leaders" (Interview, April 5, 2010). Having the protocol for WASC leaders and methods of

communication fosters a two-way flow of information to the stakeholders involved in the process.

Teachers also shared information about communication between school sites and the district office. This is an example from one site's mathematics department, involving lead teachers for each type of content within that subject area:

At the site level, a lot of the communication happens with the content leads talking to the department head and then the department head gives the information to the district person who is in charge of math, which is really nice because then we don't all have to have conversations and we know the information is getting passed on effectively and correctly.  
(Interview, March 30, 2010)

This description is evidence of a clear protocol for communication between the district and the site, where multiple levels of district employees are included. Communication from the district office to the sites also occurs in a similar manner. For instance, one teacher from the continuation site described the district's communication about its new method of professional development. The teacher explained, "In the last couple of weeks, we have been moving in the direction of professional learning communities, so we are talking in our department" (Interview, March 31, 2010). Teacher leaders from the site were given information about PLCs and they were to communicate that information to the teachers at their site. Then, the teachers were to communicate as a group and work toward school-wide goals.

When the teachers in the sample spoke about communication within the participating school district, some of the teachers' experiences were generally negative. One teacher, who is involved as a site coordinator for AVID at his/her site, said: "[One of the assistant superintendents] doesn't do much communication with us [coordinators], so

we talked about doing district-wide AVID meetings” (Interview, March 30, 2010). Here, the AVID coordinators from various sites in the school district began the process of organizing themselves because there was a lack of district office support with communication within and about the AVID program.

The lack of communication from the district office was also described in reference to district assessments. One teacher described what happened when there was a breakdown in communication regarding the administration of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) earlier in the school year:

We got another initiative later in the school year to give the California Exit Exam to all our 10<sup>th</sup> graders. And we were trying to figure out where to do that, and we weren’t prepared for it because we didn’t know at the beginning of the year. (Interview, April 5, 2010)

From this example, timely communication would have served as district office support for strategic planning at the school sites for the CAHSEE, ensuring an adequate amount of time for the preparation for the administration of the state exit exam.

Another teacher described issues with decision-making communication. He/she described the level of involvement of teachers in district decision-making:

Teachers do not participate in decision-making at the district level at all. In the past, there have been a few teachers on special assignment, but they were not part of the decision-making process. There’s no input there, but not from lack of desire on part of teachers, but a firm lack of desire on part of the district. (March 31, 2010)

This veteran teacher described a problem with including teachers in the district’s decision-making processes. Moreover, he/she clearly perceives that the district does not want to make this effort to improve communication. In summary, three different teachers from three different comprehensive sites all cited the need to improve district communication when programs, assessments, and decision-making are concerned.



Although teachers in the sample generally had negative responses in reference to communication within the school district, some did report positive experiences. The following is what one novice teacher said about the efforts of the district and site concerning communication:

I think the district does a good job of trying to get our input. They have a lot of focus groups, they have a lot of smaller groups that they all meet together and they get teacher input. At the site level we do a lot, like all of our WASC stuff. They want our teacher input. I feel like I do have input. Not a lot, but I do have input. They do a good job of that. (Interview, April 7, 2010)

This novice teacher, who is from a different comprehensive site, does not perceive an issue with communication between teachers within his/her site or between his/her site and the school district. However, it is possible that this new teacher does not fully understand the WASC process because he/she has not previously experienced one. Particularly, all focus groups are site-based, and generally have little or nothing to do with the district office. He/she, while professing the ability of communication, admits to not giving much input, but at least there are protocols for sharing information if that was a desire.

Because of their experiences, teachers shared their suggestions for the participating school district. One teacher described his/her ideal school, "My ideal school would be a school that has open communication, but also has a leader that is willing to make decisions without making everybody happy, appeasing everybody" (Interview, March 30, 2010). Clearly, this teacher values inclusion of the group, but understands that some decisions might be made with good intentions, even if there is some resistance to them.

Some teachers described their need for increased communication about campus events. Here is how one teacher described his/her wish for improvement:

I would just say probably more notice when we're going to have things on campus. So, that when kids say, 'Oh, did you see such and such today at lunch?' and we don't know what such and such is. Sometimes it's nice to know. (Interview, April 6, 2010)

Teachers, who are often in their classrooms and interacting with only their students, would appreciate the opportunity to be more involved on campus. If there were timely communication prior to these events, perhaps more teachers would participate. At minimum, teachers could communicate information to the student body and increase student awareness and participation in campus events.

Teachers desire the district and site administrators to heed their suggestions whenever possible. One teacher took this opportunity to compare his/her site to another site in the district:

I would say if I was at another one of the high schools in this district, even right now, the administration isn't always listening to them about their math processes and such. Even at [another site], their last department staff development meeting where they were talking about how some of the students that didn't pass Algebra I-A got put in a Plato class without their input. That's something that is horrible for the kids and the teacher to not know why some of the decisions are being made. So, I'm glad that our site has that communication and that it's not always the decision that people want to make, but it is something that is at least communicated with us most of the time. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

This teacher clearly appreciated his/her site's workplace culture of communication, especially during issues of student placement. It is immensely important for site and district leaders to utilize teacher input when making decisions and maintain consistent communication.

*Respect.* Site administrators and district administrators create a workplace culture of respect and trust using autonomy. This has led to the retention of some teachers in the participating school district.

I think this is the place I'm going to be for a while. It is a match for me in terms of my professional—knowing that I'm valued and knowing that they trust me to make the decisions I make and they trust that I've communicated with the parents and that I know how to make some of those decisions in terms of behavior and stuff or referrals and such. It's good having that trust. (Interview, March 30, 2010)

Some teachers specifically identified their site administrator as a vital component in their workplace culture of respect, “With our current principal, mutual respect is the basis of efficiency and effectiveness” (Interview, March 31, 2010). Other teachers described how district administrators have created a workplace culture of respect, demonstrated through care: “They care about their employees, and I truly believe they do care about kids. That to me is critical—that they don't just care about looking good. I think they really care about the kids” (Interview, April 1, 2010). The teachers in the participating district have described the value of respect in workplace culture and that this respect comes from colleagues, site administrators, and district administrators.

#### Limitations of the Study

The economic situation in California where school districts issued layoff notices to tens of thousands of teachers in 2009 and 2010 is a limitation of the study. It is possible that teachers, who might have otherwise moved to another district or left the profession, chose to remain at their school sites not because of the working conditions, but because they needed to remain employed. Moreover, the researcher was unable to focus this research solely on high-quality teachers, even though all participants were

highly qualified. This study did not focus on both highly qualified and high-quality teachers because of an inability to identify high-quality teachers with student achievement data or principals' recommendations to measure student-growth patterns.

Another limitation is that it was difficult to find a similar cross-section of participants from each of the four school sites in the participating high school district because participants were volunteers. It was also problematic to find participants who have migrated from the school district or left the teaching profession. The participants in the study represented a sample of the teachers at each site in the participating high school district. Each participant can have different experiences and perceptions of events and activities that occur in the working environment; therefore, there were some conflicting viewpoints that the researcher included for transparency in the findings.

This sample did not reflect the voices of all teachers at any participating school site, the participating school district, or the teaching profession as a whole. However, the sample did indicate findings that are likely to have significance more broadly as they are consistent with current literature.

### Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher retention in one high school district. Teacher retention plays a critical role in increasing educational opportunities for students in urban school districts. This chapter presented findings from the data collection process and analysis of that data. The research identified conditions that promote teacher retention and identified aspects of school leadership's positive influence on teachers. The analysis displayed a range of influences that have both positively and negatively affected participants from four sites in one small high school

district that serves a mid-sized city. The data analysis revealed the following themes: various levels and specific types of support, professional development, district hiring practices, autonomy, teaching assignments, workplace culture, personal satisfaction, communication, and respect. In this study, when the working conditions and the support interactions were both in place, the result was the participants' retention in the teaching profession for 14 out of 15 teachers in the sample.

For example, one teacher remained at his/her site, but decided to work part-time because of stress; one teacher moved to a district in Northern California to be closer to family; the teacher who was not retained moved to a nearby district and then decided to leave teaching and return to his/her previous career in the sciences. The teacher who left the profession did not perceive positive working conditions or an appropriate level of support, which provides evidence that these supportive interactions and positive working conditions can lead to teacher retention.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

This final chapter presents a review of the study and the significant conclusions drawn from the data presented in chapter four. The chapter begins with a brief summary of the previous chapters, including an overview of the problem, a review of the methodology, and a summary of the major findings. This chapter contains a discussion of the findings in relation to the previous literature, implications for practice, implications for future research, and concluding remarks.

#### *Overview of the Problem*

As stated in chapter one, teacher retention plays a critical role in increasing educational opportunities for students in urban school districts. Research clearly indicates the correlation between more experienced teachers and increased student achievement (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2003). The inability to retain both highly qualified and high quality new teachers is a national problem which began before the twentieth century (Lortie, 1975), especially in urban, high-needs schools (Baltimore City Public School System, 2003; Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007). Such urban, high-needs schools generally have more new and inexperienced teachers (Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001). Therefore, if new teachers are not retained eventually to become teachers with more experience, closing the achievement gap will be more difficult.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the teacher retention phenomenon through teachers' experiences in an small secondary school district in Southern California. This study sought to examine the factors that influence the retention

of teachers in the profession using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperider & Whitney, 2005; Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). The research questions were:

1. What are the working conditions at a site that impact teachers?
2. In what ways do district and school leadership influence teachers?

The researcher employed interview questions including Appreciative Inquiry (AI) techniques with a purposeful sample of participants. The researcher then analyzed participants' narratives within the transcripts from these interviews using qualitative research software.

The research identified conditions that promote teacher retention and identified aspects of district and school leadership, which includes teacher leaders, that influence teachers. In relation to their retention in the participating school district, the teachers in the study discussed a range of influences that have affected them both positively and negatively. Using this methodology, analysis of the narratives revealed the following constructs that influence teacher retention, listed in order of significance: colleague support, professional development, district hiring practices, site administrator support, district office support, autonomy, teaching assignments, workplace culture, personal satisfaction, communication, respect, and teacher induction support.

#### *Findings Related to the Literature*

The findings of this study answered the research questions. This section provides a summary and discussion of the findings using purposeful combinations of the constructs of teacher retention that participants identified. Figure 5.1 contains a framework for teacher retention based on the organization of these constructs, which displays how this study's major findings are related in the context of the participating

school district. All of the constructs represent indicators of teacher retention that transcend the research questions because they are present in both the site context and the school and district leadership context. The participating teachers in the sample perceived the combination of support and working conditions that are inherent to a school site and are created by site and district leadership practices as personal satisfaction and respect, ultimately leading to persistence in the teaching profession.

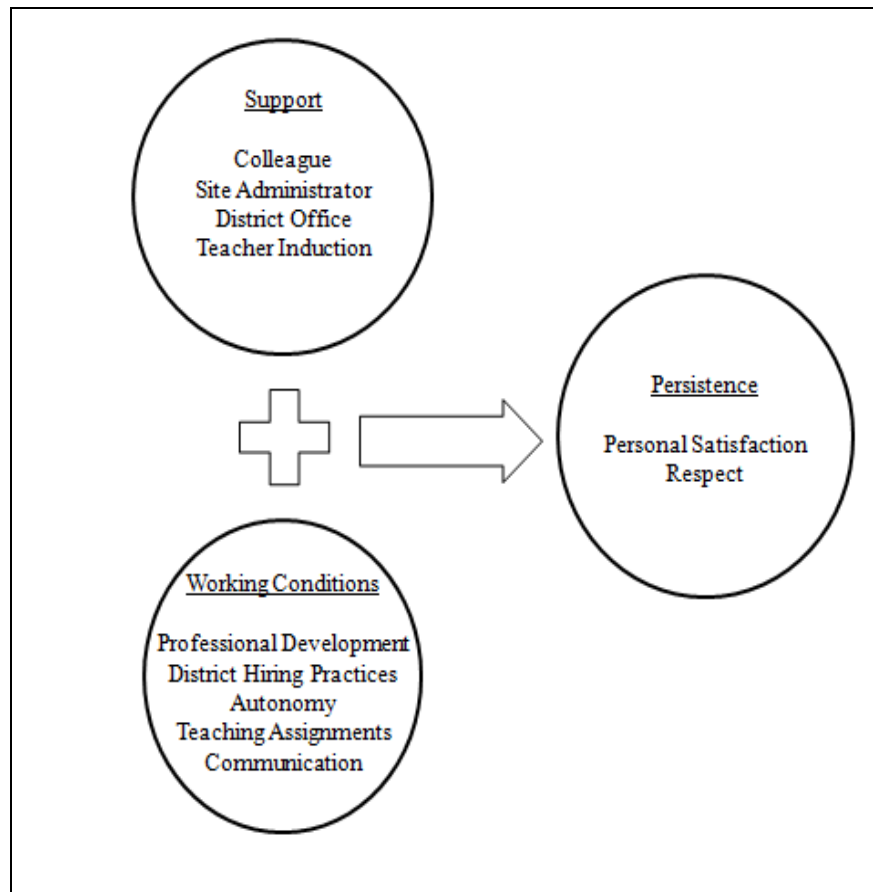


Figure 5.1. *A Framework for Teacher Retention.*

As shown in Figure 5.1, specific themes emerged through the analysis of participant narratives. These constructs, and how they are interrelated, are evident. Persistence in the profession and the decisions by a majority of these teachers to remain



at a particular site and in the district were predicated upon the support and positive working conditions, resulting in feelings of respect and personal satisfaction. As described in chapter four, the findings are often interdependent and therefore warrant conjoined interpretation.

### *Support*

*Colleague, site administrator, district office, and teacher induction.* Teaching in high school is complex, complicated, and public. Regardless of their breadth and depth of experience, teachers in this study clearly expressed the importance and need for support from district and site administrators. According to Makkonen (2005), the need for strong administrators is also an implication for increasing teacher retention. Similarly, Berry, Rasberry, and Williams (2007) found that working conditions, including administrator support, have more to do with recruitment and retention than financial incentives, which is good news in today's struggling economy. Equally as important as administrator support, but of a different nature, teachers also expressed a need for support from colleagues.

The purposeful creation of conditions that facilitate colleague support is significant because previous research has found the lack of collegial support is one reason for teacher attrition (Futernick, 2007). Evidence from the findings in this study indicated several requirements for increasing teacher retention rates. There must be collaboration, opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making, the existence of quality relationships among staff, and a mutually supportive approach to leadership between the teachers and principal. These ideas are also reflected in the research of Barth (1990), Poplin and Weeres (1994), and Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990).

Teachers in this study indicated that communication and autonomy are valuable to their professional development. Therefore, administrators should collaborate with teachers when designing professional development. This communication should include listening to teacher input and using site-specific data to identify areas for improvement. Additionally, teachers should have the ability to engage in decision-making related to the content and structure of professional development (CTA, 2007; Futernick, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Kozol, 1991).

Educational leaders should consider teachers' suggestions regarding an action plan for professional development. Autonomy and choice regarding the path of development for individuals and academic departments is also significant. The evidence from this study regarding administrator support is confirmed by previous research: quality administrators use teacher expertise (Berry et al., 2007) and are effective in their use of teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and their support of teacher inquiry and reflective practice (CTA, 2007).

Ingersoll's (2001) research identified numerous factors that led to lower teacher turnover rates and schools more likely to be staffed with teachers who are experienced, high quality, and highly qualified. The factors include more administrative support provided to teachers, lower levels of student discipline problems, higher levels of faculty decision-making influence, and teacher autonomy in the classroom. These working conditions are associated with causes for teacher movement (Baltimore City Public School System, 2003; Finley, 1984; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Hanushek et al., 2003; Ingersoll; Kain, & Singleton, 1996). All of the above-mentioned working conditions which previous research identified as decreasing teacher movement are

dependent upon how site and district administrators structure and support a workplace culture that values communication and collaboration.

Novice teachers need support to become more proficient and to deal with the high levels of stress related to being overwhelmed in a demanding job. Participants described the first years of teaching as “challenging” and “too much in the beginning.” In addition to teaching, becoming familiar with a new workplace culture and sponsoring extracurricular activities, novice teachers need support with tasks, such as those that are clerical in nature and are peripheral to teaching (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Like the experiences described in this study, previous research suggests that novice teachers must plan all new lessons; sort through mountains of paperwork; search for materials; comply with the evaluation process; become familiar with the site and staff; and often perform extra assignments, such as coaching a sport or advising a club (DeBrabander, 2000; Lortie, 1975; Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Findings from this study contribute to the existing research regarding the importance of beginning teacher support through a teacher induction program. Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) is California’s teacher induction program. Each novice teacher, called a participating teacher, is assigned a mentor, known as a support provider. The participating teacher and support provider work together for two years to complete professional competencies designed to support new teacher development. While the intention of BTSA is to support teachers in professional growth and increase teacher retention, participants in this study gave it mixed reviews, as evidenced by the narratives in the previous chapter. Some teachers in the sample described a lack of support through BTSA, but not a lack of activities that take their

attention away from the classroom. Clearly, novice teachers need support, but as indicated by the participants in this study, the differing needs of beginning teachers are not necessarily met by one teacher induction program. For example, one teacher described how he/she grew up in a family of teachers, and did not need support with classroom management, while another teacher described how a lack of classroom management experience consumed his/her energies during his/her first year of teaching. Each new teacher needs individualized support including choices in professional development.

Likewise, the right match of an induction plan and a support provider to a participating teacher is vital. Not all experienced teachers have the necessary dispositions to be successful support providers. Administrators must remember that great teachers are not necessarily great mentors to new teachers (Makkonen, 2005) and finding the right mentor is critical. Novice teachers, through the teacher induction process, need mentors or support providers who have expertise in the following areas: content, pedagogy, and student engagement (Lortie, 1975; Makkonen, 2005). In addition to excellent interpersonal skills, these mentors or support providers must be committed to the work of helping new teachers personally with the adjustment to the profession (CTA, 2007; Moore Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Donaldson, 2004). Evidence from this study suggested that multiple colleagues, in addition to the formally identified support provider, provide beginning teacher support.

Support providers, or mentor teachers, also need to promote novice teacher engagement in effective professional development in their schools, and promote communication with their colleagues. Specifically, beginning teachers need support with

teaching in the more challenging environments of urban schools (Tennessee Department of Education, 2007), which was described through participants' experiences as originating from colleague support. Some teachers in this study did mention a lack of preparation for teaching in diverse urban schools. In addition to teacher induction programs to support teachers who have already begun teaching, there is movement in the direction of preparing pre-service teachers to meet the needs of a linguistically and ethnically diverse student population. To increase teacher retention and student support, some research posits designing teacher preparation programs to meet the needs of urban teaching (Berry et al., 2007; Kain & Singleton, 1996). These preparation programs should include a variety of culturally proficient teaching strategies in order to provide differentiated instruction across multiple content areas to meet the needs of the diverse learners in all classrooms.

### *Working Conditions*

*Professional development, district hiring practices, autonomy, teaching assignments, workplace culture, and communication.* The positive culture and environment in which the teachers in this study spent much of their day was instrumental in their decisions to stay at a particular school site. Evidence from this study indicated that colleague support within a workplace culture of respectful peer relationships positively affects teachers both personally and professionally. Moreover, the years of service a teacher has did not diminish the positive impact of colleague support. Depending on their years of experience and growth in their teaching practice, teachers need appropriate professional development. According to previous research, teachers with fewer years of service may need more support with classroom management

strategies (Barth, 1990), while experienced teachers often need professional development focused around classroom instructional practices (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Through communication, teachers can work together to engage in continuous inquiry (CTA, 2007) for professional growth. This means that teachers perform action research in their classrooms. Because the teachers themselves determine the direction of their inquiry, autonomy increases and professional development becomes more relevant, teachers experience more autonomy, and personal satisfaction is increased.

According to this study's findings, professional development activities must be connected to teachers' classroom work and continuous. Similarly, concerning professional development, the CTA (2007) claims that fragmented activities are unlikely to result in changes in practice. However, in the use of collaborative, distributed teacher leadership such as professional learning communities, teachers can engage in successful professional development in which they employ regular Appreciative Inquiry (AI) on specific site needs.

As a method of support to promote personal satisfaction, administrators must hire teachers who have personal dispositions and experiences that will enhance existing school culture. Teachers emphasized their understanding that matching their personal styles to the existing site workplace culture was essential to their persistence at that site. One teacher referred to this phenomenon as having a "niche" within a school while another teacher employed the metaphor of interpersonal "chemistry" within a school. Existing research corroborates this evidence. Like Farthing (2006) and Poplin and Weeres (1994), Liu and Johnson's (2006) research examines the importance of matching teachers' beliefs and values appropriately with schools' to maximize retention efforts.

The findings in this study cannot suggest hiring methods that require a greater time investment on the part of a school district to ensure a better teacher-school match. Recent research indicates that most districts do not employ hiring practices that really give both parties the opportunity to see if there is a match to one another (Liu & Johnson, 2006). However, almost all teachers in this sample were hired after one interview and they have maintained employment as teachers. Nearly all teachers in the sample described an expedited, and sometimes haphazard, hiring process, which is indicated as a common practice in the literature. However, as in the case of the sample for this study, the hiring protocol does not necessarily ensure that newly hired teachers will fit into a school's existing culture.

Teachers' personal dispositions seemed to be a more accurate indicator of a fit within a school culture than are the racial, cultural, or socio-economic demographics of the potential hire. This finding is another example that not all aspects of the previous research are generalizable to the context of this study. For instance, Poplin and Weeres (1994) suggest the importance of matching race, culture, and socio-economic status of both teachers and the student body. In the participating school district, the demographic characteristics in the sample of teachers from this study were not similar to the characteristics of the student body. This could mean, at least within the sample of teachers, that personal dispositions are a greater predictor of an effective match between teacher and school site than race, culture, or socio-economic status, when workplace culture is concerned.

A key aspect of the hiring process was related to teacher assignments. The findings based on existing research about the teaching assignments for novice teachers

are largely negative. In addition to the general need for equitable opportunities for employment and in relation to access to highly qualified teachers for students, both teachers and students are also tracked, grouped, or sorted, thus differentiating their educational experiences (Finley, 1984). Specifically, inexperienced teachers are sorted, or tracked, into what are perceived as less-desirable, high-needs areas (Finley; Kain & Singleton, 1996; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). According to Finley, this teaching assignment phenomenon also extends to newly migrated teachers. In addition, she identified the tendency for teacher migration to higher tracks of classes through the stiff competition for higher tracked classes and an obvious teacher disdain for remedial assignments. Evidence from teacher narratives in this study corroborated Finley's work and described this pattern of migration to higher tracks of classes as a part of workplace culture where a novice teacher, or a teacher who is new to a site, has to earn a more desirable course load, much like a teacher earns tenure. One teacher reported an exception to this rule. The participant described how a more experienced teacher took a more difficult teaching assignment for him/her, so that he/she, as the newer teacher, would not have an entire schedule of higher-need students.

Another feature of the hiring process is the teacher contract, which is often negotiated at a greater benefit to established teachers (Moore Johnson et al., 2004). In addition to higher salaries, tenure and seniority protects veteran teachers when schools have budget-driven cutbacks and the new teachers are the first school district employees laid off due to budgetary or attendance issues—regardless of job performance. Many teachers in the sample described receiving pink slips, also known as layoff notices. For instance, one teacher described having to re-interview for his/her job, and another teacher



described waiting for the school district to rescind his/her layoff notice, so he/she could regain focus and “get back to teaching.” Findings indicated that while there are teacher layoffs in California, it could be possible that an impending layoff threat is not a factor that affects a teacher’s level of personal satisfaction to the point of attrition from the teaching profession. That could be because these teachers were all rehired, which is often the case. It is important to know that the researcher conducted all interviews in the spring, after the date when school districts are legally required to issue preliminary layoff notices. Despite the possibility of the school district issuing layoff notices to teachers with fewer years of experience, the newer teachers seemed to have confidence in the district’s support for rehiring them. The teachers in the sample viewed the yearly notices as a part of teaching that did not affect their desire to persist in the profession. However, it was clear that the yearly “layoff” phenomenon was a distraction to their teaching.

### *Persistence*

*Personal satisfaction and respect.* Support from all levels within a positive working environment led to persistence for the majority of teachers in this study. Participants in this study described how more instances of positive, constructive communication strengthened their peer relationships. The outcomes were increased colleague respect and colleague support through a variety of avenues, such as academic department social activities and curricular assistance within teachers’ academic departments.

Multiple teachers’ narratives emphasize the importance of autonomy in instructional delivery methods, content, and pacing of the participating district’s curriculum. Teachers perceive autonomy as an indicator of respect from administrators

toward the teachers as professionals. These outcomes of respect and support align with Makkonen's (2005) work, which cited a respectful environment as a component of retaining and supporting highly qualified teachers.

The experiences of teachers in this study indicated a connection between stronger colleague relationships and an increase in personal comfort in asking colleagues for assistance. Teachers also described respecting colleague input. There were many positive outcomes to colleague support, including improved instructional practices for students, and, as many teachers described, increased teacher retention.

Teachers recognized when school and district leadership made a conscious effort to support a respectful workplace culture of trust. The content of one narrative identified how a workplace culture of autonomy and support led to that teacher's decision to remain teaching in the participating school district. Another narrative described the connection between workplace culture and respect of colleagues' ideas during the decision-making process.

Existing research indicates that teachers need to feel involved in a variety of aspects of their schools. They also need to feel that their voices matter concerning decisions at their site or in their district, instead of feeling like another warm body in the classroom (Farthing, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001). If teachers feel that site and district leadership values their ideas, they experience greater personal satisfaction in the teaching profession. If teachers feel that they are meeting the needs of their students and receive positive feedback from site or district administrators, their sense of self-efficacy increases, and they are more likely to persist in their position (Johnson & Birkeland, 2004; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Moreover, when administrators model respect

toward teachers' ideas and encourage innovation, they foster a workplace culture, which includes respect and autonomy. Findings in this study indicated that leaders in the participating district valued teacher input and regarded teachers as colleagues and partners who are working toward common goals of student achievement.

Teaching assignments can also affect personal satisfaction, and thus retention. Some participants, particularly those who were new to the profession, shared their negative experiences with teaching in lower level courses. Talbert and Ennis (1990) and Finley (1984) make the connection that a teacher's schedule relates to the development of a teacher's reputation. As a result, the levels of classes that they teach affects a teacher's sense of self-efficacy, which their research supports is true for both novice and experienced teachers. Participants preferred not to teach only low-level courses. One teacher, who identified him/herself as teaching mainly lower level courses, suggested that having a least one higher level course gave him/her a "bright spot" during the school day. Another teacher, who taught all low-level courses, described experiencing low personal satisfaction; later, this teacher migrated to another school district. A different teacher from that same site described how a colleague agreed to take lower level courses for him/her, resulting in that teacher feeling supported and respected by that, ultimately leading to his/her decision to remain in the classroom.

Colleague support, communication, and workplace culture increased a feeling of being respected and personal satisfaction. Teachers described an increase in feeling a sense of belonging, a sense of team, and a sense of family. Additionally, they described looking forward to work, and not feeling as if they were "on an island." Findings indicated that teachers in the sample valued a workplace culture with shared ideals, such

as: appreciating colleagues, sharing ideas, sustaining the professional growth of peers, making progress toward collective goals, and ultimately increasing learning for all students. Similar perspectives about collegial support are findings in the work of Barth (1990) for school improvement and Makkonen (2005) for novice teacher support, while the work of Futernick (2007) finds the sense of a team as an important aspect of teacher retention. If there is one school in a district that embodies these factors, that site might be successful in the retention of teachers. However, what is more important is that entire districts embody these factors. When more teachers feel personal satisfaction and respect, they consequently persist in the profession, strengthening the likelihood of improving student achievement.

#### Implications for Practice

The major implications relate to leadership and social justice for novice teachers, teachers new to a school site, and, most importantly, students in urban schools. One implication for site administrators to increase teacher personal satisfaction is the distribution of equitable class assignments (Finley, 1984; Kain & Singleton, 1996). New secondary level teachers need to have equitable class level assignments that do not place the new teacher in solely low-level tracks of classes because that can increase the difficulty of the teaching assignment (Rosenholtz & Simpson) and can decrease feelings of personal satisfaction.

Another implication for site administrators is that they must take action to decrease the tasks peripheral to teaching. This decrease in *bureaucratic impediments*, such as paperwork, classroom interruptions, and teaching restrictions (Futernick, 2007), may be useful in the effort to retain quality teachers (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

At the site level, principal leadership (Allensworth et al., 2009; Barth, 1990) is a significant indicator of positive working conditions and teacher support, leading to increased personal satisfaction. Site leaders should provide administrative support generally, and specifically for student discipline (Berry et al., 2007; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). For example, administrators can improve their support of all teachers concerning student discipline, especially once teachers issue student referrals to the office (Barth, 1990; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990), by assigning appropriate sanctions and not immediately returning that student to the class where the infraction occurred.

District administrators must work to refocus school site leadership on instructional quality and high-quality teaching and learning conditions (Futernick, 2007). Examples of this work include providing for sufficient preparation time, and proper facilities and resources (CTA, 2007; Futernick, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Kozol, 1991).

Evidence from the teachers in this study also indicated that teachers experienced personal satisfaction when they perceived growth in their careers. Examples of this were prevalent through the interviews and included aspects of providing professional development to colleagues, representing a site at a district function, and representing an academic department. The implication from this is that the formation of a career ladder with increasing responsibilities and influence (Barth, 1990; Makkonen, 2005) could be beneficial to increasing personal satisfaction.

There are also implications that transcend both site and district administrators. The formation of relationships and the implementation of a continuous communication cycle among all levels of administrators and teachers are essential. When site and district

administrators are visible and present in schools, there are more opportunities for communication and teachers felt their voices mattered.

Site and district administrators should also make an increased and visible effort to assess teaching conditions locally and continuously (Futernick, 2007). For example, if it was perceived that disciplinary issues were escalating, the school district and/or site could institute a mutually agreed upon stricter code of student conduct. Concurrently, administrators could support teachers through more equitably distributed class assignments and professional development to help them discern and promote student motivation for positive student performance, as well as understand reasons for negative behaviors. Then, administering and enforcing the student conduct code could be easier for the administrators in those schools to support all teachers, including novices, with discipline issues.

Finally, although nearly all teachers are highly qualified because of NCLB, teacher retention really is not important if school districts do not retain high-quality teachers. In order to correct for retaining low quality teachers, effective teacher evaluation procedures and policies must be in effect in order to retain only the highest quality teachers (Reed et al., 2006). Site and district administrators must spend more time in classrooms, frequently and spontaneously completing walk-through observations. As one teacher in the study described, these unscheduled classroom visitations allow the administrator to “be on the factory floor.” Added information from such random visitations could include the rigor of instruction, student engagement, and evidence of student learning through behaviors. Administrators could then gather a more valid representation of what really occurs in the classroom and the subsequent teacher

evaluations would be a better representation of their practice. Increasing emphasis on evaluation could positively correlate to increased effectiveness of both novice and experienced teachers, which could also benefit students academically.

### *Social Justice*

When using the lenses of equity and diversity for the critical examination of teacher persistence, migration, and attrition, researchers have found that there are injustices to both novice teachers and economically disadvantaged students who are primarily students of color. These injustices, previously mentioned and captured in the work of Makkonen (2005), also contribute to the academic achievement gap throughout educational systems in the United States.

When school sites and school districts do not retain high-quality teachers, these sites and districts create an opportunity gap for both students and teachers (Berry et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Social injustice appears in this opportunity gap because students in high-needs schools do not have equitable access to experienced teachers and novice teachers do not have access to teaching positions in schools with more desirable working conditions (Berry et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Lankford et al., 2002). This is not to suggest that students in high needs schools are correlated with less desirable working conditions. Rather, administrators should provide the support and working conditions that teachers cite in this study as integral to their persistence in all school settings. It seems obvious that these working conditions must be present in schools with the highest teacher attrition in a direct effort to increase teacher retention.

### *Teacher Movement*

Previous research has demonstrated a tendency for teachers to migrate to schools with fewer academically and economically disadvantaged students and lower minority student populations (Allensworth et al., 2009; Hanuskek et al., 2003; Tennessee Department of Education, 2007). Although there was one school in the sample for this study that had a higher Caucasian and middle class student population in comparison with the other three sites, there was no evidence of migration to that site.

In fact, teachers in the sample emphasized their school pride. An example of the extent of this pride is from one of the teachers at the continuation site. He/she was chosen to be a teacher-in-residence at a local university for two years, which is quite an honor; however, this teacher would not agree to take the position without a guarantee that he/she would return to the continuation site. At least one other teacher from the sample shared a similar story. The teachers in this study were very connected to their schools and their colleagues, and they demonstrated this connection through the workplace culture of pride and identity.

### *Funding*

School working conditions, such as proper facilities and resources (CTA, 2007; Futernick, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Kozol, 1991) are one aspect of teacher retention. Some research indicates teacher attrition and migration are the unfortunate effect of inequitable funding problems in districts with the most need for experienced teachers, which are mostly in urban areas that serve poor students (Kozol, 1991). However, as the participating schools in the study, there are urban schools that serve students of lower socio-economic status that do not experience inequitable funding.



The teachers in this study did not give any indication that they perceived inequitable funding among schools; moreover, they explained that each school in the district was undergoing some form of renovation and the continuation school was located in a new facility. While a majority of the teachers in this study was retained, there is not enough evidence to support that teachers experience personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction directly from perceptions of equitable or inequitable funding.

### *Salary*

The previous research is inconclusive regarding compensation and the rate of teacher retention. According to Berry et al. (2007), financial incentives are little help when dealing with teacher retention, but Ingersoll (2001), Kozol, and Makkonen (2005) claim the opposite, which is that an increase in salary increases the likeliness of teachers remaining in urban, high-needs schools. Furthermore, salary as a working condition played a factor in teacher movement in Hanuskek et al.'s (2003) quantitative study of Texas schools that utilized a variety of datasets about school characteristics. Hanuskek et al.'s study points to using salary as a type of equalizer of working conditions to retain teachers, like combat pay, meaning teacher in high-needs schools receive a higher salary than those in other schools.

The teachers in this study, however, rarely mentioned salary. One teacher remarked that he/she knew that "I wasn't going to be rich." They also gave no indication for favoring compensation-based incentives to increase their retention in the profession. Like the teachers in this study, in some urban school districts working conditions were a more powerful indicator of persistence than level of compensation (Allensworth et al., 2009).

### Implications for Future Research

Several areas for further research emerged from this study. First, it would be valuable to replicate the study with a sample of teachers who are both highly qualified and high quality, as the researcher was unable to gain access to that population of teachers. If high-quality teachers make the greatest positive impact on student learning, what matters most is that these high-quality teachers are the ones who remain in the profession, especially in urban areas.

A second area for further research is to replicate the study in different school districts with a larger sample of teachers from throughout the country. This could include school districts that have varying locations (urban, suburban, and rural), student body characteristics (ethnicity and English language proficiency), and socio-economic status (low, middle, or high). Through this replication, research could determine if the findings from this study are generalizable to more school sites in a variety of school districts.

A final area for further research is to expand the study to include the perspective of site and district administrators, and perhaps master teachers who serve as mentor teachers or teacher coaches. Future researchers can use these new perspectives in comparison with the teacher perspective. This expansion would add to the body of research for site and district administrators to help them in the creation of a positive and welcoming environment to retain teachers.

### Conclusion

Findings from this study indicate that in order to retain high-quality teachers, effective leaders should employ the following practices

- create a respectful workplace culture that facilitates the following conditions for colleague support, including: collaboration; opportunities to participate in decision-making and the identification of areas for site improvement; quality relationships among staff; and a supportive approach to leadership between the teachers and principal
- utilize communication with teachers to design the content and structure of connected and continuous professional development pathways from which teachers have the ability to choose their professional development path
- provide individualized and site-based support for novice teachers, or teachers new to a site, specifically with the adjustment to workplace culture and individual professional growth
- distribute an equitable schedule of classes to all teachers
- implement hiring methods that identify individual teachers' dispositions and evaluation methods that promote the retention of high-quality teachers
- emphasize the focus on student learning by decreasing peripheral tasks to teaching and increase support with student issues, including discipline
- present constructive feedback about instructional practices to promote professional growth of teachers

Regardless of the school site, the demographics of the students, or the measured quality of the teachers, it is clear from this study that specific leadership practices are imperative. These leadership practices ensure that teachers, who are on the front lines with students, do the best job they can to help students achieve.

## APPENDIX A

### Script for Electronic Communication

Subject Line: Teacher Movement Research Study

Hello \_\_\_\_\_ teachers,

My name is Jenna Pesavento-Conway and I am a high school English teacher and BTSA support provider at \_\_\_\_\_ High School in the \_\_\_\_\_ Unified School District. I am completing a three-year joint doctoral program in Educational Leadership at UCSD and CSUSM. The purpose of this contact with you is to seek your help and possible participation as an interviewee for my dissertation study. My study focuses specifically on factors related to teachers' decisions to work in schools or classrooms with student populations, which consist of higher numbers of students who are English learners, are in a lower socio-economic status, and/or may exhibit other factors that put them at risk.

I am interested in talking with teachers who have a variety of years of teaching experience and perhaps teaching experience in other schools and/or other school districts. The interview would last approximately one hour and your name, as well as any particular school names, would be kept confidential. It is my hope that findings from this study will help to identify specific factors that are more likely to lead to persistence in the profession in general and persistence in working with high needs populations, in particular.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the information sheet about participating in my research study, please respond to this email\* (pesav001@csusm.edu) with:

- 1) Your Name
- 2) Contact Phone Number (not a work number)
- 3) Email Address (personal email only)
- 4) Credential Type and Subject Area(s)
- 5) Current Work Location
- 6) Any other schools and/or districts where you have taught

Once again, your name and information will be kept confidential, including after you have given your consent to participate in this study.

If you are not interested in participating in my study of teacher movement, please disregard this email and know that I will not send a similar email during the 2009-2010 school year.

Jenna Pesavento-Conway  
Doctoral Candidate, UCSD & CSUSM  
English Teacher & BTSA Support Provider, \_\_\_\_\_ High School  
Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Contact Information:  
CSUSM email: pesav001@csusm.edu  
UCSD email: jpesavento@mail.ucsd.edu  
Cell Phone: (760)840-XXXX

## APPENDIX B

### Information Sheet



## INFORMATION SHEET

---

Dear Participants,

#### **Invitation to Participate and Purpose of Research**

Jennifer Pesavento-Conway, a graduate student at California State University San Marcos, is conducting a study through the use of personal interviews to examine the factors that influence employment decisions, in regard to perseverance, migration, or attrition. As a current or former teacher, you are being asked to participate in this study because you can provide details and insights about your experiences to better understand the phenomenon of teacher movement.

#### **Procedure**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in an audio recorded interview conducted by the researcher who will ask questions about your working conditions and your experiences in the teaching profession .
2. Review the transcript of your interview and provide the researcher with any clarification or expansion on initial interview responses.
3. If needed, participate in a follow-up interview with questions generated during the process of analyzing the information from the initial interview.

The total time the interview may take is expected to be no more than one hour. The total time for the review of your transcript and clarification and/or expansion is expected to be no more than thirty minutes. If needed, the total time expected for a follow-up interview is expected to be no more than thirty minutes.

#### **Risks, Inconveniences, and Benefits**

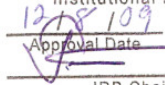
The risks and inconveniences of this study include your time to participate, which is expected to be two hours (1 hour for the interview and 1 hour for review of the interview transcript.) Additionally, the possibilities exist for an emotional reaction to research questions about your past experiences or that the interview is audio recorded. While all individual and school site names will be kept confidential, there is a possibility of recognition from the contextual content of your interviews. As the risks of this study are minimal, the benefits clearly outweigh the risks. The potential benefit to you is an emotional benefit of hope for improvement of the current reality of teachers' working conditions. This project not only continues research and connects previously existing research in differing fields (psychology, education, and workforce research); moreover, this study has the potential benefit to future and current teachers and students in the public school system of decreasing teacher movement.

#### **Safeguards, Confidentiality, and Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you have an emotional reaction while answering questions about your experiences, you will be given the opportunity to pause or abort the interview. Psychological referrals will be offered if you and/or the researcher deem it is necessary. Each interview may be terminated if the researcher feels it is in your best interest. If you have audio taping discomfort, you will be reassured that the recording is only for transcription and it will not be shared. Additionally, you will be provided with an electronic copy of your interview transcript as a part of the research protocol. All transcripts will be stored on a password protected computer and audio tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home office To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used for publication in the research study and notes from the interviews will be stored in a locked cabinet. Additionally, names of schools and personnel will be replaced with descriptors and pseudonyms. All information gathered in this study will be made available to you upon request.

**Questions**

This study has been approved by the Cal State San Marcos Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions about the study, you may direct those to the researcher, Jennifer Pesavento-Conway, [pesav001@csusm.edu](mailto:pesav001@csusm.edu), (760)840-0142, or the researcher's committee chairperson, Dr. Patricia Stall (760)750-4386 [pstall@csusm.edu](mailto:pstall@csusm.edu). Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760)750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Cal State San Marcos Institutional Review Board	
<u>12/8/09</u>	<u>12/7/10</u>
Approval Date	Expiration Date
	
IRB Chair Signature Human Subjects Committee	

## APPENDIX C

### Consent Form



## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Participants,

### **Invitation to Participate and Purpose of Research**

Jennifer Pesavento-Conway, a graduate student at California State University San Marcos, is conducting a study through the use of personal interviews to examine the factors that influence employment decisions, in regard to perseverance, migration, or attrition. As a current or former teacher, you are being asked to participate in this study because you can provide details and insights about your experiences to better understand the phenomenon of teacher movement.

### **Procedure**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in an audio recorded interview conducted by the researcher who will ask questions about your working conditions and your experiences in the teaching profession
2. Review the transcript of your interview and provide the researcher with any clarification or expansion on initial interview responses.
3. If needed, participate in a follow-up interview with questions generated during the process of analyzing the information from the initial interview.

The total time the interview may take is expected to be no more than one hour. The total time for the review of your transcript and clarification and/or expansion is expected to be no more than thirty minutes. If needed, the total time expected for a follow-up interview is expected to be no more than thirty minutes.

### **Risks, Inconveniences, and Benefits**

The risks and inconveniences of this study include your time to participate, which is expected to be two hours (1 hour for the interview and 1 hour for review of the interview transcript.) Additionally, the possibilities exist for an emotional reaction to research questions about your past experiences or that the interview is audio recorded. While all individual and school site names will be kept confidential, there is a possibility of recognition from the contextual content of your interviews. As the risks of this study are minimal, the benefits clearly outweigh the risks. The potential benefit to you is an emotional benefit of hope for improvement of the current reality of teachers' working conditions. This project not only continues research and connects previously existing research in differing fields (psychology, education, and workforce research); moreover, this study has the potential benefit to future and current teachers and students in the public school system of decreasing teacher movement.

### **Safeguards, Confidentiality, and Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you have an emotional reaction while answering questions about your experiences, you will be given the opportunity to pause or abort the interview. Psychological referrals will be offered if you and/or the researcher deem it is necessary. Each interview may be terminated if the researcher feels it is in your best interest. If you have audio taping discomfort, you will be reassured that the recording is only for transcription and it will not be shared. Additionally, you will be provided with an electronic copy of your interview transcript as a part of the research protocol. All transcripts will be stored on a password protected computer and audio tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used for publication in the research study and notes from the interviews will be stored in a locked cabinet. Additionally, names of schools and personnel will be replaced with descriptors and pseudonyms. All information gathered in this study will be made available to you upon request.

**Questions**

This study has been approved by the Cal State San Marcos Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions about the study, you may direct those to the researcher, Jennifer Pesavento-Conway, [pesav001@csusm.edu](mailto:pesav001@csusm.edu), (760)840-0142, or the researcher's committee chairperson, Dr. Patricia Stall (760)750-4386 [pstall@csusm.edu](mailto:pstall@csusm.edu). Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760)750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Check one:

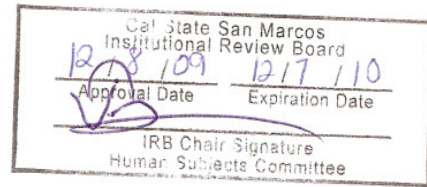
Yes, I will participate in this research study.

No, I prefer to not participate in this research study.

Participant's Name (Printed)

*Jennifer Pesavento-Conway*  
Researcher's Signature

Participant's Signature





## APPENDIX D

### Interview Protocol

#### *Probing Questions*

1. Is there anything in your work environment that makes you excited to come to work every day?
2. School and district policies shape our working environment. What do you think about policies in this district? In this school?
3. What do you think about support in this district? In this school?
4. How do teachers participate in decision-making at the district level? Site level? Department level? Classroom level?
5. As a teacher, describe the perfect match of a school site for you.
6. If you had three wishes to improve working conditions at your site, what would they be?
7. What aspects and/or qualities are supporting you in your teaching? How does this make you feel?
8. What, if anything, has gotten in the way or made it difficult for you this year? How does this make you feel?
9. Can you tell me about some of the aspects of this district that make it a good place to teach for you?
10. Can you tell me about some of the aspects of this school that make it a good place to teach for you?
11. Can you tell me about some of the aspects of this school that might make you migrate to another site or leave the profession? How about the district?
12. Does your district/site provide professional development? If so, are you able to utilize your learning in your classroom as a teacher? If not, why?
13. As a teacher, are you able to control what occurs in your classroom? If so, to what extent? If not, why?
14. As a teacher, are there protocols or rules at your site to guide your actions in your classroom/department? If so, does following these protocols or rules lead to goal attainment? If so, how? If not, why?
15. As a teacher, what are your personal values, beliefs, and/or norms (meaning standards) concerning teaching and learning at your school? Do your personal ideals match the ideals generally held at your site? If so, how? If not, why?
16. As a teacher, what are your attitudes and feelings about your work? (in the district, site, department, classroom)
17. As a teacher, do you engage in reflective practice? If so, how? If not, why?
18. Describe your employment journey as a teacher. What courses did you teach? What schools? What did you find challenging? What did you find rewarding?
19. As a teacher, I know that teaching is hard work. What do you like about being a teacher?

20. Many teachers, especially in urban settings, do not make it more than a few years. Did you find teaching challenging in the beginning? If so, what helped you to continue? When did you make it out of survival mode?
21. Where do you see yourself in the next five years? Why?
22. At what point did you really start to feel successful as a teacher? What helped you to reach that point?
23. As a teacher, do you influence the process and product of your work? If so, how? If not, why?
24. As a teacher, do you experience value in your work? If so, how? If not, why?
25. Describe your professional interactions with colleagues—formal or informal, in school or outside of school.
26. How have these interactions supported or failed to support your growth as a teacher?
27. As a teacher, how did you become employed at your current site? (or at your last teaching position, if no longer a teacher)
28. In regard to your preferential working conditions previously shared, is the site where you currently teach a match for those conditions? If so, how? If not, why?
29. What types of classes and levels do you teach?
30. Are there many veteran teachers at your site? In your department?
31. Are there many novice teachers (those with less than five years of teaching experience) at your site? In your department?
32. As a teacher, have you experienced being non-reelected? What was that like? How did that make you feel?
33. As a teacher, have you experienced the receipt of a layoff notice, also referred to as being pink-slipped? What was that experience like? How did that make you feel?

*Demographic and Personal Questions:*

34. Would it be okay if I asked your background and teaching experience?
35. How do you ethnically identify yourself?
36. What is your current age?
37. What is your highest level of education?
38. How long have you been teaching?
39. How did you come to be a teacher?
40. Discuss your involvement with your family and community outside of school.
41. Regarding attrition, migration, or persistence, how do your family and/or community influence your employment decisions?
42. Are there any teachers in your family?

*Evaluation Questions*

43. Are there other significant experiences/influences that we have not yet discussed?
44. Among the many experiences we have discussed, what were the most important to your development as a teacher? Why?
45. If you were to give advice to someone who wanted to become an effective teacher in an urban high school, what would you tell him/her? Why?

46. Do you feel that you need to continue to grow? If so, how?

*Snowball Sampling Question*

47. Are there any teachers or former teachers who you personally know from your high school district that you believe should be a part of this research project about teacher retention in secondary schools?

APPENDIX E

School District Consent for Research

Southern California Union High School District

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*Educational Services*

To: Jennifer Pesavento-Conway

From: Assistant Superintendent

Date: February 16, 2010

Subject: Research Project in SCUHSD

Promoting life-long learning is a core value in the Southern California Union High School District. Being part of a research study is a valuable learning opportunity for both the district and the doctoral student. I have reviewed your research proposal and you have permission to conduct your study in our district. I wish you the best of luck and look forward to reading your research findings.

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