

EXPLORING THE REASONS TEACHERS STAY IN THE PROFESSION:  
A CASE STUDY IN ONE MIDWESTERN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

---

A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

---

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

---

By

S. BEERY JOHNSON

Dr. Carole Edmonds, Dissertation Supervisor

JULY 2017

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School,

Have examined the dissertation entitled

EXPLORING THE REASONS TEACHERS STAY IN THE PROFESSION:

A CASE STUDY

IN ONE MIDWESTERN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

Presented by S. Beery Johnson,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education and

hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

---

Dr. Carole Edmonds, Dissertation Supervisor

---

Dr. Tim Wall

---

Dr. Virgil Freeman

---

Dr. Nissa Ingraham

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Dr. Carole Edmonds has been a huge support throughout my process. I enjoyed Dr. Edmonds way back during my masters and specialist days and was glad when she came on to help with this program. She has always been in education for the right reasons and I enjoy her continued support through some interesting times with Dr. Messner and with my journey through this difficult process.
- Special thanks to Dr. Tim Wall, Dr. Virgil Freeman, and Dr. Nissa Ingraham for their commitment and willingness to serve on my dissertation committee. It is especially gratifying to have Dr. Freeman, my old football coach from many years ago, serve on this committee.
- Sincere thanks to all the participants who volunteered to participate, for your time, candor, and interest in the study.
- Thanks to all my coworkers within my district for their support and confidence in my ability to get through the program, especially Michele Thomason and Sandy Steggall and my Cohort 7 compadres Brian Shindorf and Doug Flowers.
- I also would like to thank my in-laws, Bill and Sharon McNally, my aunts and uncles, and all my Johnson cousins for always pushing me to be the best. My uncle Tom Trail went through this program years ago and is someone I always strived to be more like. This is also for my grandparents, Sid and Katherine. Sid played football for Mizzou back in the early 1930's and became a pioneer in so many areas including soil conservation.
- Lots of love also to my siblings who are all very successful in their own field. This includes my brother Rick and wife Kristy, my sister Lindsey and husband Tim, my youngest sister Jennifer, and her husband Dave along with all my nieces and nephews.
- I would not have matriculated through this endeavor without the support of my mom and dad, Jean and Sidney Johnson. They have provided support throughout the process and have always afforded me the best role models for life you could ask for. My mom is a true lifelong learner and my dad was instrumental to education as a State Senator.
- Finally, I could not have completed this without the support and love of my wife Tracy and my amazing kids, Lauren, Sid, Alex, and Connor. When doubting whether I wanted to finish this project, I always went back to the fact that I must finish for these five.
- Thanks to these remarkable people and to my everlasting love, my Lord God.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
Background.....	2
Theoretical Framework.....	3
<i>Motivational Theory</i> .....	3
<i>McGregor' Theory X and Y</i> .....	5
<i>Herzberg's Motivational-Hygiene Theory</i> .....	5
<i>Embedded Motivators: Culture and Climate</i> .....	7
Constructivist Research Paradigm.....	8
Problem Statement.....	9
Research Purpose.....	9
Research Questions.....	10
Design and Methods.....	10
Limitation, Delimitations, and Assumptions.....	12
<i>Limitations</i> .....	12
<i>Delimitations</i> .....	12
<i>Assumptions</i> .....	12
Definition of Key Terms.....	13
Significance of Study.....	14
Summary.....	15
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	16
Motivational Theory.....	17

Teacher Retention.....	18
<i>Teacher Background</i> .....	18
<i>High Quality Teachers</i> .....	20
<i>School Culture</i> .....	21
<i>School Climate</i> .....	23
Organizational Structure.....	24
<i>Working Conditions</i> .....	25
<i>Human Resources</i> .....	26
<i>Intangibles</i> .....	27
<i>Local District Background</i> .....	28
History of SS High School.....	29
<i>The Age of Innocence</i> .....	29
<i>Post World War I</i> .....	32
<i>Post World War II</i> .....	34
<i>Social Unrest</i> .....	36
<i>Late 20th Century</i> .....	37
<i>21st Century</i> .....	39
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	40
Research Purpose.....	41
Research Questions.....	42
Design for the Study.....	42
Participants and Sampling Procedures.....	43
Data Collection.....	45
<i>Interviews</i> .....	46
<i>Focus Group</i> .....	47
<i>Documents and Artifacts</i> .....	47
Human Subjects Protection and Other Ethical Considerations.....	48

Data Analysis.....	48
Role of the Researcher.....	49
<i>Trustworthiness</i> .....	49
<i>Credibility</i> .....	49
<i>Dependability</i> .....	50
<i>Transferability</i> .....	50
<i>Confirmability</i> .....	50
Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions.....	51
<i>Limitations</i> .....	51
<i>Delimitations</i> .....	51
<i>Assumptions</i> .....	51
Ethical Principles.....	52
Summary.....	52
4. RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	53
Setting for the Case Study.....	55
Relationship of Researcher to Research.....	56
Description of Participants.....	56
Interview Setting.....	57
Interviews and Focus Group.....	57
Data Analysis.....	58
Findings from the Data.....	59
<i>Theme 1: Creating a Positive Culture</i> .....	60
<i>Theme 2: Creating a Family Atmosphere</i> .....	64
<i>Theme 3: Autonomy</i> .....	71
<i>Theme 4: Limiting Factors</i> .....	75
Research Findings.....	79
<i>Building Strong Relationships</i> .....	80

	<i>Autonomy</i> .....	80
	<i>Collaboration Time</i> .....	80
	<i>Quality Professional Development</i> .....	80
	<i>Quality Mentoring Program</i> .....	81
	<i>Support Teachers with Feedback</i> .....	81
	<i>Celebrate Hard Work</i> .....	81
	<i>Dealing with Poverty</i> .....	82
	<i>Good Pay with Benefits</i> .....	82
	Answering the Research Questions.....	82
	Summary.....	84
5.	DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	85
	Discussion of Findings.....	86
	Herzberg’s Two-Factor Motivational Theory.....	87
	Positive Instructional Culture within Buildings.....	88
	District Programs.....	90
	Limitations to the Study.....	92
	Implications for Practice.....	93
	Implications for Future Research.....	96
	Conclusion.....	96
	REFERENCES.....	98
APPENDIXES		
	A. INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT.....	108
	B. TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	111
	C. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS.....	113
	VITA.....	114

**EXPLORING THE REASONS TEACHERS STAY IN THE PROFESSION:  
A CASE STUDY IN ONE MIDWESTERN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL**

S. Beery Johnson

Dr. Carole Edmonds, Dissertation Supervisor

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative bounded case study was to find the factors that lead teachers at SS High to remain in teaching and more specifically, to stay in their current building. A review of literature provided revealed that teachers are leaving the profession and moving between buildings at alarming rates that in turn negatively affect our children's education. An examination of why teachers stay in the profession was rarely studied and relates to what motivating factors are prevalent for the teachers to stay. Literature revealed motivational strategies from theorists Herzberg, Pink, and Maslow like autonomy, purpose, empowerment, and leadership opportunities that lead to more teacher satisfaction, which then can lead to greater teacher retainment. This study used semi-structured interviews with teachers who had four-ten years' experience, a focus group with teachers with 11-30 tenure, and a pertinent document review to gather teacher perceptions in order to determine themes district and building leaders can use to retain more teachers. The themes were: a) Creating a Positive Culture; b) Creating a Family Atmosphere; c) Autonomy; and d) Limiting Factors. The findings allow building and district leadership with implications for practice that will provide heightened satisfaction for teachers, which will keep them in the building and district and provide better support for learning to students.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Early in conversation with parents of school-age children, the topic of education habitually comes up and often turns to the quality of teacher a child has. Society realizes that education is the key to so many facets of life, yet seems to pay little attention to who is teaching our young. Politicians routinely sprout off the need for more accountability, laws are consistently created to raise the bar for schools, yet American culture still lacks the knowledge of how to recruit or retain the best teachers (Gregorian, 2012).

There is a current shortage of quality teachers in the United States (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2013). This shortage is so pronounced that many jobs are being filled by individuals who haven't even completed the minimum certification requirements (Kronholz, 2013). To make this situation worse, a high percentage of individuals leave the field after less than five years in the classroom (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). The overall number of teachers coming into the field has diminished by 31% from 2008-2013 (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2013). Various studies have found that novice teachers leave in higher numbers than more experienced teachers (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016).

During the past forty years the attrition rate for secondary teachers has grown to over 50% with the turnover rate at almost 17% per year nationally (Teaching and America's Future, 2007). The problem isn't always finding teachers, but rather keeping teachers in our schools. The magnitude of the problem is not just national, but a problem seen in many other countries (Akin, et al 2014). Schools with high-poverty, high-minority, and low-performance make the problem of retention even harder. The inability to retain good teachers correlates with the inability to close the student achievement gap (Teaching and America's Future, 2007).

## Background

Teacher retention is tied to job satisfaction, which is also dropping dramatically. According to the 2013 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, teacher job satisfaction dropped from 62% in 2008 to 39% in 2013 (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 2013). Moreover, the newest cohort of teachers, the so-called Y generation, do not expect to be teaching their entire career (Manuel & Hughes, 2006). The inability to find what motivates teachers to stay in teaching is costing this country enormous amounts of money, and, more importantly, hurting our most important resource, children (Teoh & Coggins, 2013).

Teachers need to feel a purpose for work and need the autonomy within the job to feel relevant, which is a strong motivator according to Daniel Pink in his book *Drive* (2011). Teachers must have opportunities to learn and use leadership potential while still in the classroom (Teoh & Coggins, 2013). The way to improve learning is not through micromanagement from administration, but rather through teacher leadership (Wallace Foundation, 2010). The leadership for teachers must be real and encouraged in a true collaborative environment. There must be a true, shared sense of decision-making and responsibility for results (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Many teachers today are frustrated with a lack of autonomy, lack of choices, and decisions coming from the top down. Rather than being praised and encouraged to be creative, they are more likely to get called on the carpet for veering away from accepted methods (Thomas, 2017). Young teachers are encouraged however by good mentoring, positive professional development, and a sense of autonomy in their work (Latifoglu, 2016). Young teachers seek to change the world and quickly find the demand to balance teaching, paperwork, mandated testing, and a personal life to be too much (Strauss, 2015). Strauss goes on to state that no other college-

educated profession is questioned, second-guessed, or blamed for so many things as teachers (2015).

The purpose of this bounded case study is to find the factors that lead teachers at SS High to remain in teaching. Are factors like more money, increased mentoring, and less mobility the answer as some studies suggest (Fensterwald, 2015), or are other factors more prevalent? The results from this study may determine factors affecting job satisfaction that in turn may affect teacher retention for teachers and should provide policy makers and district administration information to help improve and implement strategies to raise the teacher retention rate. If successful, the district costs should decrease and student learning should improve. It is crucial to retain the best teachers in our classrooms. The SS High school district needs more data in order to understand and alleviate the issue of decreasing retention of teachers. The reasons why local teachers are satisfied in their current teaching position is currently unknown. Such knowledge should allow for better policy decisions on increasing retention.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Researchers are guided by a theoretical framework to help guide qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). The guiding lens of the framework helps to shape what questions will be formed, how data collection and analysis will be performed, and ends in results that will direct change. The concepts of teacher retention and history of the school under research, called SS High for purposes of this study, will be viewed through the lens of Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivational Theory.

### **Motivational Theory**

Teacher retention is an issue facing education, which is centered by the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The Human Resource frame is a lens that enables a view into

how organizations and their workers treat each other (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Human resource theorists often view workers to be used like pawns within the organization, while other theorists view workers to be the organization's energy and talent and should be used accordingly (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Organizational management theorist like Maslow and Herzberg posit that workers need to be empowered (Bowman & Deal, 2008).

Many organizations have found that in order to get the optimum talent and energy out of employees, their needs must be met (Maslow, 1954). Abraham Maslow believed that human beings all have needs that are arranged in a hierarchy, which he arranged in a pyramid. The base of Maslow's pyramid was the most basic physiological needs consisting of such things as food, water, and sleep. The needs higher on his pyramid could not be addressed unless these basic needs were first met. Above the base, the next level of needs were the things human beings needed to stay safe, such as shelter from the elements and freedom from fear of animals or other humans threatening them. Still higher on the pyramid was the human need for love and belonging, while above that were the esteem needs of recognition and a feeling of self-worth. Moreover, highest on the pyramid, Maslow placed self-actualization, which included reaching one's potential and creative pursuits (McLeod, 2016).

Maslow later expanded his hierarchy of needs to include cognitive, aesthetic needs, and transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970a). Cognitive needs included curiosity about the world and the meaning of things, while aesthetic needs included an appreciation for beauty. The transcendence need included the need to help others reach their self-actualization (Maslow, 1970b).

## **McGregor's Theory X and Y**

Douglas McGregor built on Maslow's theory to build his concept of Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960). McGregor believed workers would rise or fall to the leader's expectations. Theory X leaders believe workers are lazy and only motivated by the carrot and stick, while Theory Y leaders believe in creating optimal conditions for individuals to work towards their own goals that will lead to organizational achievement (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Some leaders try to control staff members by limiting their involvement with decision-making (Blasé, 1991). In order to create teacher satisfaction, leaders must engage in a collegial and collaborative leadership model (Williams, 2009). Teachers not only want to be led through a collegial model, but they want the chance to lead themselves (Harris, 2007).

## **Herzberg's Motivational-Hygiene Theory**

Also built out of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Frederick Herzberg, in 1966, created the Motivational-Hygiene Theory, also called the Two-Factor theory. Job motivators were those things that led workers to meet needs higher on Maslow's hierarchy, while job hygiene items were those things that led workers to meet needs lower on Maslow's hierarchy. Motivators lead to job satisfaction and the lack of motivators lead to lack of job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966).

Motivators are concepts like recognition, achievement, responsibility, advancement, growth, and the work itself. Hygiene motivating concepts include such things as company policy and administration, relationship with supervisors, work conditions, salary, peer relationships, personal life, relationships with subordinates, and security and status (Herzberg, 1966).

Herzberg put forth the idea that the opposite of job satisfaction was not job

dissatisfaction, but rather the absence of job satisfaction. The lack of motivators did not lead to job dissatisfaction, because hygiene items such as working conditions and pay only affect job dissatisfaction. Herzberg believed that only motivators lead to job satisfaction and the lack of motivators lead to the lack of job satisfaction. Herzberg wrote that organizations too often concentrated on the hygiene items when trying to motivate workers. Since hygiene items cannot motivate workers over time, Herzberg proposed that only through enrichment like worker freedom and authority with high expectations would companies be able to motivate workers to their highest level (Herzberg, 1966).

Herzberg wrote that most organizations were using kick-in-the-pants (KITA) to motivate employees (Herzberg, 2008). Using the KITA method has three major drawbacks: it is inelegant, contrary to a style most organizations strive to convey, and it affects employees in a negative way. Positive KITA can lead to motivation to employees but has drawbacks. Some positive KITA practices are raising wages, more fringe benefits, reducing time spent at work, sensitivity training and communications. KITA methods of motivational activities lead to short-term benefits for the organization. Herzberg's alternative to KITA was job enrichment. Job enrichment provides for employees' psychological growth through vertical job loading, which is allowing employees ownership, the chance to grow, build, and produce and to meet higher needs on Maslow's hierarchy. Enriching the jobs required of employees leads to longer lasting changes (Herzberg, 2008).

Having a narrow view of what the job entails will make it very difficult for school districts to compete with the private sector. So much of what education uses are the intangibles that need to be stated in order to recruit and retain our best teachers (Shields & Lewis, 2012). Teacher job satisfaction is at the lowest level ever found in the history of the twenty-year plus

survey (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 2013).

### **Embedded Motivators: Culture and Climate**

Many talk about the importance of school culture and climate and the role it plays in motivation and in particular teacher retention (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014).

Researchers seem to differ on what school climate is, but for this research is defined as the quality and character of school life that is based on what the students, staff, and parents perceive within their own experience with the school. The climate and culture is reflected through norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014).

Maurice Elias defines school culture as the “sum total of behaviors and interactions of all adults and children, their attitudes and norms, and the extent to which the school is safe, supportive, healthy, engaging, inspiring, and challenging for all. Culture is what we do in the school” (Elias, 2014). Elias continues to define school climate as “the collective perception of how well school provides suitable conditions for learning; for positive social, emotional, and character development; for all staff to grow professionally; and for parents, families, and community resources to become engaged in the school” (Elias, 2014).

In order for schools to be successful and sustainable, they must have both a positive school culture and climate. When schools have a positive culture and climate, learning takes place, and students and staff generally want to be there. Conversely, if the culture and climate become toxic, derisory learning will take place and students and staff will suffer (Elias, 2014).

The long-fathered culture of the school in this study, which in this study will be called SS High, has existed since 1904. It is one of three high schools in a district of between 10,000-

15,000 students. The school building sits in a part of town that once was an American Indian powwow site. The residents of this part of town are mostly blue-collar workers who believe in hard work, and the school's history has a background in manual training and domestic science. While 12 were graduated in 1912, today the school graduates around 200 students each year (Foley, 2009).

SS High has historically dominated industrial technology contests within the state and showed that the student body was still parented by blue-collar workers that passed down the need to learn a trade (Foley, 2009). Enrollment began to slide in the 1990's and the wealth of the area began to decline as large employers of blue collar workers began to leave the community. As the community became poorer, parents and their children did not respect education in the same way as students in the 1940-1980's did. A large pork processing plant is now the major employer in the school community. Teacher retention became more of a problem as the socioeconomic makeup of the school declined (Foley, 2009).

The culture and climate of a school has a considerable impact on whether staff want to remain in the school (Elias, 2015). If teachers feel emboldened to work smart and creatively, without fear of reprisal, they are much more likely to be satisfied in their work and stay in the school and profession (Thomas, 2017). The concepts of teacher retention and the culture and climate of schools will be viewed through the lens of motivation theory in Chapter Two.

### **Constructivist Research Paradigm**

A social constructivists' worldview was used in this phenomenological study in order to interpret the meanings of what others say (Creswell, 2009). Creswell states that research should be based as much as possible on the views of the participants (2009). The questions used in the

interview protocol were open-ended in order to allow participants to make their best meaning of the situation. Participants had varied views as they have complex interpretations and various experiences (Creswell, 2009).

### **Problem Statement**

While the collegial model has been gaining steam, other changes in education over the past ten years have been enormous (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). With the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, the accountability measures have risen to a very high level for local school districts. This has put additional burdens on teachers and principals as the stakes have continually risen (Rayfield & Diamanties, 2004). Governments, through programs such as NCLB, have centralized their power over schools in order to show schools as the cause and cure for our economic and competitive edge in the world market. Governments have used accountability to systematically change local control over curriculum and allocation of funds (Malen, 2003). The burden of maintaining a stable of world-class teachers is as important as ever in the history of our country. There have been many studies conducted (Hong, 2012; Lochmiller, Sugimoto, & Muller, 2016; Silva, McKie, & Gleason, 2015) as to why teachers are leaving the profession, but research is needed to find what motivates teachers to remain in the profession.

### **Research Purpose**

The researcher's purpose was to explore teachers' perceptions of reasons they stay in the profession. In order for teachers to stay in their current role, they must feel good about their job (Herzberg, 1966). This researcher will use convenience sampling for the proposed study. Convenience sampling allows the researcher the ability to easily access and collect data from a

specific site (Creswell, 2007). Participants will consist of teachers belonging to the same building ranging in experience from novice to over 25 years teaching. All participants are certified teachers in a nine-twelve public high school located in a Midwest, urban school district.

This study strengthened the body of literature because it allowed teachers to construct their own meaning from their own experiences (Creswell, 2007) in regard to their motivation for why they stay in the profession. The study is important because this district must develop strategies to retain teachers in order to combat both the lack of teacher candidates and the lack of quality candidates to replace the pool.

### **Research Questions**

The guiding question for this researcher and the study was to explore teachers' perceptions as to why they stay in teaching and more specifically stay in their current building? This led to two subquestions used to determine teacher views on why they remain in teaching.

1. What are the reasons you have remained in teaching at SS High School?
2. Based on other teachers in our district or building, what are reasons for moving to another building?

### **Design and Methods**

Qualitative procedures depend on text, have a distinctive process for collecting and analyzing data, and use various tactics of questioning. A model of investigation that gives the researcher an in-depth understanding of the complex issues and focuses on understanding the narratives and observations are necessary in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). There are four sources available to gather data: interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts. Interviews are not just to get an answer to a specific question; rather they are a dialog or conversation with a

purpose (Erlandson et al, 1993). Researchers use the specifics from participants to build general themes that allow interpretations to be made from the data (Creswell, 2009).

Because social constructivist uses qualitative methods to reach the goal of relying as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation (Creswell, 2009), interviews were chosen as the process selected to collect data. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed researchers to “explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 2003). Interviews also provide deeper insight into the reasons teachers stay or leave the profession.

The researcher purposively contacted teachers who had been teaching in the school between four-thirty years and asked to take part in the study. Data collection came from face-to-face interviews using open-ended questions and was done in the participants' setting (Creswell, 2009). The researcher began the interviews with non-threatening questions that allowed the participant to become comfortable. Once the interview became comfortable, the questions centered on the reasons why teachers decided to stay in the profession and building or why they were thinking of leaving. Participants were allowed to elaborate on their responses. To close the interview, the researcher summarized the information gathered to make sure the most important parts were collected (Erlandson et. al, 1993). Interview results were then analyzed using both open and axial coding to determine common conceptual and common themes that emerged to better understand why teachers stay in the profession (Patton, 2003).

A focus group of teachers who had between 10-30 years tenure was completed. Document and artifact analysis were also used along with field notes to help maintain validity (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The use of the interviews along with the focus groups, document analysis, and the

field notes were triangulated with analysis of unobtrusive documents, and all data was coded to allow for emerging themes in an inductive approach (Creswell, 2009).

### **Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

#### **Limitations**

Creswell defines limitations as unforeseen circumstances that are beyond the control of the researcher (2009). Limiting factors within this study includes that all data are self-reported and subjective. If participants are not honest or true in making complete answers to questions, the data will be inaccurate. This study was only done in one school building. The time of year for the study is probably not the best for getting the best answers since it was towards the end of the school year when testing is going on and summer is in the air. Another big limitation is that the researcher is an administrator within the building where the study took place. However, the findings in the research may show that this wasn't a factor.

#### **Delimitations**

Delimitations of this study dealt with sampling. The school studied is one small school in one urban location in the Midwest. Participants interviewed were a fairly small sample that volunteered to take part in the study, so findings were limited to this school and these individuals. But, it was not the aim of this study to acquire findings for a district or all districts, rather discover research for one building, SS High, as identified in the study.

#### **Assumptions**

When interpreting results from the findings, several assumptions should be made. These include that all participants answered honestly, the cultural differences among participants had

no impact on the findings, and that participants shared comparable life experiences and external events. The topic of the research was assumed to be worthy to all participants, but this could be limiting as well.

It was also an assumption that they would be honest in their answers within the focus group and interviews within the risk-free, confidential setting. The researcher also assumed they would be able to perform objectively, in an unbiased manner even though the researcher works and is an administrator within the same building. Lastly, it was an assumption that the building and district would use the research to help improve procedures and processes so that barriers that lead teachers to leave could be eliminated or at least contracted.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Attrition:** A decrease in the number of teachers remaining in the profession.

**High-quality teachers:** For the purpose of this study, those teachers that have the appropriate college education, teacher practicum experience, and certifications to teach the corresponding courses.

**Hygiene factors:** For the purpose of this study, factors or conditions that could lead to dissatisfaction with current employment.

**Leavers:** For the purpose of this study, former teachers who have left public school teaching are referred to as leavers.

**Mentor Program:** A program that pairs new teachers with veteran teachers who assist the new teachers by helping them with lesson planning, working with parents, students, administration, and other staff, and in general helping them learn the standard practice of

teaching in a public school.

**Motivators:** For the purpose of this study, factors or conditions that would cause a person to want to remain in their current employment.

**Non-Tenured:** For the purpose of this study, teachers who have taught in Missouri for one-five years.

**Novice teachers:** Those teachers in their first five years of teaching.

**Stayer:** For the purpose of this study, teachers who stayed in public teaching.

**Teacher Induction Program:** A beginning teacher support program aimed at acclimating new teachers to a district to improve teacher efficacy as well as retention.

**Teacher Retention:** The ability to keep teachers at a school or within the profession.

**Workplace conditions:** The conditions under which teachers work in the school setting. They can affect a teacher both positively and negatively and can affect a teacher's commitment to remain in teaching in the same manner.

### **Significance of Study**

As an educator, it is very discouraging when countless hours in time, resources, and heart was put into new teachers only to see them leave just when they were really beginning to reach students and be successful as teachers. There are many issues that play into whether a young teacher likes or dislikes their job. Many factors like childbirth or moving for a spouse's job can't be alleviated. But others such as implementation of an induction plan are important in order to help meet the needs of the novice teachers so more will stay.

If retention of highly trained teachers is the goal, factors that lead to retention need to be found and implemented. As teachers stay longer, they build up capital in their investment that they don't want to leave. Early in a career, teachers don't have capital built up and are more likely to leave as suggested by fact that around 45-50% leaves within five years (Ingersoll, 2003). While young teachers are more likely to leave to have children or for other family related reasons, they also are usually given the toughest assignments. The U.S. is the only developed country that does this. Young teachers are given more limited resources (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). Ways must be found to limit the factors that are known to drive teachers away from the profession.

Also important to learn is how to improve motivational elements, such as recognition, collaboration, and responsibility in order to meet the needs of the novice teacher. It is hoped that policymakers and district administration can use this information to create policy and cultures to decrease the attrition rate of novice teachers, cut costs that are spent to recruit and re-train new teachers, and improve the learning for students.

### **Summary**

Teaching children in today's world of accountability is one of the noblest professions in the world. Teaching is a profession that is challenging and can only be done by highly trained individuals who have a high sense of efficacy (Ingersoll, 2003). Schools must find what is lacking in our educational system that continually has up to 50% of our non-tenured teachers finding another profession within their first five years (Ingersoll, 2003). Factors and conditions that lead to teacher retention must be found.

The research design is qualitative, phenomenological approach using semi-structured

interviews. Participants were interviewed to find why they remained in teaching as well as why they stayed at the same high school. The data was coded and analyzed using both open and axial coding to determine common conceptual and common themes that emerged to better understand why teachers stay in the profession. Delimitations, limitations, and assumptions were listed. Finally, the significance of the study was identified and its importance to the learning of our children explained.

Chapter 1 covered the background of the study, stated the problem being studied, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. In Chapter 2, the history of the school being studied will be presented as well as literature related to motivational theories. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology and procedures of the study. Chapters 4 and 5 will explain the findings and recommendations for further practice and research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

There is a current shortage of quality teachers in the United States (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2013). This shortage is so pronounced that many jobs are being filled by individuals who haven't even completed the minimum certification requirements (Kronholz, 2013). To make this situation worse, a high percentage of individuals leave the field after less than five years in the classroom (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). The overall number of teachers coming into the field has diminished by 31% from 2008-2013 (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2013). Various studies have found that novice teachers leave in higher numbers than more experienced teachers (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016).

One side of human resources theorists view workers as pawns to be used, while the other

side views the workers to be the organization's energy and talent and should be used accordingly (Bowman & Deal, 2008). Organizational management theorist like Maslow and Herzberg posit that workers need to be empowered (Bowman & Deal, 2008).

### **Motivational Theory**

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory suggests that all human beings have common needs that lend themselves to a pyramid with the most basic needs on the bottom of that pyramid. (Maslow, 1954) The most basic physiological needs must be met before the next rung of the pyramid needs can be met. The physiological needs are things that a human must have to live such as food, water and air. The pyramid proceeds to the top through belongingness and love needs to esteem needs to self-actualization needs (McLeod, 2016).

Frederick Herzberg, in order to explain employee motivation, used Maslow's hierarchy to create his own Motivational-Hygiene Theory. Herzberg explains that motivators are factors that employers utilize to enhance worker's performance. Motivators deal with the upper levels of Maslow's hierarchy. Hygiene factors are things that employers offer to employees to meet their lower level needs on Maslow's chart. Motivators serve to enhance job satisfaction, while hygiene factors serve to keep workers from having job dissatisfaction. Motivators are such things as achievement, advancement, personal growth, responsibility, recognition and work itself. Hygiene, on the other hand, deals with policy, interpersonal relations, salary, job security, personal life, status, and working conditions. Employers, by meeting Maslow's hierarchy of needs, enhance job satisfaction and lower job dissatisfaction factors. Generally, Herzberg said for workers to be happy, they must feel good about their job (Herzberg, 1966).

It is imperative to review the literature in order to better understand motivational theory

as it applies to teacher perceptions on why they are motivated to remain in teaching and teach specifically at SS High. For that reason, it is also important to look at not only teacher retention in our country and world, but also the history of SS High to get a better understanding of the culture and climate in this particular high school so we can find why teachers might want to stay or leave. This chapter will explore literature as it relates to teacher retention and the history of SS High.

### **Teacher Retention**

Teacher retention is tied to job satisfaction which is also dropping dramatically (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 2013). According to the 2013 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, teacher job satisfaction dropped from 62% in 2008 to 39% in 2013 (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 2013). Moreover, the newest cohort of teachers, the so-called Y generation, do not expect to be teaching their entire career (Manuel & Hughes, 2006).

### **Teacher Background**

Novice teachers, or those in their first five years of teaching, have an exceptionally high turnover rate. Ingersoll found that half of all teachers leave within their first five years of service (2003). It is over this span of time that teachers learn the most about the art of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003). Districts many times spend the most money on teachers during this five-year phase (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Those teachers that aren't able to create a sense of success with students are less likely to find teaching a rewarding profession and have a higher rate of turnover (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). While the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) has created a cost calculator to estimate the actual teacher turnover costs to schools and districts, the calculator does not include the largest cost, which is lost

teacher quality and effectiveness (2007).

Beginning teachers are more likely to leave their schools than more experienced teachers. Teachers under 30 and over 55 are more likely to leave because younger teachers are not tied to one place and older teachers are retiring. Young teachers may be less certain that teaching is their true career path, and, after experiencing teaching, decide to go into another career. They also tend to move more. College background and gender have little to do with the mobility of teachers except that teachers with advanced degrees tend to move more (Allensworth, 2009).

Teachers leave their schools for a variety of reasons. A large study of the Chicago Public School system divided those reasons into teacher backgrounds, school structure, social, and climate and organization (Allensworth, 2009). Teacher backgrounds included career stages, age, gender and race. School structure studies such things as declining school enrollment and smaller schools to see what percentage of teachers were leaving those schools. The Social Category studies teacher retention and the affluency, discipline, and safety of individual schools within the district. The district also studied climate and organization, which dealt with respect for colleagues, collective responsibility, innovation, and professional community (Allensworth, 2009).

Interestingly, while a teacher's undergraduate institution has not shown to influence teacher mobility, it has emerged to be a factor in the chances of a teacher leaving the profession. Those with higher academic qualifications (includes individuals from universities that had higher average SAT scores) seem more likely to leave schools that are not performing well academically. Teachers who scored in the lowest quartile had a higher retention rate. If this is true, it helps explain why low-performing schools have a more difficult time retaining better teachers (Boyd et al., 2005).

## **High Quality Teachers**

In contrast, those who have made the journey to become a high quality teacher are most likely to stay in teaching. Those that go through the work and effort required to obtain National Board certification are 90 percent less likely to leave a school system. They are also 18 percent less likely to transfer within the district. Of those that did leave, it was more likely due to family related issues rather than work conditions or preferences (Goldhaber, Gross & Player, 2007).

Most school districts have policies that give leaders few incentives to retain their top teachers. We know that our top 20% of our teachers in most schools are the most effective, yet we continue to have teacher compensation systems that are based on seniority and advanced degrees. Because of that, you will see the irreplaceable teachers leaving at a higher rate to find higher compensation that values their teaching skills (Jacob, et al 2012). Without creating retention policies and implementing strategies to retain a school's superstar teachers, schools are locked into a cycle of failure. They will never have enough great teachers to make a positive gain in overall student learning (Jacob, et al 2012).

Because of the outdated policies and practices, the teaching profession in general has become one of low performance standards and the lack of respect that comes with that. A dangerous message is sent by many that it is ok to be mediocre. When schools tolerate ineffective teachers, it demoralized great teachers and generates little to zero improvement in our schools (Jacob, et al 2012). In order to create real change in student learning, schools must retain their top teachers year after year. A student that has a two-year achievement gap can make that up three-four years of having a top 25% teacher (Hassel & Hassel, 2010).

## **School Culture**

The TNTP group found the schools that had a strong instructional focus, one that fosters great teaching, that help students learn more with intentional instructional practices make for schools that have a much better chance of retaining their best teachers (TNTP, 2012). In fact, schools that are in the top quartile of instructional culture retain their most effective teachers at a much higher rate than those in the bottom quartile (TNTP, 2012).

Teachers play a critical role in promoting a positive climate in the school (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014). Teachers help encourage a positive climate by treating students equal and fair, by having high expectations and motivating students to believe in themselves. They also allow students autonomy, explicit teach and model school rules, and most importantly develop strong, supportive relationships with students. Teachers that promote a positive climate also collaborate well with other staff members (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014).

Of course, the tone for the culture and climate of a school is first set by the main office of a school (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014). The office is a microcosm of the school. Every interaction the school office has with stakeholders including face-to-face, emails, and phone calls shape the experiences parents and students have. Prompt and respectful phone call answering, courteous greetings when guests enter the building, and talking with students to let them know you care about their attendance, how they are doing in school, what they are learning are all connected to a positive culture and climate within the school (Smith, Connolly & Pryseski, 2014).

The principal of the school will also have a large impact on the school climate that will in turn affect how teachers perform and students learn. Teachers and staff routinely rate the

Principal's accessibility, support, and relationships as the most important strength or weakness when talking about a school's culture and climate. Teachers want a Principal that has an inclusive open-door policy and has invested heavily in quality professional learning opportunities for the staff (Smith, Connolly, and Pryseski, 2014).

While teachers that are the lowest quality tend to have higher rates of turnover, which can be considered good, the effective teachers generally tend to stay in challenging schools for a longer time. This is also good news; but as these teachers become more effective over time they tend to leave the challenging schools with higher poverty and go to low poverty, high performing schools (Goldhaber, Gross & Player, 2007).

It is not only important to recruit and develop high-quality teachers, but you also must retain them. High quality teachers have the greatest impact on students' test scores (Aaronson, Barrow & Sander, 2007). Students who have a highly qualified teacher can overcome racial and socioeconomic disadvantages (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007).

In order to create a school with a strong instructional culture, TNTP found five characteristics that schools must implement. These include setting an elevated concentration for hiring only the best teachers available with a rigorous interview process. These schools also set high expectations for student learning and even convert those expectations into specific goals for each student that they focus on throughout the year. The schools with the strongest instructional culture have instructional leadership that knows student goals, evaluates and gives teachers feedback much more often than weak instructional culture schools. In schools with a strong instructional culture, the professional development is well planned and facilitated, and instructional leaders respond correctly to good or poor teacher performance much more often

(TNTP, 2012).

Despite bringing in high quality teachers, the retention rate continues to be low for teachers during their first five years of service. Between 11-15% of teachers nationally leave their school each year, which is above other similar industries. Novice teachers, those in their first five years, make up a larger group of those who leave even when compared to the baby boomers who are retiring at a very fast pace (Luekens et al, 2004, Harris & Adams, 2007).

### **School Climate**

When teachers find success in raising student academic performances, they stay. Because of this, it is imperative to have policy that supports new teachers in particular so they can be retained. Teachers in their first year of service are at a higher level to leave if they are unprepared or not supported. Half of all new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Ingersoll, 2003).

It has been found that a comprehensive induction program helps districts retain their teachers at a higher rate than other districts with no or very little induction programs (Alliance, 2004). A comprehensive program includes training, support, and assessment during the first year on the job. It includes high-quality mentoring, release time for mentor and protégé, focused professional development, common planning time, and out of school networking. An evaluation that identifies strengths and weaknesses, targets future professional development, and an overall grade on whether the protégé should stay in the profession is the culminating event in the program (Alliance, 2004). The Alliance for Excellent Education study demonstrated that beginning teachers had an 18 percent leave or move after one year under the comprehensive induction program compared to 27 percent under a basic induction program plus collaboration. Those that had just a basic induction program without collaboration left or moved 39 percent of

the time and those with no induction program left 41 percent after one year of service (2004).

Teachers need autonomy and be able to feel a purpose for their work in order to feel relevant which is a strong motivator according in Daniel Pink in his book *Drive* (2011). Teachers must have opportunities to learn and use their leadership potential while still in the classroom (Teoh & Coggins, 2013). The way to improve learning is not through micromanagement from administration, but rather through teacher leadership (Wallace Foundation, 2010). The leadership for teachers must be real though in a true collaborative environment. There must be a true shared sense of decision-making and shared responsibility for results (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

In the area of climate and organization, a higher rate of teacher retention is found in schools that have a high degree of collegiality, innovation, and professional community (Allensworth, 2009; Krasnoff, 2015). Professional development that is collaborative time with fellow students helped teachers feel more job satisfaction and confidence with not feeling so isolated (Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013).

Administrators from high performance cultures create a sense of respect and trust with the irreplaceables within these schools by using the low-cost strategies. These school administrators also are much less tolerant of ineffective teaching than schools with poor school cultures. Superstar teachers don't leave schools that are demanding and hold high expectations (Jacob, et al 2012).

### **Organizational Structure**

School structure affects teacher retention (Allensworth, 2009). Teachers move at a higher rate from schools with declining enrollment, perhaps because they are assigned more extra duties. Teachers move from smaller school to larger schools (Allensworth, 2009). Social factors

influence teacher retention in that teachers have a higher rate of retention in affluent schools and a lower rate in poverty schools. Teachers tend to leave schools that have problems with discipline and safety (Allensworth, 2009; Krasnoff, 2015).

Teachers that work in high-poverty schools are fifteen percent more likely to leave their schools each year, while only ten percent of those teaching at low-poverty schools leave (Ingersoll, 2003). Teachers leave the profession as well as move to other schools (Ingersoll, 2001). Many studies have found that finding a better teaching assignment is the number one reason for transferring (Luekens et al., 2004). Teachers that have more than one grade or subject assignments are more likely to leave than those with a single assignment (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). It was found that 19 percent of elementary teachers teaching more than one grade left after one year compared to only 6.7 percent of those that taught a single grade. Secondary teachers with multiple subject assignments were also more likely to leave after one year although they weren't as likely to transfer as elementary teachers (Donaldson, 2008).

### **Working Conditions**

Working conditions play a large role in teachers transferring or leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2003). Teachers who transferred cited a better teaching assignment as the deciding factor 38 percent of the time. Equally important in their decision was dissatisfaction with the workplace conditions (32.7 percent) and not getting support from administration (37.2 percent). Retirement, as a reason for leaving, is not the primary reason for teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2003).

While we struggle with the reasons for teachers leaving the profession, we do know there are huge costs for school systems when teachers leave schools. Around 157,000 teachers in our

country leave the profession each year while more than 232,000 additional teachers change schools in the pursuit of better working conditions (Ingersoll, 2003). The better working conditions are usually found in wealthier schools. This amounts to around 12 percent of our total United States workforce (2003).

## **Human Resources**

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), it is estimated that individual urban schools spend \$70,000 per year just on costs associated with teacher transfers. District office costs are estimated at \$33,000 for non-urban schools and \$6,000-\$9,000 when teachers leave the district entirely (Barnes, Crowe & Schaefer, 2007). The Department of Labor estimated that attrition costs to a district is 30% of a departing teacher's salary. It pays to find why and how we can improve the retention rates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Teachers move to other jobs for more money, better working conditions, and greater intrinsic rewards. If other school districts or other professions offer these incentives, teachers will leave (Guarino, Santibanez & Daley, 2006).

While evidence shows it is very difficult to make the salary for teachers competitive with the private sector (Shields & Lewis, 2012), school districts need to make salary as competitive as they possibly can. Daniel Pink suggests that, "Effective organizations compensate people in amounts and in ways that allow individuals to mostly forget about compensation and instead focus on the work itself" (2011). When salaries are satisfactory, creativity and performance can go up. But if salaries aren't at a satisfactory level, it becomes front and center (Pink, 2011).

School Districts normally recruit teachers by providing a salary schedule and possibly some information about the district itself. Districts should add a more complete set of offerings

that would reflect the needs of the employer and employee. This would include not only salary and benefits, but also professional growth opportunities, life-work balance structures, and recognition. It would have information on the quality of leadership, opportunities for teamwork and general demands for the job (Shields & Lewis, 2012).

## **Intangibles**

Having a narrow view of what the job entails will make it very difficult for school districts to compete with the private sector. So much of what education brings to the table are the intangibles that need to be stated in order to recruit and retain our best teachers (Shields & Lewis, 2012). MetLife found that teacher job satisfaction is at a lowest level ever found in the history of the twenty year plus survey (2013).

While it is true that teachers are not motivated only by salary, the money does need to be competitive to recruit and retain the very best. It is very difficult when the top 20% of students coming into college do not believe that teaching offers a salary that is commensurate with their skill level. Only one in three think teaching would pay enough to support a family and over half believe garbage collectors would earn more (Shields & Lewis, 2012).

Urban schools across the country are facing a teacher retention crisis, but the crisis is that schools are unable to recruit and retain the right teachers. The teachers that are nearly impossible to replace, are termed the “Irreplaceables” (Jacob, et al 2012). Irreplaceable teachers in this category help students achieve five-six months of learning over the students of low-performing teachers. It takes eleven hires to find just one irreplaceable that a school loses (Jacob, et al 2012).

40% of teachers that have more than seven years of teaching experience are less effective than the average first-year teacher. But schools routinely continue to try to help these teachers

improve rather than coaching them out of the profession. Low-performing teachers are retained by administrators at about the same rate as their superstars. The familiar result of keeping this many struggling teachers is that schools basically are stagnant in their improvement (Jacob, et al 2012).

When principals give teachers at least two low-cost strategies out of the following eight identified retention strategies, irreplaceable teacher retention went up over six years longer than if they received none (Jacob, et al, 2012). These strategies include providing regular, positive feedback, identifying areas of development, giving critical feedback, recognizing accomplishments publicly, informing the teacher they are a high-performer, and identifying opportunities or paths to teacher leader roles. They also include putting the high performers in charge of something important and providing the teacher with access to additional classroom resources (Jacob, et al 2012).

### **Local District**

Within the local district, retaining teachers is and has been a very difficult endeavor. Over 10% of the teaching staff leaves the district each year and many are novice teachers. This does not include the number of staff that moves between buildings (SS High District Board Minutes, 2015). There is not only a cost to hire new staff, but also a cost for those that move. Each building has an improvement plan that takes time and resources to implement. When a teacher leaves or moves to a different school within the district the individual school and its student suffer.

In order to increase the number of students taught by great teachers, it is going to take a number of new goals and policies. These would include increasing the recruitment of high-

potential teachers and increasing the dismissal rate for ineffective teachers. It would also include creating an opportunities for top teachers to achieve more by paying them according to their worth, eliminating non-instructional duties, having them teach multiple classes with other teachers supporting them, and to remotely teach more students through the use of technology. While the precise formula for combining technology strategies with instructional strategies in order to more fully utilize our best teachers is unknown, it is certainly a way we can improve student achievement in our schools (Hassel & Hassel, 2010).

### **History of SS High School**

School climate and culture is tough to define at times, but it certainly is tied to the history and existing characteristics of the students, staff, and community where the school is located. There isn't a single proven strategy to improve a school climate, but if the strategies selected to implement are proven, intentional, and tied to the local characteristics they will greatly improve the school. In high schools, part of the local characteristics that will positively or negatively drive a school are their sports teams and academic programs (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014).

### **The Age of Innocence**

SS High was originally built in 1904. The following year the local Board of Education decided to hire a Superintendent from a neighboring district to establish a high school in the area (Foley, 2009). At the time the high school was being formed, there were four grammar schools serving the area. Until the high school was created, there weren't any ties to bind the area of the town together. The new school was created and became the glue or hub that created the strong community that has existed over the past 100 plus years. (Foley, 2009).

The school district planned to someday make the school a 20 room school house. The high school had four grades to begin, 5-9 and was called the “school on the hill,” or *Wahwahlanawah*. The name of the high school was later changed, but for the purposes of this paper will be called Southside High, or SS High. Each year, the school added a grade until the first class graduated in 1911. The building overlooked a large part of the city that included large packing houses, stockyards, and various industries that in many ways symbolized the hard work ethic the students have been known for through the years. It was said that “no youth could attend the school even a day without realizing the significance of those big industries and the appropriateness of their prominence in the view of the institution, which they caused to exist” (Foley, 2009).

When the new principal opened the doors the first day, he was greeted by only six high school students. The Board of Education expressed disappointment at the small ninth grade enrollment, noting with some sarcasm that “...it is possible that the patrons of the area do not understand that high school work is to be done at the new school (Foley, 2009).” By the next school year, the building had 19 students, and by 1907 the building was up to 45 students (Foley, 2009)

Manual training with a start of one set of tools and a workbench began at the school in 1907. Domestic science, today’s Families and Consumer Science, also began around this time. As the school grew, more rooms were needed. In 1908, the Board decided to add four rooms to the building. It was about this time that red and white became the official colors of the school (Wahwahlanawah, 1911).

In 1910, a business department was added to the school and it became accredited with the

state college. Enrollment was now at 140 students and the first class from the school graduated in the spring of 1911 with a total of 12 graduates. This was also the first year and first publication of their yearbook. Quite interestingly, by the fall of 1914 there were 73 graduates from the school and 18 of them were enrolled at the state college (Wahwahlanawah, 1921).

The first club to form at the school was created by the girls of the sophomore class called the *Polyhymnia Literary Society* in 1909. It was created with the intent of “improving the mind and to develop a taste for good literature.” It was also a goal of the group to “learn to live in harmony with each other, not only in club life, but in school life and home life also.” In order to join the club, you had to have a 90% in English. (Wahwahlanawah, 1920).

The school has always been known for their strong athletic teams. The first team to play for the school was actually a girl’s basketball team in 1908, followed closely by a boy’s team. The boy’s basketball team captured the first city championship in 1909 and was also the first sport to finish undefeated which they did in the 1911 season, finishing 9-0. Also in 1911, the school had an enrollment of 140 and published a yearbook for the first time (Wahwahlanawah, 1936).

Much like today, sports play a huge role at the school. For the first time in this area of the city, the schools had something that united the people. As the school’s first decade came to a close it was said that a big reason for the success of the school and its students was the close relationship the teachers enjoyed with their students. It was expected that teachers attend any function of the school and its students. Students, staff, and the community took great pride in the school and its success. The teacher’s’ success came from not only their knowledge and skills, but also from the outstanding role model they presented and long hours of advising, tutoring, and

getting to know their students (Wahwahlanawah, 1936).

Life was good at the school in its first decade. But it was a decade of innocence that would be severely shaken with the looming war. World War I reinforced the idea to most Americans that we were not to be the gatekeeper for world peace. Most Americans believed that evil came from outside our boundaries and that the only way to move forward was to isolate ourselves from the world. The war also destroyed the ability of the United States to assimilate all men like they were able to do pre-war. Each of these changes to American way of thinking impacted schools and their future (This Fabulous Century, 1969).

### **Post World War I**

With many Americans making more money after the war, education also saw a major change. The greatest change came to high schools. Between 1920-1930, enrollment in high schools doubled nationally. Fewer students had to drop out to work. Finishing high school became almost universal during this time for middle-class families in the United States (Foley, 2009).

More Americans going to high school caused a profound effect on the nature of the high school. Prior to this age, high schools were for the most part intended for students to prepare for college. Now, schools were full of students that had no intention whatsoever of going to college. Schools did not react successfully with this change. For the most part, they kept the same curriculum but watered it down. They did create more vocational courses but most had little relevance to what they would see post-high school (Foley, 2009).

In 1920, the Booster Club was formed at the school with the intent of uniting support of the students and teachers for school activities. It was also a goal of the club to award letters, medals,

sweaters, and cups to deserving athletes. The ROTC was also started at the school during this period. While this didn't require students to further pursue the military, it was meant to help prepare our nation for future wars and to help those involved to advance quicker through the ranks of the military (Wahwahlanawah, 1920).

Enrollment at the school reached 250 in 1920, rose to 370 by 1927, and 472 by 1928. The track team won the state championship in 1928-29, the first for any of the city teams. The school also became a Junior-Senior high with the addition of grades, becoming a 7-12 school (Foley, 2009). The new school motto, which beat Nike to the punch, was "If it's good for our school, do it." Many new clubs were added including the national honor society (Foley, 2009).

During this time, the school also added band, a boys' glee club, biology, trigonometry, and speech in 1930-1931. The enrollment rose to 886 students by 1930. The sports teams continued to do very well. The boys' basketball team won the state title in 1931, the first for any city school (Wahwahlanawah, 1931).

The building would open up the 1939-1940 school year with 1,011 students in grades 9-12. The school also had a guidance committee create a comprehensive curriculum guide for the first time to help guide students. The homeroom teachers would help guide the students as they created their *play of study*. Teachers would also advise students one-on-one during their free periods, called counseling students (Foley, 2009). Technology also came to the school in the form of "Victrolas" which would allow students to hear things like famous plays (Foley, 2009).

The board of education gave \$7,711 for a tract of land in 1938 for the purpose of building a new school. The land was actually purchased by the Public Works Administration (PWA), a government agency that was part of FDR's New Deal. This purchase of land was the very last

purchase made by this agency (Foley, 2009). In 1939, toward the end of the depression, the school enrolled 1,011 students and started utilizing a guidance counselor as more students were thinking of college instead of jumping right into the job market (Foley, 2009).

The students walked down the hill to their new building on March 21, 1940. It was a magnificent structure 320 feet long, 3 stories above grade. The building faced a scenic roadway and had parking and the athletic field on the east, same as today. The building was designed for 1100 students and it was understood that the elementary and high school that were now next to each other would now educate children from kindergarten through high school. The total cost for the new high school was over \$400,000 (Foley, 2009).

## **Post World War II**

No event in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century did more to unite the United States more than WWII. The stamina, resolve, and determination of the American people overwhelmed the AXIS powers. All Americans wanted to do their part in the war effort and did (Foley, 2009).

During WWII, adolescents for the first time became known as teenagers. Prior to this, the group was mainly living somewhere between grammar school and the job market. Teenagers for the first time filled jobs vacated by those in the war and also for the first time had a little money to spend. This opened up a whole new market for merchandisers. It also created a new group that today creates most of our pop culture. Clothing styles became important to teens with the goal of setting themselves apart from adults. This included bobby sox, pleated skirts, blue jeans rolled up, knee high socks, and leaving the shirt tail hanging out (Foley, 2009).

The most important event in the school during the decade was when the district became the first in the nation to end racial segregation following the Brown vs. Board of Education

ruling in 1954. The school had 27 black students enroll for the 1954 fall semester (Foley, 2009). The school also won a prestigious sportsmanship award for the fourth year in a row due to the outstanding sportsmanship displayed at events (Foley, 2009).

The school for the first time in its history closed school due to a snowstorm in January of 1957. During that year they also pioneered a seven-period day as well as began the requirement of four years of English for every graduate. The enrollment of the school on the first day of school in the fall of 1959 was 808. The technology was also moving along as the school purchased two 24" television sets to bring into the auditorium so students could watch the John F. Kennedy inauguration (Foley, 2009).

Americans quickly came to love the educated, cultured, wealthy, and good looking President Kennedy and his wife Jackie. They portrayed a charming and vigorous couple that created a romanticism in the U.S. that soon came to be known as "Camelot." President Kennedy's "New Frontier" brought a new hope to young America which promised to bring a new age of equal treatment to all and end discrimination once and for all (Foley, 2009). Perhaps his most famous quote as he challenged people to help out in the country and world was, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" (Foley, 2009). President Kennedy also helped build such programs as the Peace Corps to help the poor in third world countries and "put a man on the moon by the end of the decade" (Foley, 2009).

All of this came to a screeching halt on November 22, 1963 when Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, TX. The hope that President Kennedy brought to the citizens and especially the youth seemed to end abruptly. With the questions that surrounded his death, many started to question the government for the first time. That lack of trust with government and to a degree schools has

carried over and compounded until the present (Foley, 2009).

## **Social Unrest**

The assassinations of Kennedy, his brother Robert, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X led to desperate times. Riots and assassinations defined the 1960's. Each of the men assassinated brought hope to many, but despair in their deaths which led to a more radical age in America. The one event of the 1960's that excited Americans was the landing on the moon by Neil Armstrong on July 20, 1969. Most Americans can remember this event as "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" (Foley, 2009).

The decade of the sixties began with 870 students enrolled in the school and rose to almost 1,100 by the mid to late sixties and 1300 by 1975 (Foley, 2009). During this time, major changes came to student's dress and hair. Girls skirts got shorter as men's hair got longer. The mini skirt and bell bottoms were debuting in schools across the country (Foley, 2009).

The 1970's might best be remembered for its fashions. Men's hair continued to get longer, but the skirt also got longer. Men wore polyester leisure suits with their long sideburns. The end of the decade saw a really radical look, the punk style with shaved heads, dyed hair, and bright colors. It was all done to offend those in power (Foley, 2009).

Male students at the school could wear sideburns under the dress code, but could not have any other facial hair. Girls weren't allowed to have skirts higher than five inches above the knee (Foley, 2009). Students became upset with the policy of closed lunches where students weren't allowed to leave the school, so they staged a "hunger strike" at the school in 1970 (Foley, 2009).

The school was not immune to the energy crisis going on in the country. Lights were

turned down in all hallways and thermostats turned down as well to conserve energy. In 1973, construction on a new football field began. Girls were first allowed into ROTC during the same year. Also, for the first time since 1927, girls' interscholastic sports were put back into place with the addition of golf, tennis, track, and basketball. As stated previously, the previous girls' basketball team won three out of three city titles and were undefeated. The following year, the physical education classes became co-ed for the first time. Volleyball was added again four years later. (Foley, 2009).

The enrollment reached 1,213 in the fall of 1975. The school continued to upgrade technology during the decade with the use of bank computers to schedule and organize student information. Students now had a number instead of a name within the system. Concerns over absenteeism resulted in a new policy in 1976-77 school year. If students had 10 days of unexcused absences, they would receive a failing grade in that class. If they had three-six absences, grades would be lowered by one point. If they had seven-nine absences, grades would be lowered by two points. For the first time, Saturday school and in-school suspension was introduced for students that earned the consequence (Foley, 2009).

### **Late 20th Century**

The 1980's was a decade of "me." It was a decade of binge buying, high credit, video games, and mini vans. Families continued the trend of more divorces and more two-earner households. It was the beginning of the soccer mom generation with moms constantly taking kids to various organized activities. It was also the age of personal computers with many using computers for the first time at their work, home, business, or school (Foley, 2009).

During the early 80's, the school's athletic success was very low in most every sport.

Morale was low, student apathy was high. There were two editorials in 1981 issue of the school paper which wrote about the lack of spirit among students. Pep assemblies weren't enjoyed by students who had "apathetic students and spiritless students." Some blamed the apathy on the "me" generation (Foley, 2009).

The school began offering computer classes in 1982, about the same time the compact disc and the "mouse" was introduced to the world. Following the computer classes, three years later the school opened their first computer labs that had 30 Apple IIe computers and 10 printers. For three years in a row the school dominated the area Industrial Arts contests winning seven of the top 25 awards with over 900 projects entered. It was the start of a period of dominance for this program within the school.

On a more positive note, the school re-introduced an honors program during the 1983-1984 school-year. In 1985 the school began to monitor students' attendance hourly instead of daily due to new state guidelines. Also in 1985, the area accrediting agency suggested a few changes at Benton. One was to have department chairs meet with the Principal once a month to help make improvements to the school, the first job at a collaborative leadership team. Another was to appoint someone to be the activities coordinator for the school. They implemented both suggestions (Foley, 2009).

The world became a much smaller place during the 1990's with the internet, cell phones, fax machines, and pagers that allowed instant communication from anywhere in the world. For the first time, television lost viewers due to the popularity of the internet (Foley, 2009).

Schools were not immune to the violence. Militias were reaching large audiences with the internet and school violence skyrocketed. Incidents in schools in Kentucky, Arkansas, Oregon,

and Colorado resulted in many deaths while instilling fear into the rest of the nation. About the same time of the terrible Columbine incident in Colorado, the district added school resource officers to help keep the buildings safe. Along with this, the students for the first time were asked to wear ID tags to school. Security camera were also added to help keep students and staff safe while at school. Times were definitely changing (Foley, 2009).

SS High School Alumni also continued to be a big source of pride for the school. One such student attended the school as a ninth grader in 1927. He didn't have enough money to pay the \$35 enrollment fee collected at the time, so the Dean of Women at the time paid the fee for the young man so he could attend school. The next year, the student left the area to move to California. 70 years later, the man gave a \$261,000 gift to the school to be used for student scholarships to pay for that loan. A few alumni put the school in the spotlight, one who was part of the 1992 and 1996 U. S. Olympic team, another who began his NFL career in the late 90's (Foley, 2009).

## **21st Century**

The twenty-first century didn't start off too well for the United States. The Y2K scare led it off with many American's stocking up huge stockpiles of supplies in fear of the computers all crashing, ending life as we knew it. The presidential election of 2000 ended in a virtual tie, the first time that had happened since 1876. It was decided finally by the Supreme Court who awarded the victory to George W. Bush even though Al Gore had more popular votes. So while Bush won the election, it created a division between the parties that frustrated most that wanted anything done. On September 11, 2001 the United States was attacked by Islamic terrorists called Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden that would forever change our world. And then in

February of 2003, the space shuttle Columbia exploded, killing all seven astronauts including a teacher (Foley, 2009).

The music department also became very strong, winning numerous state awards over the next fifteen years. The A+ program began at the school in 2000. This program helps students pay for college if they can maintain attendance, grades, and perform some community service. In 2001, a new family and consumer science room was added to the school as well as an addition to the smaller gymnasium at the school (Foley, 2009). Later in the decade, a Fieldhouse was added up by the athletic field and the science rooms were remodeled on the third floor of the building.

Athletics were not too good early in the decade, but picked up over the following ten years. The athletic programs continue to be a large part of the culture which brings the community together. In 2004, the football team finished number three in the state. Baseball finished fourth in the state during 2005, then went on to win the state championship in 2007. The most successful program over the period belonged to the girls' basketball team, the team that was actually the very first program in the history of the school, back in 1905. In 2003, the team finished third in state. They moved to the state playoffs several times over the next dozen years, even winning the state championship in both 2007 and 2016 (MSHSAA, 2016).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

While it is known that finding teachers and retaining them is increasingly difficult, less known is why teachers stay in the profession (Gregorian, 2012). School leaders talk about the difficulty of retaining teachers and districts embrace well-articulated goals trying to ensure teachers remain in their district; however, many teachers still leave districts for various reasons

(Office of Postsecondary Education, 2013). This same situation exists in SS High. A bounded case study design was used to determine factors as to why teachers stay in the building and the profession (Creswell, 2009).

The methodology used to speak to the research questions in this study is described within this section. First the research questions will be discussed, then the description of the study followed by the narrative of the population and sample. The collection method and data analysis procedures will also be detailed followed by the role of the researcher, trustworthiness, limitations, and assumptions. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the summary of methodology.

### **Research Purpose**

School districts are challenged to bring in high quality teachers and challenged further to keep teachers from leaving the district and even the profession (Kronholz, 2013). In order for educators to be able to best educate students, high quality teachers must be retained. In order to retain the best instructors, the motivating factors on why teachers remain in place must be determined.

The purpose of this study was to provide an urban Midwestern school information concerning perceptions of teachers as to why they continue to teach, more specifically in the school building being researched. The study sought to find reasons for why teachers stay in the profession as well as why they stay in the specific building in the study or whether that is a factor at all. The results from the study adds to the body of research available on motivation and satisfiers for teachers, especially in this urban Midwestern school building.

## **Research Questions**

The guiding question for this researcher and the study was to explore teachers' perceptions as to why they stay in teaching and more specifically stay in their current building? This led to two subquestions used to determine teacher views on why they remain in teaching.

1. What are the reasons you have remained in teaching at SS High School?
2. Based on other teachers in our district or building, what are reasons for moving to another building?

## **Design for the Study**

The proposed study will use a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach to research allows for the exploration of a problem and where inductive and deductive methods are used to gather data that can only be collected by talking to people (Creswell, 2013). The goal of qualitative research is to make sense of the meaning people assign a problem and how that meaning relates to the existing literature (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) has outlined the following four philosophical assumptions made by researchers conducting a qualitative study:

- a. The ontological assumption that qualitative research embraces multiple realities;
- b. The epistemological assumption that qualitative researchers gain valuable knowledge through getting to know the research participants;
- c. The axiological assumption that the researcher makes their own values transparent within a qualitative study; and
- d. The methodological assumption that the procedures of qualitative research are shaped by the researcher's experiences with the data.

The school building wanted to know why teachers stay and why some leave. The

research design is a descriptive case study that emerged from this concern. A bounded case study format was used since only one school building was used in the study. In a case study the researcher explores in depth something such as individuals within a program or environment (Creswell, 2009). In order to study a real-life problem in depth, it is recommended to use the case study method (Yin, 2009). The researcher used semi-structured interviews and a focus group while taking observation notes. These were all triangulated with analysis of unobtrusive documents. The data was then coded to find themes that emerged from the inductive method (Creswell, 2009).

The qualitative strategy called constructivist worldview was used by this researcher in this descriptive case study. This research aims to find meaning from individuals and this strategy assumes people derive meaning from their everyday experiences while living their lives within the home and workplace. A constructivist works to find meaning using the contexts of people's lives and their experiences within their world. Open-ended questions are used as the researcher listens carefully to participants' responses (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher was the primary instrument in data collection and descriptive data that emerged using the constructivist theory of qualitative research which utilizes the natural setting where the actual events and activities of the interviewees occurred (Creswell, 2009). The questions and procedures within the study emerged as is typical in a qualitative research. Data was collected in the participants' setting and analysis was built inductively from specific to general themes as interpreted by the researcher (Creswell, 2009).

### **Participants and Sampling Procedures**

The proposed research site is an urban high school serving approximately 800 students

and is located in the Midwest region of the United States. The surrounding school community is largely blue-collar and transient with a major pork plant being the primary employer. Four years ago the administrative team was replaced due to a negative school culture, lagging scores on state and national assessments, and a lack of confidence by the community and central office administration. Since that time about half of the certified staff positions have turned over, however the school culture and support from the surrounding community has dramatically improved.

This researcher will use convenience sampling for the proposed study. Convenience sampling allows the researcher the ability to easily access and collect data from a specific site (Creswell, 2007). Participants will consist of teachers belonging to the same building ranging in experience from novice to over 25 years teaching. All participants are certified teachers in a 9-12, public high school located in a Midwest, urban school district.

The recruitment strategy for this study is straightforward and based on volunteer participants from various experience groups within SS High. Initial thoughts on recruitment efforts focused on the schools within the local school district. However, further consideration of the necessity of the strong relationships and trust required for a successful narrative inquiry refocused plans for recruitment on this researcher's own school site (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Relationships of trust between all participants and the researcher have been previously established diminishing the time necessary to build relationships suitable to the study's purpose. All possible participants will be required to review an explanation of the study and the criteria, as explained in the Informed Consent (Appendix B).

Initial contact with teacher participants will occur through a letter of invitation (Appendix

B) whereupon appointments will be made with those who agree to participate in the study; informed consent will be obtained (Appendix C). While 100% participant anonymity cannot be guaranteed, pseudonyms will be assigned at the time of data collection to ensure it will not be possible for comments or dialogue to be tied to a specific participant. Identifying data such as school district name, colleague names, some professional background information, and particular dates will also be omitted or changed.

Biographical information as well as information pertaining to education background and professional experience will be obtained through the interview process. Each participant will describe their professional history leading to their current teaching position. This information is relevant to understanding the people, place, and events as an ongoing process and always in transition. Understanding the sociality of the participants reveals their “existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form each individual’s context” (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007, p. 23).

### **Data Collection**

The focus of qualitative research is how participants understand their own experiences they live, so the researcher must try to understand many realities. The researcher, who is the main ingredient in the qualitative process, gathers information from various sources including interviews, observations, and documents rather than just one source (Creswell, 2009). This section will explain the various methods of data collection including the documents, artifacts, interviews and focus groups.

All data for this study was taken from a purposefully selected site (Creswell, 2009). Interviews with teachers were made up of open-ended questions that were controlled by the

researcher (Creswell, 2009). One focus group was created from the pool of teachers with experience over ten years. Any follow-up questions were done through email and agreed to by the participants. Data collected during the study was examined and analyzed inductively in order to find emergent general themes.

Mutually agreed upon settings and times for interviews and the focus group will be set through email, phone, or personal contact. The setting will be in a protected environment that is convenient to both the participant and the researcher.

## **Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews with teachers were conducted in quiet spaces in SS High for approximately one hour each. Focused, semi-structured interviews were used in which Yin (2009) describes as the researcher using guiding questions that allows for the participant to go in various directions but still open to probing from the researcher (Hatch, 2002). Focus group and interview protocol was used from the work from Krueger and Casey (2009). Each participant signed the Informed Letter of Consent (Appendix B) and a copy given to each participant's request. Each participant was allowed to read the transcribed interview to make any changes they wanted to make. The interviewer also told the participants that the recording and transcript would be kept in a secure location for seven years along with contact information for any further inquiries or concerns that could arise. The interviewer used a list of prepared questions for teachers (Appendix C) that served as a guide. The interviewer listened intently, asking probing or follow-up questions to explore statements further. Each interview was recorded in its entirety. Interviews were designed to find perceptions why participants stayed in teaching or what reasons might propel them or acquaintances to leave the building or profession. At the conclusion of the

interview, the interviewee ended by asking for any further information and thanking each participant for their time in this important study (Hatch, 2002). All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim after the interviews were finished.

### **Focus Group**

A focus group was conducted using teachers who had over ten years service teaching at SS High. The Informed Letter of Consent (Appendix B) was signed by each participant and each was given a copy. The semi-structured, focused, face-to-face discussion protocol was used with the guided questions to help maintain focus. Head nodding, short verbal responses, and humor was used by the researcher as Krueger and Casey (2009) suggested. The researcher used probing, clarifying questions when needed to follow up or expand on focus group participant responses. All questions used were clear and open ended to allow good discussion without confusion (Fink, 2009). When the questions were over, the researcher asked if there was anything that was missed allowing each participant to add anything they believed wasn't stated. This was followed by thanking the participants for giving up valuable time and energy to help in this important study. The focus group was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim after the interview.

### **Documents and Artifacts**

Various documents and artifacts were collected and analyzed in order to triangulate data with the interviews and focus group. Documents and various artifacts can be used when convenient and are useful as written evidence (Creswell, 2009). Unobtrusive data was acquired from the district and building including teacher retention policies and teacher tenure records. The advantage of using the many sources of evidence is to gather a convergent theme of triangulation and corroboration (Yin, 2009).

## **Human Subjects Protection and Other Ethical Considerations**

No participants were put at risk. Agreement to the study was obtained from the Superintendent or their designee prior to the study. The Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Missouri reviewed and approved the research plan. Creswell states that the IRB ensures that all human subject research at the University of Missouri complies with all federal regulations in regards to human rights (2009).

Each participant read and signed an Informed Letter of Consent (Appendix B) that explained that participants rights would be protected during data collection. This was reviewed and questions answered with each participant again at the beginning of each interview or focus group. Hatch explains this allows participants the opportunity to make sure they aren't being pressured or compelled to participate (2002). It was explained to the participants that the transcriptions would be kept in a secure location for seven years after the study, then destroyed.

It was important to keep each participant protected and confidential, mainly so they were free to talk freely without fear of retribution or reprisal. For these reasons, pseudonyms were used for each participant. After transcriptions were made, participants were allowed to review and change data for any errors or corrections.

## **Data Analysis**

All recordings from the interviews and focus group was sent to an outside source for transcription. Subsequently, they were reviewed by the researcher to ensure accuracy. The researcher then analyzed the transcripts to identify and code worthy statements which later became patterns that emerged. An email was sent to each participant to ensure accuracy in what they said in the interview or focus group. The interviews and focus group data was coded and

categorized using open and axial coding (Creswell, 2009). Patterns that emerged were identified and aligned with the research questions and then interpreted into emergent themes that were described in detail by the researcher in Chapter 4 findings.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As an administrator in the building where the research is taking place, the researcher is aware of the importance to the education of the building and community's students on recruiting and retaining a first-class staff. The researcher also has a professional and personal relationship with every participant in the study. The researcher made a conscious effort to make staff members feel absolutely free to speak freely, whether that means putting down current administration or not, to ensure the reliability of the results. Every effort was made to make certain that each participant's name was masked so they remain anonymous without fear of retaliation.

### **Trustworthiness**

Any study's findings are only as valuable as you can trust them. Each study must be evaluated for trustworthiness to find its worth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order for a study to be worthy, the findings based on the design, participant responses, and context must be true.

### **Credibility**

Creswell states that the researcher must use techniques to establish credibility or validity by using triangulation of the data through the interviews, focus groups, and other unobtrusive data as well as using member-checking and a rich description (2009). Member-checking allows for any mistakes in the transcription or interpretation by the participants to ensure the study is

using the correct data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By triangulating the sources, the researcher can check the consistency of the data sources as well (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Providing rich descriptions of the process, setting, and the participants within the writing process will support credibility as well (Creswell, 2009).

### **Dependability**

The researcher checked the transcripts to make sure there were no obvious mistakes to improve dependability, or reliability (Creswell, 2009). Other methods used to increase dependability was member-checking and checking to make sure there wasn't any shifting in the coding as the researcher matriculated through the process. Rich descriptions of the data gathering and data analysis process are provided to provide the repeatability of the study (Krefting, 1991). The plan was also checked by the researcher's advisor to ensure dependability (Krefting, 1991).

### **Transferability**

The participants in the study were representative, typical and common among the entire group being studied. The researcher was able to establish the questions for the content of the interviews and focus group that would coincide with the background information on the participants (Krefting, 1991).

### **Confirmability**

Guba (1981) states there are a number of methods that were used to establish confirmability. Methods used included triangulation of data sources along with documentation for interpretation of at least two sources to make sure the findings are consistent with the researcher's analysis and interpretations (Guba, 1981).

## **Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

### **Limitations**

Creswell defines limitations as unforeseen circumstances that are beyond the control of the researcher (2009). Limiting factors within this study includes that all data are self-reported and subjective. If participants are not honest or true in making complete answers to questions, the data will be inaccurate. This study was only done in one school building. The time of year for the study is probably not the best for getting the best answers since it was towards the end of the school year when testing is going on and summer is in the air. Another big limitation is that the researcher is an administrator within the building where the study took place. However, the findings in the research may show that this wasn't a factor.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations of this study dealt with sampling. The school studied is one small school in one urban location in the Midwest. Participants interviewed were a fairly small sample that volunteered to take part in the study, so findings were limited to this school and these individuals. But, it was not the aim of this study to acquire findings for a district or all districts, rather discover research for one building, SS High, as identified in the study.

### **Assumptions**

When interpreting results from the findings, several assumptions should be made. These include that all participants answered honestly, the cultural differences among participants had no impact on the findings, and that participants shared comparable life experiences and external events. The topic of the research was assumed to be worthy to all participants, but this could be

limiting as well.

### **Ethical Principles**

This research was accomplished in an organized, systematic method. Research was granted through the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board. Permission was also granted through the research school Superintendent or their designee. Each and every participant that took part was contacted and volunteered to partake in the study. Each participant signed a consent form (see Appendix B) that disclosed the purpose and nature of the study as well as defined the confidentiality and parameters of the research. Demographic information was collected on a limited basis from the participants.

Survey and focus groups recordings were digitally transcribed by an outside source to help guarantee confidentiality. Maintaining participant confidentiality was paramount throughout the data collection and analysis.

### **Summary**

The research and design methodology in this chapter outlined the bounded case study of an urban, Midwestern school regarding why teachers stay in the profession and in particular, SS High. The purpose of this study was to provide an urban Midwestern school information concerning perceptions of teachers on why they continue to teach, more specifically in the school building being researched. The study sought to find reasons for why teachers stay in the profession as well as why they stay in the specific building in the study or whether that is a factor at all. In order for schools to create real change in student learning, schools must retain their top quality teachers year after year (Hassel & Hassel, 2010).

The results from the study adds to the body of research available on teacher retention and the motivation factors involved in teacher satisfaction as viewed through one urban Midwestern school building. Research questions were created and the case study rationale was expanded upon. Population and sample, along with the tools and procedures to gather data were each defined. The data analysis process was described. Trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability procedures were all explained. Lastly, the issues with confidentiality was outlined along with details of the limitations and assumptions of the research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The shortage of teachers is so pronounced that many jobs are being filled by individuals who haven't even completed the minimum certification requirements (Kronholz, 2013). To make this situation worse, a high percentage of individuals leave the field after less than five years in the classroom (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). The overall number of teachers coming into the field has diminished by 31% from 2008-2013 (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2013). Various studies have found that novice teachers leave in higher numbers than more experienced teachers (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016).

During the past forty years the attrition rate for secondary teachers has grown to over 50% with the turnover rate at almost 17% per year nationally (Teaching and America's Future, 2007). The problem isn't always finding teachers, but rather keeping teachers in our schools. The magnitude of the problem is not just national, but a problem seen in many other countries (Akin, et al 2014). Schools with high-poverty, high-minority, and low-performance make the problem of retention even harder. The inability to retain good teachers correlates with the inability to

close the student achievement gap (Teaching and America's Future, 2007).

Even though much is known about why teachers leave the field (Ingersoll, 2003), not much is known about why teachers remain in the field and in particular, their current building. The results from this study may determine factors affecting job satisfaction, which in turn may impact teacher retention for teachers and should provide policy makers and district administration information to help improve and implement strategies to raise the teacher retention rate. If successful, the district costs should decrease and student learning should improve. The SS High School District needs more data in order to understand and alleviate the issue of decreasing retention of teachers. The reasons why local teachers are satisfied in their current teaching position is currently unknown. Such knowledge should allow for better policy decisions on increasing retention.

This chapter will provide results from analysis of data collected from interviews of ten teachers, a focus group of nine teachers, and a review of school documents. The data from these three sources were coded, organized, and analyzed to find understanding to address the research questions. The following research questions were used to direct the study:

The guiding question for this researcher and the study was to explore teachers' perceptions as to why they stay in teaching and more specifically stay in their current building. This led to two subquestions used to determine teacher views on why they remain in teaching.

1. What are the reasons you have remained in teaching at SS High School?
2. Based on other teachers in our district or building, what are reasons for moving to another building?

This chapter will begin with a description of the setting and introduce the participants involved in the study. Findings include patterns, commonalities, and any discrepancies found in

the study. It also includes themes that emerged from the coding process. Findings are presented within the conceptual framework and research questions. Data transcriptions were analyzed and the themes that emerged will be identified and discussed along with the coding process used to discover the emerging themes. A summary of the findings is also provided.

The data provides numerous examples to support the findings and are provided throughout the chapter. This includes data from interviews, pertinent documents used, and the focus group.

### **Setting for the Case Study**

The long-fathered culture of the school in this study, which for purposes of this study will be called SS High, has existed since 1904. It is one of three high schools in a district of between 10,000-15,000 students. The school building sits in a part of town that once was an American Indian powwow site. The residents of this part of town are mostly blue-collar workers who believe in hard work, and the school's history has a background in manual training and domestic science. While 12 were graduated in 1912, today the school graduates around 200 students each year (Foley, 2009).

SS High has historically dominated industrial technology contests within the state and showed that the student body was still parented by blue collar workers that passed down the need to learn a trade. Enrollment began to slide in the 1990's and the wealth of the area began to decline as large employers of blue collar workers began to leave the community. As the community became poorer, parents and their children did not respect education in the same way as students in the 1940-1980's did. A large pork processing plant is now the major employer in the school community. Teacher retention became more of a problem as the socioeconomic

composition of the school declined (Foley, 2009).

### **Relationship of Researcher to Research**

The researcher grew up going to games with his mother as she was a teacher in the school during the 1970's. The researcher farmed full time after graduating college, then decided to go back into education and did two semesters of practicum at the school including student teaching under the same teacher mentor that his mother student taught under. The researcher then worked at other schools for a number of years in various capacities prior to coming back to the school as the Principal four years ago. Due to the close relationships built over the years working and supporting the school, it was assumed all parties involved in the study would be able to work together to determine reasons teachers stay in the profession and in particular, SS High.

Due to the researcher's background as an administrator, the researcher assumed the importance of teacher retention being extremely important to student success. It was very important to the researcher to remain neutral through the study and to make it voluntary for participants to take part and for that reason continually reflected to ensure a clear focus on making sure participant's reactions sole purpose was the study.

### **Description of Participants**

The goal of the researcher was to gather input from teachers in the building that have been teaching for a minimum of four years and to ensure there was a good cross-section of experience. Teachers with between four-nine years' experience were interviewed individually. Those participants with between 10-30 years tenure were part of the focus group.

The district human resources provided a list of the school's teachers and their years of

service to make sure there was a good cross-section represented. There were ten teachers interviewed and nine teachers that participated in the focus group. All teachers volunteered to be part of the study after being asked to participate through an email. Volunteers also had a letter of confidentiality they reviewed prior to the study and it was assured again that participation was strictly voluntary. The teachers were also from a cross-section of grades taught within the high school and were from most every department in the school.

### **Interview Setting**

Interviews were all held in the school office conference room since it was available and in an air-conditioned environment. Participants seemed to find this a comfortable setting. Participants had various years of experience, but all had remained in the school for a minimum of four years and were coming back the following year. The range of experience teaching in the building ranged up to 30 years experience. Most every department was represented.

### **Interviews and Focus Group**

Open-ended questions were prepared by the researcher for both the interviews and the focus group based on the research questions. The questions asked of each participant were to elicit responses and facilitate understanding of the reasons why they have remained as a teacher in the school for so long and to get their perceptions on why teachers that left did so.

Merriam states (2009) that it is good for the researcher to ask more probing questions as the interviews progress to help fully understand the responses and to further answer the research questions (2009). It is also good to to probe further in order to make sure you are accurately understanding and reflecting what the participant said. After gathering the transcripts of the interviews, the researcher began the process of open and axial coding (Creswell, 2009).

## Data Analysis

Once the interviews and focus group conversations were transcribed, the researcher read the interview and focus group transcriptions, looking for themes, categories, confirmations, and negations. The insights gained during the literature review were kept in mind as the analysis was done. Transcriptions were read and reread to ensure accuracy and to determine importance, frequency, similarities, and differences. A system of coding and categorizing then took place with each transcript. As categories and themes began to take shape, they were formally identified, coded and organized into patterns that emerged. The process was repeated until there was no new data emerging, or the data was “saturated.”

When a researcher uses open code, he is organizing the material into smaller segments before determining meaning (Creswell, 2009). Common words, relevant phrases, and statements were found in the interviews and focus group that pertained to the research questions. The researcher then created categories under which each common theme was grouped. The process was repeated over and over for each interview and focus group. If new categories came up, they were added. The categories that emerged were the following:

- a) Students Care
- b) Positive Relationships
- c) Safety
- d) Department Collaboration
- e) Traditions
- f) Autonomy
- g) Salary

- h) Location
- i) Benefits
- j) Discipline
- k) District Struggles
- l) Family moves
- m) Taking Leadership Positions
- n) Community
- o) Pride in School
- p) Poverty
- q) Lack of Hope, Motivation

After all transcripts and other data had been categorized, themes were identified from the axial coding. Axial coding is taking the categories, or subcategories, and relating them to a single category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The themes were created using the axial coding with the literature review and research questions in mind.

The themes to emerge were: (a) Creating a Positive Culture; (b) Creating a Family Atmosphere, (c) Autonomy, and (d) Limiting Factors. The researcher analyzed the statements that were significant under each of these themes from each interview and focus group conversation. The next section will detail the evidence from the interviews, focus groups, and other documents used to support the findings.

### **Findings from the Data**

Four themes emerged after triangulation and coding: (a) Creating a Positive Culture; (b) Creating a Family Atmosphere, (c) Autonomy, and (d) Limiting Factors, along with subthemes.

The themes and subthemes that emerged were the product of this case study that included individual interviews, a focus group, and the review of pertinent documents. Analysis of the data has given a glimpse of what teachers believe are the reasons teachers stay in teaching and stay at SS High.

### **Theme 1: Creating a Positive Culture**

The first theme to emerge from interviews, the focus group, observation, and documentation was how important having a positive culture is to teachers when deciding whether they like working in the building. Further examination revealed three subthemes: a) student's care; b) positive relationships with students; and c) safety.

**Sub-Theme: Caring Students.** The interviews and focus group revealed time after time how caring the students at SS High are and how important that is to teachers. DR states that students are very genuine. When she talks to her students, she stated, "I feel like they care about me. Like, they'll ask me questions about me and actually care about their teachers." She also said she believes most teachers love the students at SS High.

Sky stated, "I really love my students. I really appreciate their honesty. Sometimes it's a little blunt, but they're definitely honest." Students are what he says brings him back to school each day. Part of the students' attitude could be because of where the students are coming from. The school is very low socioeconomically according to Peter. "It's very poor. I think that hurts our student achievement to a certain degree." He also states that there is a unique aspect to the school in that while the school has a high percentage of special education students, "the students at this school are very caring. They take good care of those kids. They're very receptive to them, very inclusive of them, and I'd say it's a good place."

Art remains at SS high because she loves both the staff and students in the school. But another reason is that she knows the students can do it. She fully believes in the students at every level. “That’s what keeps me here, just the success of the students that we have here, and the staff. We’ve had staff go on to do great things, but I just think we can be the best too,” she said.

Butch mentioned that the students are so respectful of others. When he first came to the school, he was shocked when during an assembly, there was a teacher speaking at the podium, and then the bell rang. Instead of seeing a mass exodus, the students remained in their seats until the assembly was over before leaving. He is constantly amazed at how the students in the school have such a great tolerance for students who are “different,” or have special needs.

Z, who has a special needs son that graduated from SS High and still volunteers in the school every day and at most events, echoed these sentiments. He stated that the reason he has stayed so long is because of the way the students and staff at SS High have embraced his son and his family over these past years. Z said, “that is the beauty of this school. Southside people love everybody, it doesn’t matter if they are special needs or not.”

Kit has seen many kids come from other parts of town to the southside school. She stated, regardless of what their reasoning is, when they leave, one of the things I’ve learned, cause I still live in midtown, so I run into these kids all the time, and that’s the one thing they talk about is they were glad they came here, because they felt welcomed. They had attended other schools and didn’t feel as welcomed. They felt the teachers cared, they went an extra mile, they called the parent even when they thought the parent might not help.

**Sub-Theme: Positive Relationships.** Research indicates the importance of having

positive relationships and it becomes even more important in schools with high poverty. Sky states, “through the building I think kids feel supported, I think most kids have at least one teacher they can turn to.”

DR found SS High to be eye opening as another teacher who came from a white collar suburban life as a child. She came into the profession with grand ideas and believed it would be just like her own experience as a student growing up. DR states, “I was so used to and accustomed to that life, I think it’s very humbling and eye opening and I’m appreciative to get to know these kids and have a good relationship with them because I know that they need that. They need a good role model because I don’t think they have that very often, with the students we have here.”

DR also feels the school’s counselors do a great job dealing with all the issues that come up. She said there are lots of tough, personal issues that come up with students often which makes it tough on classroom learning. But she is happy that the staff is so supportive of students and all their issues and believes that most every student has someone in the building they feel comfortable in going to with issues they might have.

Teachers go out of their way at SS High to ensure every student is touched in a positive way according to Peter. “I witness on a daily basis here teachers trying to help kids perform, whether it be socially, academically, even sometimes to a certain degree spiritually. I think we create a culture around here where we have high expectations in terms of moral standards, we hold kids to expectations. At the end of the day I see a lot of people around here constantly talking to kids about their future.”

Ape believes sometimes the school gets a bad rap. She stated, “They grow up fighting,

they grow up drinking. They grow up in drugs. But when you get to school and you see the students and you interact with them, I think it's totally different than what people think. I do think the students have it a little bit harder. They don't have a lot of money, but once you get past that, they're just students who want someone to care for them. They test you when you first get here, but once they start building relationships with you, it's a family."

SS High does a good job with relationships according to Will. "I think culturally that's something that we do pretty well here is to try to foster those (positive relationships)." HTrain called the students very challenging, but after the school tightened down the screws and drew attention to the positive actions of the school, it has improved greatly.

**Sub-Theme: Safety.** Any administrator will tell you one of their primary tasks is to keep the students as safe as they can. Parents send their children to school and expect them to remain safe. One subtheme that emerged is how important safety is to both teachers and students. Sky believes students feel safe. He states, "Otherwise, we wouldn't have students here at 6:00 in the morning till 5:00 at night even when they aren't involved in anything."

Ape believes that while there have been some incidents, they were handled in the right way and with the best interests of students in mind. She stated, "Our school really supports safety, I feel like our staff are supportive, I think most our students are supportive. Once you get in here, you see how much it's family."

The students at SS High feel safe according to Bus. She said there aren't too many issues and students do not worry about their safety while at school. HTrain says the school has made tremendous strides in safety the last few years over what it was six-seven years ago which really helps the overall culture of the school. HC agrees that the school is definitely safe and supportive

of one another.

Frances agrees that most students when taking the survey about safety really don't know what they mean with the question because they have never felt threatened or unsafe within the school.

## **Theme 2: Creating a Family Atmosphere**

When the final coding and analyzing the documents for what is important to why teachers stay, the concept of family came up more than any other. Family is a term used by many, but there are many degrees to family and what that means differs among various people groups. Four subthemes emerged under the umbrella of creating a family atmosphere: a) trust, b) traditions, c) family relations, and d) pride in school.

Art said, "I think SS High...it's different from what I thought. I thought it was just kids from the south side, that everybody had a job, and it was like every other school, but I don't think that now. I think it is very diverse. I think that it is one of the city's best kept secrets. I think that it's got an enormous sense of family and great kids."

**Sub-Theme: Trust.** Trust is important to Sky, he stated "I love the staff. When I get a job, I need it to feel like family. We spend lots of time together, so I want to have trust, be with people I can talk to and generally bounce things off of." Ape added, "I really love the kids here and I love the staff that I work with."

Poverty is a big issue at SS high according to Art. While you can't fix the poverty students have, Art believes that you have to meet the kids where they are and help other staff members understand that "there are ways to get kids to perform for you just based on the fact

that they trust you, and that can be hard.”

Frances believes the staff really gets to know the kids. She stated, “you’ll see that a student isn’t doing well inside or outside of school and they’ll look at you and go, “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry,” cause they know, even if they don’t have a class with you who you are.” She knows the students trust the adults to help them along the way.

**Sub-Theme: Traditions.** Ape said that while it is “such a huge school, parents and grandparents went here, and so there’s that tradition there that follows them.” When talking to others in the community, it is very common for her to hear about what family graduated from SS High. She also says that many of the staff came from SS High or have ties to the school which adds to the family atmosphere and keeping the traditions alive.

Will likes that the school has lots of history tied to it that feeds into the traditions the school has. Will said, “There’s just something about this place that people really like and they’ve had good experiences here. We’ve always had strong athletic programs which helps. While we’re not necessarily known for our academics, we’ve had a lot of high achieving students come through here as well as people go to West Point, Naval or Air Force Academy, and Duke. Some really prestigious schools and that’s not just a small amount (of students).”

Many staff went to SS High themselves and take great pride in how they were raised and want to raise their own children in the same way. Will stated, “I’ve always had this dream that my sons would also come to SS High and whether they play athletics or are in a play, do choir or whatever they do, that’s how much I love this place. When I first started teaching, I always saw myself coming back here.”

Bus is another former SS High graduate who now teaches at the school. She believes she

was meant to be here, was “called” to the position. Bus called SS High “the pride of the South Side. SS High is a great place to be. There’s a lot of support in the community, especially this community.” Bus also believes the staff is very close and has comfort in the fact that she can talk to any of the staff at SS High.

Some teachers who didn’t grow up in the area knew of SS High growing up even though they didn’t live too close to the school. HTrain remembers the school as having one of the largest youth wrestling programs in the state and admired the school at an early age for their pride and traditions. Once he became a teacher, he said that he has been able to build some great relationships with administration, teachers, and students at the school he is now very proud of.

Amed confessed that it took a long time to be accepted to the south end as a family even after teaching and coaching in the area for years as well as bringing their kids into the south end schools. He said, “that was probably the biggest shock was how close the south end really was, and it took a while for people to kind of accept ya.”

Kit talks about how you don’t want to step on the traditions in the south end. She grew up in the same city, but attended a different school. As she began her coaching career years ago, she quickly found out that you don’t schedule games or practices on the same day or weekend of a traditional festival or parade in the south end. Kit stated, “It’s always difficult because that is part of what they’ve known since they were young. And I’ve learned to respect that. It’s something I just can’t seem to take away from them and I think it shows that step further of what the south side kind of does with their community to bring everybody together.”

Annie echoed this, “There are a lot of traditions within our own building as well that have been carried on for decades. It’s not only important to us, but important to the kids, the

community, their families. That's the main thing that sticks out that no one really mentions."

**Sub-Theme: Family Relations.** There's a lot to like about SS High according to Art. When she first started teaching with zero experience in the high school, she leaned on the support of the veteran teachers to mentor her. Her close relations with other staff members helped her to get through those early years. She leaned on her experience as a parent and the mentoring of her new school family. The strong relationships she had with other staff members helped her focus on student relationships. She stated, "That focused me then on my relationships with kids, and I continued to grow my relationships with staff, but my focus ever since has really been with the kids."

"The culture of SS High is that we take care of each other. Staff takes care of staff; teachers take care of the students. The students perform for the teachers. We include family members in the decisions that we make here. But it's more than just what happens here on a daily basis. If a staff member has a significant other or a family member that's not in the school, that's struggling, it affects the teachers, so we always reach out to people that are going through hard times, and I love that about SS High," said Art.

Art has children that attend a private school close by. She constantly gets asked about how she likes the school, expecting some juicy gossip. She states that she tells them, "I love it. I love the school. I love the kids, and they always have such a surprised look on their face." Art said SS High students and staff work hard and they play hard.

William said SS High is known for being family-like. He believes the school is very close-knit and is a reflection of the community as a whole. SS High, he said, is a pillar to this part of town and many graduates go on to the local college or trade school. "We take great pride

in watching our kids succeed,” he stated.

While SS High is in a larger community with multiple high schools, HTrain believes the school operates much like his one-horse town growing up. He stated, “It’s kind of its own little pocket of our community and that is important to me. It’s why our own kids started in our feeder school and will come to this school. That’s important to us.”

Matt likes the strong family-like connections and relationships shared with administration and within her own department. “Most of the administration and other departments make it super cohesive, and we collaborate often. The kids are low socioeconomically, but that makes it more rewarding and challenging,” Matt said. While she usually sticks to her department, DR finds it enjoyment in talking to other people on the staff.

Goody said that many schools throw out the “creating a family atmosphere” concept, but that SS High and the community takes it a step further. He stated, “Bar none, it is one of the best places I’ve ever been around. As far as creating a family atmosphere, it’s what keeps me here.” Z added, “When I moved to the area a few years ago, I felt that the community itself was a tremendous community to raise a family. As my kids grew, we developed lots of relationships with everybody in town, but there’s something special about SS High that has kept me here, and it’s the people that I work with and the people that live down here, it’s the kids that are here.”

Amed added that once a family comes and graduates from SS High, they begin to send more family members to the school. Alumni say, “Oh, I can’t wait until they get here, too,” according to Amed. Troll added that she has heard many, many times about how they can’t wait for her to get a former student’s relatives in her class. Troll and Amed both said it’s the connections that are made that make it so powerful. AC said, “I would say it’s definitely the

relationship that you build with families and the kids...just the tightness of the community as well as this place just feels like home. Feels safe, I feel valued, always so welcomed.”

**Sub-Theme: Pride.** Every school wants and needs pride in the school to be successful. Many times that can be easily attained and other times it is very difficult. Pride seems to be one of those things that comes and goes like a roller coaster going up and down.

Peter believes SS High is “very, very, very blue collar.” He believes the staff is top notch, as is the administration. The school is a landmark, he said, and this end of town would have a hard time functioning without this school and its identity. Peter stated, “I think a lot of people in this end of town identify with this institution. It has a sense of pride.”

There are numerous programs at SS High that help build the pride and creates more opportunities for students according to Ape. She stated, “We push to get scholarships in all sorts of different areas and that is one of the reasons why my son came down here because of all the opportunities. He went on to play football (in college) and he would’ve never had that opportunity if he had stayed in the school where he was. Just the care, the opportunities.”

Will said students take great pride in the school and it’s building even though it is almost 80 years old. When the district took part in a community engagement process a few years back, feedback stated they couldn’t believe how straight all the pictures in the hallways were. They were in awe that the building looked the way it did even though it is a very old structure. They said it was “a prime indicator that our students really loved our school and really respected our school because they didn’t mess them up.” They went on to say, “you just don’t see that everywhere, especially in an older building.”

Will went on to say he enjoys the kids in the southside. “These are my people, I

understand where they are coming from,” Will states. He said he believes the school has its priorities right and wants to make sure that continues.

Butch added that wherever he travels, it seems to come around to where they are from and when he mentions that he works at SS High, they seem to always either have gone there or have a relative that did. He gets a strong sense of community from them as they talk fondly of the school. Troll added, “it never ceases to amaze me that in every obituary with a SS High grad, how big a deal they make of where they went to school and what they did there. They carry that pride to the grave.” Bill said that the school is an anchor in the community and everyone wants to see their own children and grandchildren graduate from there.

Matt loves the rewards of seeing kids succeed. She said, “even though you can’t save everybody, it’s always nice to see that one or two kids succeed and I think that SS High is a good place to have kids. I enjoy working here.” Matt also loves that many of the teachers actually attended SS High. She believes them coming back shows the deep sense of pride and spirit they have for the school.

Goody was part of the focus group and tried to sum up what others were saying, “the first thing each brings up is friends, family, and community. And I think you’re gonna hear that consistently with everybody. I’m committed to SS High, and I feel a sense of loyalty to the school. And to finish here, my kids want to come here. I mean, my kids won’t wear green (color of archrivals), and it’s just something that they grow up around, and I think it’s kinda comical. But that’s what they learned, and it’s something that they’re truly excited about being part of.” Bill concurred, saying that since his mom worked here 40 years ago, that is all he has ever known. He went on to say it has always been positive for him and his child who just graduated.

### **Theme 3: Autonomy**

What really motivates teachers to stay? Most research in the literature review discusses the importance of how workers feel, not what they are externally receiving. This theme goes along with this research and looks at perceptions of teachers and the feelings they get from various stimuli. The subthemes that emerged from the interviews, focus group, and pertinent data were: a) hard work celebrated, b) collaboration and development, and c) professional workplace.

**Sub-Theme: Hard Work Celebrated.** Most people seem to get a feeling of satisfaction after a job well done. Many seem to get even more satisfaction and hence, more motivated, when told they did a job well. This sub-theme reveals how teachers feel about work celebrated.

DR feels supported by the administration and really likes the feedback she receives. She stated, “I like knowing what I can improve upon so that’s something I really appreciate and need. Because I don’t want to just plateau as a teacher, I want to keep improving.”

Peter loves the fact that the school has a family atmosphere. He sees the school as very laid back and allows teachers to teach how they think best. Peter states, “I feel comfortable here. I think the people that work here are in it for the right reasons.”

Autonomy in the classroom and within activities is very important to many teachers. HTrain states, “I get to do and teach and coach the way I want to teach and coach. I don’t have administrators or other coaches in the athletic department telling me how I have to do what I do. I think this school allows people to do things their way as long as they are doing it well instead of trying to use the cookie cutter approach. This allows the coach or teacher to put their own personality into their class or team.”

Matt believes there is a good system in place within the school to value good work. She stated that each person and department carries their own weight to ensure their part gets done well. She also thinks it is important that many staff do things together outside of school. Matt loves the fact that she is valued, saying, “My husband and I each have parents about half an hour away in each direction. I feel like if something comes up and I’ve done my job here well, then if something comes up and I have to leave, people aren’t questioning it. The administration understands me and lets me do my thing. Plus, the work is challenging which makes it fun to come to work. I like figuring things out, then do a good job with it. The hard work is noticed and that’s always nice.”

HC agrees that it is very enjoyable to work in a place where good work is noticed. She believes there is a strong bond between the administration and the department she works in that makes it a good environment to work. HC gets lots of satisfaction in knowing she has helped students overcome some of the problems they come to school with.

The school recently had an administrator who was very difficult to work for and ran off a lot of good people according to Amed and others. “Nobody wants to stay or work hard for her because she was hard to work for. We are just now getting back to people wanting to come back and hang around. And until you get a staff that has cohesive family you won’t have a good school,” Amed said.

Frances added that “it feels like family again. And a lot of it, is administration...And I’m not just saying that (because of the researcher being an administrator). When you feel valued, when they tell you what they tell you, then that’s what they actually expect. They don’t lie to you. They say, “Do the best that you can. Let us know what you need us to do,” and they mean

it. They don't say, "We're gonna focus on this and then don't. You're not micromanaged. You feel safe enough to try new things, and the other faculty support you when you try new things, so it is a family. It's support all the way around, top down. And to me that's one of the reasons I came back."

Bill said, "I will be honest. There were a number of years where there was a different administration that was here that made it very difficult to stay here. But I kept to myself. I was like, "This place is bigger and more important than that person," so we stuck it out and are still here. My child always wanted to be a SS High student. That's all he's ever talked about from the time he was born. He graduated with red, and it'll be something that he carries with him for the rest of his life. But, this is just a place that feels like home. And honestly? I don't wanna go anywhere else. I wanna finish here."

Kit went on to talk about the challenges we face every day, but that brings out the athlete in her to make sure she reaches each student to help them reach success. She went on to say, "Based upon the administration here now, it changes the culture of everything, from the top to the bottom. And I think that makes a difference on how everybody interacts with one another, whether we're, like smiling and happy with one another, or you know kind of grouchy."

Kit has found the past few years very relaxing and enjoyable at the school. She was asked to come interview recently at the school she attended. She went for the interview and said, "And it was at that moment that I knew that was not where I was supposed to be. I felt so uncomfortable in that setting, and that's where I graduated from. So, I think just the welcoming and the comfort that happens down here at SS High makes it a reason to stay."

Frances stated the biggest reason she stays and came back to the school is because she

feels valued and supported. Goody added he believes how administration treats you is paramount, but some do still leave for bigger money. Troll added that many young teachers don't yet understand how important and unique the traditions are in SS High and so many times work for a time here and then decide to go back and teach in the area they grew up.

**Sub-Theme: Collaboration and Development.** Most schools over the past twenty years at least figure out a method to have at least some collaboration and professional development in order to raise test scores. While that is the main motivation for school districts, there are other reasons to do this and these perceptions came out through the interviews and focus group.

Professional development is quite evident in the school and district according to Peter. He points out the schedule is setup to induce productive collaboration and development. Peter states, "I think we do more with less than any other school district in the state. I mean, we are living and serving in classrooms that are very industrialized to a certain degree. I think what we've been able to do with these structures, and especially in this one (SS High) with as old as the building as it is, and then to get the productivity that we get out of the students that we have, I think it's second to none."

"SS High allows teachers to use our own strengths of what we have, and if we don't have strengths, they push us to lean on somebody who may be better at something through collaboration in order to get better. I've had probably the best professional development that I'll ever have in my career since I've been at SS High. The PD in this district and this building alone is unbelievable," said HTrain.

He went on to discuss the professional development experience teachers receive in the district and school. After working in a smaller school previously, he knows the value of

receiving this valuable knowledge. HTrain also loves the family feel within the teaching and the coaching. He is proud of the wrestling program he has built from the ground up and looks forward to remaining here to garner the rewards of seeing it do well.

HC said the reason she hesitates to ever leave is due to the strong relationships and love for the people in her own department. The sense of teamwork, the environment, and the autonomy allows them to come to work each day. She enjoys how the administration and others continue to fight for teachers. She stated, “I just think continuing to make each teacher feel like they’re important, that each person matters, building those relationships with teachers is what matters.”

**Sub-Theme: Professional Workplace.** One of the great things about SS High according to Z is the commitment from graduates over the past 100 plus years. It’s nice to see how many graduates who went on to do well and want to give back in terms of scholarships to help our current students further their education, Z said.

Z also believed that while the pay is just fair, pay isn’t the reason you go or stay. “That isn’t the reason people teach here,” he said. Kit added that the teacher who spoke last year at graduation summed it up when he said that he felt guilty for receiving a paycheck because he absolutely loved what he did each day. When you are with people you like, and you like what you do, money isn’t an issue. Butch added that isn’t the paycheck we come to work for, rather the “paycheck of the heart.”

#### **Theme 4: Limiting Factors**

While the research mainly deals with why teachers stay in the profession and in particular why they stay at SS High, the opposite of why they stay is why they leave and sometimes you

have to look at both in order to get the best answer on how to keep top quality teachers in your building and district.

This theme reveals why teachers sometimes want or need to leave as viewed through the lens of teachers who have stayed in the building. The subthemes that emerged from the data within this theme were: a) economics; b) poverty; c) hope and engagement; d) location; and e) promotions.

**Sub-Theme: Economics.** HTrain sees pay and maybe more importantly, benefits as keeping teachers in the district. While the pay isn't what it is in the bigger city, it is better than many directly around us. While the benefits haven't changed much lately, the threat of it changing has helped some teachers who have left decide they better go ahead and go to the "green on the other side of the fence" schools while they can.

While many teachers have stayed, many have gone to the other schools in the larger cities as well. It is hard to compete with those schools if you would like to work there, HTrain stated. He went on to say many folks are from small surrounding towns with roots in the area and it doesn't make sense for them to move for higher pay, but they are happy to be in this district that has very competitive pay as compared to the smaller districts surrounding it.

**Sub-Theme: Poverty.** DR believes now she was very sheltered growing up in an upper middle class neighborhood. She still finds it hard to believe when students can't afford basic stuff or to be able to go down to Arby's to get a sandwich. Growing up, she didn't realize the differences many students have as compared to her childhood.

DR stated, "In college you have all these ideas of how you want to teach things and so you want to do all these things. I had no idea that kids don't have internet. Like in my mind, that

was very eye opening that kids didn't have internet at home. That they don't have parents at home. Like, not even one parent. I mean, they aren't living with their parents. They're living with their grandparents. They're living with other family. They're living with other people as well. And then, a lot of legal issues. I mean, I just wasn't really aware. Like, I had no idea what a J.O. (Juvenile Officer) was when I came here, you know?"

Some interviewees said some get out of the profession due to finances. When the teacher that leaves has to provide for their family, it is tough to be the lead breadwinner on a teacher salary. Peter said he doesn't believe it is hardly ever about SS high when a teacher leaves. It has "everything to do with the mobility, where they are in life, maybe where they're at socially, spiritually, economically," he stated.

While there are many issues at SS High including drug use and entitlement issues, Will believes the relationship piece is the most important and is well done at the school. AC adds, "I think our poverty level has risen, and it's challenging for us to meet those students, because they're coming to us, you know, not being fed, not being properly taken care of at home, and it's challenging for us to get them to learn when they're coming to us the way they are." Frances left the school and came back years later. She stated the poverty levels have definitely risen and the challenges are great to get them to learn. She thinks in some ways we've "babied" the students too much though and need to raise the bar back up again.

**Sub-Theme: Hope & Engagement.** Sky came from a white collar background as both a student and teacher. When coming to SS High, he found both teachers and students very diverse. The big difference he saw between the two types of schools is that students and their families do not realize the importance of education to their lives. Many of the students don't have aspirations

for postsecondary and many don't have a plan beyond tomorrow. Many students are "just biding their time...just hanging out, hoping to get passed on."

DR also finds it frustrating with some of the students. She teaches mostly freshman and finds quite a few students that seem to care little for their education and even plan to end up in an alternative school or as a dropout. She finds this very difficult when teaching when many students and their families don't see the necessity to succeed in life. She stated, "They're fine with not even getting a diploma. And they're fine with not getting a trade. I mean, after high school, they don't care what they do. They're going to be done." But, she also has many students that do plan to attend college or go to the military.

While the community shows lots of pride in the schools, that doesn't mean they are financially supportive of the schools according to Peter. He believes that folks are uneducated about what really goes on in the world of education.

It is easy to get discouraged about the lack of parental involvement according to Will. Teenage apathy is also tough to deal with although he believes you will see that in about every school to some degree. It's tough to get some kids out of the socio economic situations they are in and that makes it difficult to teach at SS High sometimes. "It becomes discouraging to everyone at times," Will stated.

HC views SS High as one with students with lots of economic issues and parents not very supportive of the educational system. While the students themselves are great to work with, what is going on at home is a big issue and a tough one to overcome. Amed agrees saying with the issues of poverty and in how we as a school has dealt with it, there seems to be a "quitter" attitude that has developed. Many students don't have the drive to succeed they once had. Butch

said it might be society in general, but the students certainly have lost their motivation in recent years to where now they are satisfied to “just get by.” Frances went on to talk about how the school and society in general many times celebrates mediocrity, instead of the truly great things.

**Sub-Theme: Location.** Teachers that leave do so mostly in order to move closer to their home or to make more money according to Sky. DR agrees, stating “usually they’re from (big city to south) or somewhere else. It’s usually to go back home or be closer to home if they’re making a commute. They want to be closer to their family and where they grew up.”

Ape believes most teachers leave to move closer to their home. Bus agrees that most teachers that leave do so in order to get closer to where they live or to move up into a leadership or better coaching position with more money. Matt also agrees that most move for a promotion, more pay, or to be closer to their home.

**Sub-Theme: Promotions.** Many times people leave to follow a spouse and their job or because of a commute, Art said. Art went on to say “But we also have many that get a coaching promotion or get a job in administration.” Will echoed that most move due to location or to take a leadership position in another school.

### **Research Findings**

Teacher interviews and the focus group revealed a variety of strategies believed to be instrumental in retaining our best teachers. Most of the recommendations center around ideas framed within items discussed in the literature review. The strategies range from scheduling to professional development to teacher pay and benefits. Categories and responses from the teachers gathered from the interviews and focus group follow.

## **Building Strong Relationships**

While one usually thinks in terms of teachers building good relationships with students to help students succeed, it also goes the other way and helps keep teachers in the profession and in their current assignment when they believe students enjoy a good relationship. Ape stated, “I’m appreciative to get to know these kids and have a good relationship with them because I know they need that.”

## **Autonomy**

Teachers want to be valued for the success stories they help create and for the hard work they perform. “I think this school allows people to do things their way as long as they are doing it well instead of trying to use the cookie cutter approach. This allows the coach or teacher to put their own personality on their class or team.” Matt enjoys when each member does their part, each department carries their weight to ensure it all gets done. She feels valued at work when everyone is working together and administration and others value a job well done.

## **Collaboration Time**

Creating a schedule that is conducive to collaboration is also valued according to the teachers interviewed. “Having a schedule that induces productive collaboration and development is key, I think we do more with less than any other school district in the state.” He goes on to say “To get the productivity that we get out of these students that we have, I think it’s second to none.”

## **Quality Professional Development**

Research continues to show that good professional development is key, but many districts

and states continue to take resources away from this area. Teachers interviewed called good professional development key to wanting to stay in a building and district. Some spoke of the lower quality learning they received in smaller districts and how much they appreciate the learning they receive at the research school. “I’ve had probably the best professional development that I’ll ever have in my career since I’ve been at SS High. The PD in this district and this building alone is unbelievable.”

### **Quality Mentoring Program**

When Art started teaching in this district, she stated she had an excellent mentor and that really helped her become successful and was key for her staying in this building. The district used to have a quality mentoring program, but for years it has been pretty much defunct. The district is just next year going to start the mentoring program back up. According to Art, she leaned on that support in the early years and helped her learn how to be successful. Without that, she stated, “who knows what would've happened.”

### **Support Teachers with Feedback**

Teachers interviewed discussed learning as teachers and the value in that. One teacher expressed that she really enjoys feedback. “I like knowing what I can improve upon so that’s something I really appreciate and need. Because I don’t want to just plateau as a teacher, I want to keep improving.”

### **Celebrate Hard Work**

Research in the literature review discussed the importance of acknowledging good work among other things. While teachers also expressed they like to be given lots of room to do their

own thing, they also expressed, “The work is challenging which makes it fun to come to work. I like figuring things out, then do a good job with it. The hard work is noticed and that’s always nice.”

### **Dealing with Poverty**

When schools such as SS High have so many students and families coming from poverty with little hope for the future, teachers want strategies to deal with it. “It’s challenging for us to meet those students, because they’re coming to us, you know, not being fed, not being properly taken care of at home, and it’s challenging for us to get them to learn when they’re coming to us the way they are.” This issue is also discussed in the literature review as it deals with motivational theory.

### **Good pay and Benefits**

While most every teacher interviewed did not see pay and benefits as the most important reason they stay or why others leave, they say it is definitely a factor they think lots about. Some even went as far as saying that many of the teachers that have left believed the district was getting into financial trouble and they wanted to get out while they still could to get to a district with better pay and benefits.

### **Answering the Research Questions**

This section begins with the two research questions and then discusses the guiding question for the research.

### **What are the reasons you have remained in teaching at SS High School?**

Family was what most participants began speaking about when they talked about their

experience at SS High and why they have stayed here for so long. Family dealt with trust for each other and with the students, basically good relationships with both. They also really like the traditions the school has and the pride that exudes from the school. The traditions and pride comes from their own history with the school as well as the athletics and activities that continue matriculate. The teachers enjoy the fact that the kids care about each other and that the staff take care of both staff and students so well. They enjoy the safety they feel at the school and while they know there are lots of issues dealing with poverty and all that goes with it, in general they want to feel safe for themselves and for the students and they do. Participants really like when their work is appreciated by other staff and administration. Teachers also want autonomy in what they do. They don't mind instruction or broad outlines, but are happy when they have room to plan and instruct in the way they believe best. They enjoy learning together, with the strong bonds built with their department during collaboration time. Professional development is key to keep learning they believe. While pay and benefits sometimes are a dirty word, many participants want to be paid fairly and keep what they believe are pretty good benefits.

**Based on other teachers in our district or building, what are reasons for moving to another building?**

Most expressed that they believe most teachers who have left did so because of the proximity to their home. Many also said the pay is much better in the larger suburban districts, and they left for the larger paycheck. Poverty issues came up quite a bit. The students at SS High are tough, especially if you don't have the toolbelt of strategies yet to deal with the issues. Many felt the lack of hope and engagement from both students and the community were to blame for some teachers leaving. Administration not handling discipline in the right way to best support teachers was mentioned. The district's recent struggles was also discussed as reasons some leave.

Quite a few teachers have left for promotions to leadership or better coaching positions as well.

**Guiding Question: Why do you stay in teaching and more specifically in your current building?**

The short answer would be for the love of their work. The teachers interviewed love what they do. They love coming to work because they know they are making a difference. The teachers don't want to leave, because they believe they are called to work here at SS High, at least for now. They stay because they feel valued, they like their fellow teachers and the administration. They feel they are not micromanaged and are supported to take risks without fear of reprisal. They love the pride and traditions of the school as well as the community that surrounds it. While the community or its students might not be the best in academic engagement or hope for what their future is, the teachers love their student's grit and caring attitude.

**Summary**

There are many factors to celebrate judging by what the study's participants had to say. But there is also lots of work to be done in a school and district that has so many issues facing it. Much of the research shows that the only way to improve education is to keep your very best teachers for long periods of time (Jacob, et al 2012). This is especially true in districts and buildings that have so many students dealing with poverty (Goldhaber, Gross, & Player, 2007). It is vitally important to place into action strategies that will help grow, recruit, and train the very best teachers to educate the best children our community can send us. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings in more detail.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Like most school districts, the district, which includes SS High, has struggled retaining high quality teachers. Over the past twenty years, SS High District has replaced over 10% of their staff most every year (SS High District HR records, 2016). Within SS High, the rate has wavered between 10-24% over the past five plus years (SS High District HR records, 2016). The national trend is 17% per year (Teaching and America's Future, 2007). To make matters worse, teacher satisfaction has dropped from 62% in 2008 to 39% in 2013 (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 2013). In order for teachers to feel relevant and satisfied in their job, Daniel Pink states that teachers need to feel purpose and autonomy (2011).

Every participant in this study believed there is a problem in general with keeping teachers in the SS High building. The participants each had numerous reasons for why they stayed, but acknowledged that SS High loses many teachers each year and that hurts both students and staff when new teachers come in each year.

Most participants also confessed that while there are certainly strategies to help the teacher retention issue, schools will always lose some teachers due to factors such as proximity to home, promotions, and higher pay if the district can't keep up with the larger pay scales of more affluent suburban school districts.

As a current administrator and former teacher in the district under study, this researcher had great interest in finding ways to satisfy teachers to help them decide to stay in teaching within their district. In conversations with our district directors and the Human Resources Director (personal communication, 2016), it is certainly paramount to our district to find and

retain our best teachers.

This qualitative bounded case study was conducted to explore reasons teachers stay in the profession in one Midwestern urban high school. The study was framed by three research questions. The guiding question was: “Why do teachers stay in teaching and more specifically stay in their current building?” The other two questions were, “What are the reasons you have remained teaching at SS High School?” and “Based on other teachers in our district and building, what are reasons for moving to another building?”

There were two qualitative data resources used in the study. First, a representative sample of teachers were interviewed individually, then a focus group of more tenured teachers was held. The three research questions were used to frame the questions concerning perceptions of why they stay in teaching at SS High and why they believe others have left the school. Interview questions are listed, respectively, in Appendixes B and C. Both the interviews and focus group was recorded and transcribed. Data was triangulated using the interviews, focus group, and appraisal of unobtrusive data. Open and axial coding was used to find emergent themes and subthemes. A summary of the findings as they related to the research questions ended the previous chapter. A discussion of the findings as they relate to the literature through the lens of Herzberg’s Two-Factor Motivational Theory is discussed in this chapter as well as implications for practice and research, and the conclusion.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings were filtered through the lens of Herzberg’s Two-Factor Motivational Theory. Four themes and accompanying subthemes emerged through open and axial coding: a) Creating a Positive Culture; (b) Creating a Family Atmosphere; (c) Autonomy; and (d) Limiting

Factors.

Each theme had accompanying subthemes. The theme “Creating a Positive Culture” had three subthemes: a) student's care; b) positive relationships; and c) safety. The second theme “Creating a Family Atmosphere” had four subthemes: a) trust; b) traditions; c) family relations; and d) pride in school. The third theme “Autonomy” had three subthemes: a) hard work celebrated; b) collaboration and development; and c) professional workplace. The final theme “Limiting Factors” had five subthemes: a) economics; b) poverty; c) hope and engagement; d) location; and e) promotions.

### **Herzberg’s Two-Factor Motivational Theory**

Frederick Herzberg, in 1966, created the Motivational-Hygiene Theory, also called the Two-Factor theory based on Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory. Job motivators were those things that led workers to meet needs higher on Maslow’s hierarchy, while job hygiene items were those things that led workers to meet needs lower on Maslow’s hierarchy. Motivators lead to job satisfaction and the lack of motivators lead to lack of job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966).

Motivators are concepts like recognition, achievement, responsibility, advancement, growth, and the work itself. Hygiene motivating concepts include such things as company policy and administration, relationship with supervisors, work conditions, salary, peer relationships, personal life, relationships with subordinates, and security and status (Herzberg, 1966).

Herzberg put forth the idea that the opposite of job satisfaction was not job dissatisfaction, but rather the absence of job satisfaction. The lack of motivators did not lead to job dissatisfaction, because job dissatisfaction is only affected by hygiene items. Herzberg

believed that only motivators lead to job satisfaction and the lack of motivators lead to the lack of job satisfaction. Herzberg wrote that organizations too often concentrated on the hygiene items when trying to motivate workers. Since hygiene items cannot motivate workers over time, Herzberg proposed that only through enrichment like worker freedom and authority with high expectations would companies be able to motivate workers to their highest level (Herzberg, 1966).

These same principles can be tied to many of the responses of teachers throughout the study. Few participants actually literally talked about motivation or motivation theory, but most all responses dealt with items written about by motivational theorists like Maslow, Herzberg, and Pink.

### **Positive Instructional Culture within Buildings**

Buildings must have a positive culture in order to retain teachers and teachers themselves play a critical role in promoting a positive climate in the school (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014). Teachers help encourage a positive climate by treating students equal and fair, by having high expectations and motivating students to believe in themselves. They also allow students autonomy, explicit teach and model school rules, and most importantly develop strong, supportive relationships with students. Teachers that promote a positive climate also collaborate well with other staff members (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014).

Teachers want and need to be supported well by administrators. Teachers tend to leave schools that have problems with discipline and safety (Allensworth, 2009; Krasnoff, 2015). Teachers that work in high-poverty schools are fifteen percent more likely to leave their schools each year, while only ten percent of those teaching at low-poverty schools leave. Teachers leave

the profession as well as move to other schools (Ingersoll, 2001). When you do have high poverty, it adds to the issues with families, community hope, and community and student engagement. Having administrators that help support teachers within this environment is key.

Many teachers today are frustrated with a lack of autonomy, lack of choices, and decisions coming from the top down. Rather than being praised and encouraged to be creative, they are more likely to get called on the carpet for veering away from accepted methods (Thomas, 2017). Herzberg said only by allowing workers more freedom and authority along with high expectations will teachers be able to be motivated at the highest level (Herzberg, 1966).

Teachers need to feel a purpose for their work and need the autonomy within the job to feel relevant which is a strong motivator according in Daniel Pink in his book *Drive* (2011). The way to improve learning is not through micromanagement from administration, but rather through teacher leadership (Wallace Foundation, 2010). The leadership for teachers must be real though in a true collaborative environment. There must be a true shared sense of decision-making and shared responsibility for results (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Teachers need collaboration time built within their schedule in order to learn, discuss, and build strong relationships which is one of the biggest reasons teachers stay. Leadership must be real and encouraged through a true, collaborative environment (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2013). Many teachers can become frustrated with the lack of autonomy, choices, and decisions coming from the top down. Teachers want to be encouraged to be creative without risk of reprisal (Thomas, 2017). Leaders must engage teachers in a collegial and collaborative model in order to create satisfaction (Williams, 2009). Teachers want to not only be led this way, but they want to lead themselves as well (Harris, 2007).

Principals should have an open-door policy to discuss ideas with teachers as well as invest heavily in quality professional learning opportunities for teachers (Smith, Connolly, and Pryseski, 2014). Great teachers' desire quality feedback including celebrating their successes. When principals give teachers at least two low-cost strategies out of the following eight identified retention strategies, irreplaceable teacher retention went up over six years longer than if they received none (Jacob, et al, 2012). These strategies include providing regular, positive feedback, identifying areas of development, giving critical feedback, recognizing accomplishments publicly, informing the teacher they are a high-performer, and identifying opportunities or paths to teacher leader roles. They also include putting the high performers in charge of something important and providing the teacher with access to additional classroom resources (Jacob, et al 2012).

### **District Programs**

Great school districts put emphasis on learning (Hassel & Hassel, 2010). Learning cannot be solely for students. It is very important to have good professional development for many reasons, one of which is to help retain your best teachers (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014). Good teachers are lifelong learners and continually tweak their art. The best schools have better prepared professional development with good facilitation. They also have instructional leaders that respond correctly to good or poor teachers' performances (TNTP, 2012).

In the area of climate and organization, a higher rate of teacher retention is found in schools that have a high degree of collegiality, innovation, and professional community (Allensworth, 2009; Krasnoff, 2015). Professional development that is collaborative time with fellow students helped teachers feel more job satisfaction and confidence with not feeling so

isolated (Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013).

Teachers that are unable to deal with issues of poverty have a much more difficult time being satisfied in their job (Allensworth, 2009). Social factors influence teacher retention in that teachers have a higher rate of retention in affluent schools and a lower rate in poverty schools. Teachers tend to leave schools that have problems with discipline and safety (Allensworth, 2009; Krasnoff, 2015). Teachers that work in high-poverty schools are fifteen percent more likely to leave their schools each year, while only ten percent of those teaching at low-poverty schools leave. Teachers leave to find positions in more affluent schools or leave the profession all together (Ingersoll, 2001).

Young teachers need good mentoring as well as good professional development and autonomy (Latifoglu, 2016). Young teachers come into the profession for all the right reasons and are ready to set the world on fire. They quickly find the demand of balancing teaching, paperwork, mandated testing and a personal life to be too much (Strauss, 2015). When teachers find success in raising student academic performances, they stay. Because of this, it is imperative to have policy that supports new teachers in particular so they can be retained. Teachers in their first year of service are at a higher level to leave if they are unprepared or not supported. Half of all new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Ingersoll, 2003).

It has been found that a comprehensive induction program helps districts retain their teachers at a higher rate than other districts with no or very little induction programs (Alliance, 2004). A comprehensive program includes training, support, and assessment during the first year on the job. It includes high-quality mentoring, release time for mentor and protégé, focused professional development, common planning time, and out of school networking. An evaluation

that identifies strengths and weaknesses, targets future professional development, and an overall grade on whether the protégé should stay in the profession is the culminating event in the program (Alliance, 2004). The Alliance for Excellent Education study demonstrated that beginning teachers had an 18 percent leave or move after one year under the comprehensive induction program compared to 27 percent under a basic induction program plus collaboration. Those that had just a basic induction program without collaboration left or moved 39 percent of the time and those with no induction program left 41 percent after one year of service (2004).

While the teachers didn't put salary and benefits as the main reasons for staying and pay isn't considered a motivating factor most times, teachers do move to other jobs for more money, better working conditions, and greater intrinsic rewards. If other school districts or other professions offer these incentives, teachers will leave (Guarino, Santibanez & Daley, 2006).

Evidence shows it is very difficult to make the salary for teachers competitive with the private sector (Shields & Lewis, 2012), school districts need to make salary as competitive as they possibly can. Daniel Pink suggests that, "Effective organizations compensate people in amounts and in ways that allow individuals to mostly forget about compensation and instead focus on the work itself" (2011). When salaries are satisfactory, creativity and performance can go up. But if salaries aren't at a satisfactory level, it becomes front and center (Pink, 2011).

### **Limitations to the Study**

The bounded case study overall design contributed to several limitations. One limitation was that teachers may have reported inflated satisfaction in some areas due to the fact of who the researcher was, in this case the administrator, and all the data was self-reported.

Data gathered was from teachers in just one urban school in the Midwest. The findings

were based on the perceptions of a small group of teachers. This specific sample may impede any generalizations of the findings. All participants volunteered to be included, so the beliefs and experiences of all teachers in the building are not included in the study. Using a larger sample size may add new information to the study.

### **Implications for Practice**

After an exhaustive search of the literature and after analyzing all findings from this study, the researcher offers the following recommendations to assist building leaders and district leadership as well as other practitioners in their endeavors to improve the satisfaction level of our top teachers in hopes they remain in the district.

1. Educate teachers on how to develop strong relationships with students. Teachers need a strong bond with their students in order to improve learning with students, but also to improve satisfaction levels with teachers. Teachers help encourage a positive climate by treating students equal and fair, by having high expectations and motivating students to believe in themselves (Smith, Connolly, & Pryseski, 2014). Teachers that promote a positive climate will also collaborate well with other staff.
2. Building principals and other administrators should provide good support for teachers, especially in schools that have high poverty levels. This would include having good support systems for discipline and safety. Teachers and staff routinely rate the Principal's accessibility, support, and relationships as the most important strength or weakness when talking about a school's culture and climate. Teachers want a Principal that has an inclusive open-door policy and has invested

heavily in quality professional learning opportunities for the staff (Smith, Connolly, and Pryseski, 2014).

3. Building principals and other administration should provide teachers autonomy in their jobs. This includes allowing teachers permission to try new things without fear of reprisal. Teachers should be provided with choices when possible and should share in the decision making for the school. Teachers need autonomy and be able to feel a purpose for their work in order to feel relevant which is a strong motivator according in Daniel Pink in his book *Drive* (2011).

Teacher leaders should be harvested from those top teachers that show potential. Teacher leadership positions should be created to allow them the chance to lead others and have some authority. Teachers must have opportunities to learn and use their leadership potential while still in the classroom (Teoh & Coggins, 2013). There should be high expectations for staff and praise should be given when earned.

4. Collaboration time should be built into the schedule. Leadership should be developed by administration through a true collaborative environment. High teacher retention is found in schools that have a high degree of collegiality, innovation, and professional community (Allensworth, 2009; Krasnoff, 2015). Improved learning is not through micromanagement from administration, but rather through teacher leadership (Wallace Foundation, 2010). Again, teachers should be encouraged to collaborate, be creative, and take risks.
5. Building principals and other administration should provide quality feedback to teachers including the celebration of successes. Strategies should include regular,

positive feedback, identify areas for teachers to develop professionally, recognize their accomplishments publicly, inform them when they are a high-performer, and identify paths to leadership roles for those who show potential. Administration should also provide resources to adequately support teachers in their classroom in addition to previously stated endeavors.

6. Quality professional development should be provided to teachers. These strategies include providing regular, positive feedback, identifying areas of development, giving critical feedback, recognizing accomplishments publicly, informing the teacher they are a high-performer, and identifying opportunities or paths to teacher leader roles (Jacob, et al, 2012). Learning should also take place collegially through common planning time with fellow teachers. Instructional leaders, including administrators, should respond appropriately to both good or poor teaching performances.
7. Teachers that work in high-poverty schools are fifteen percent more likely to leave their schools each year, while only ten percent of those teaching at low-poverty schools leave (Ingersoll, 2003). In order to keep teachers, ongoing professional development on the issues of poverty should be implemented. This should include instruction on how to identify and understand the signs of poverty, and the strategies to effectively teach students who come from poverty.
8. A strong mentoring program should be instituted. The mentoring induction program should include a comprehensive training program with support as they learn. First year teachers should be assessed on their progress. Mentors should be well trained and high-quality. Release time for both mentors and new teachers

should be arranged. Professional development should be focused for new teachers on building goals, poverty, and specific areas noted for improvement (Alliance, 2004).

9. The district must strive to make the salary and benefits as competitive as possible with our suburban neighbors to the south. When salaries are satisfactory, creativity and performance can go up. However, if salaries are not at a satisfactory level, it becomes front and center (Pink, 2011). In order for creativity and performance to increase, salary and benefits must be at an adequate level of satisfaction for teachers.

### **Implications for Future Research**

In an effort to add to the existing research in regards to retaining teachers, the following implications emerged. If a similar study conducted on larger scale was done, it could be compared to the findings in this study. Future research could also look at more longitudinal studies to further gauge the power of retaining top quality teachers.

Considerable modern motivational theory gets its roots from 1960's theories of Maslow, Herzberg, and McGregor and even further back to the 1920's work of Fredrick Taylor (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Further research to continue to measure the validity of this research would be beneficial. With education changing so drastically in some ways but so mind-blowingly slow in others, it would be interesting to see further research in how millennials compare to other age groups of teachers and how the different generations are motivated differently.

### **Conclusion**

The district and building in the study obviously have some great things going for it. But it

also has some very large roadblocks to get around as well. If we do not find and use better methods of recruiting and retaining our best teachers, our schools with rising poverty rates will be locked into the same outcomes we've already experienced or worse. When schools are not able to retain or satisfy their best teachers, student achievement will drop to levels that lock buildings and districts into cycles of failure (Jacob, et al 2012). When schools have top notch teachers, students learn five-six months more per year than a low-performing teacher (Jacob, et al 2012). And if a student has a huge achievement gap, only the best teachers can make that up (Hassel & Hassel, 2010). If schools fail to satisfy their best teachers, it takes an average of eleven hires to find one top quality teacher (Jacob, et al 2012). It is only through outstanding teachers and quality school leadership that we will see real breakthroughs in the education of our most prized asset, our children.

## References

- Aaronson, D. L., Barrow, L., & Sander, W. (2007). Teachers and student achievement in Chicago public schools. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 25(1), 95-135.
- Akin, U., Aydin, I., Erdogan, C., & Demirkasimoglu, N., (2014). Emotional labor and burnout among Turkish primary teachers. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 41(2), 115-169.
- Allensworth, E., Ponisciak, S., Mazzeo, C., & Consortium on Chicago School, R. (2009). The schools teachers leave: Teacher mobility in Chicago public schools.
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2004). *Tapping the potential: Retaining and developing high-quality new teachers*. Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers.
- Balossi, M., & Hernandez, N. R. (2016). Hiring and retaining great independent school teachers. *Independent School*, 75(2), 16.
- Barnes, G., Crowe, E., & Schaefer, B., (2007). *The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
- Blasé, J.J. (1991). The micropolitical orientation of teachers toward closed school principals. *Education and Urban Society*, 23(4), 356-378.
- Bolman, L G. & Deal, T. E. (2008). *Reframing organizations: artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 78*, 366-409.
- Boyd, D., Loeb, S., Lankford, H., & Wycoff, J., (2005). *Explaining the short careers of high achieving teachers in schools with low performing students*. Albany, NY: Teacher Policy Research.
- Clandinin, D.J., Pushor, D., & Orr, A.M. (2007). Navigating Sites for Narrative Inquiry. *Journal of Teacher Education 58*(1), 21-35. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0022487106296218>
- Clotfelter, C.T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L., (2007). Teacher credentials and student achievement in high school: A cross-subject analysis with student fixed effects. Working Paper 13617, National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007, 2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Donaldson, M. L. (2008). *Teach for America teachers' careers: Whether, when, and why they leave low-income schools and the teaching profession*. Harvard: Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- Elias, M. J., White, G., & Stepney, C. (2014). Surmounting the challenges of improving academic performance: Closing the achievement gap through social-emotional and character development. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research, 10*14-1024.
- Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing Inquiry. A*

*naturalistic guide to methods*. London: Sage.

Fabulous Century, (1969).

Fensterwald, J. (2015, July 16). Half of new teachers quit profession in 5 years? Not true, new

study says. *EdSource*, Retrieved March 24, 2017, from

<https://edsources.org/2015/half-of-new-teachers-quit-profession-in-5-years-not-true-new-s>

tudy-says/83054

Fink, A. (2009). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage

Publications.

Foley, J. H. (2009). *Hail, SS High School: A centennial history of SS High School 1905-2005*.

Victoria, B. C.: Trafford.

Goldhaber, D., Gross, B., & Player, D., (2007). *Are public schools really losing their “best”?*

*Assessing the career transitions of teachers and their implication for the quality of the*

*teacher workforce* (Working Paper 12). Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in

Educational Research, Urban Institute.

Gordan, S.P., & Maxey, S. (2000). *How to help beginning teachers succeed* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Guarino, C., Santibanez, L., Daley, G., & Brewer, D. (2004). *A review of the research literature*

*on teacher recruitment and retention* (No. TR-164-EDU) Santa Monica: RAND

Corporation.

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries.

*Educational Resources Information Center Annual Review Paper, 19, 75-91.*

Harris, D. N., & Adams, S. (2007). Understanding the level and causes of teacher turnover: A comparison with other professions. *Economics of Education Review, 26, 325-337.*

Harris, S. (2007). The best from the best: effective strategies of award winning principals.

*Principal, 87(1), 1-5.*

Hassel, B. C., & Hassel, E. A. (2010). *Opportunity at the top: How America's best*

*teachers could close the gaps, raise the bar, and keep our nation great.* Retrieved

February 12, 2016 from <http://www.opportunityculture.org>.

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings.* Albany, NY: State

University of New York Press.

Herzberg, F. (1966). *Work and the nature of man.* New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell

Company.

Herzberg, F. (2008). *One more time: How do you motivate employees?* Boston: The

Harvard Business Review Classic Series.

Hong, J. Y. (2012). Why do some beginning teachers leave the school, and others stay?

Understanding teacher resilience through psychological lenses. *Teachers and*

*Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 18(4), 417-440, Jan. 1, 2012. ISSN: 1354-0602.

Ingersoll, R. (2003). *Is there really a teacher shortage?* Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(3), 499-534.

Jacob, A., Vidyarthi, E., Carroll, K., & TNTP. (2012). *The irreplaceables: Understanding the real retention crisis in America's urban schools*. Retrieved February 12, 2016 from [https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP\\_Irreplaceables\\_2012.pdf](https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Irreplaceables_2012.pdf).

Johnson, S. M., & Birkeland, S. (2003). Pursuing a “sense of success”: New teachers explain their career decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(3), 581-617.

Krasnoff, B., & Education Northwest, N. (2015). What the research says about class size, professional development, and recruitment, induction, and retention of highly qualified teachers: A compendium of the evidence on Title II, part A, funded strategies. *Northwest Comprehensive Center at Education Northwest*.

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3), 214-222.

Kronholz, J. (2013). No substitute for a teacher: Adults' absences shortchange students.

*Education Next*, 13(2), 16-21.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2009). *Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Latifoglu, A. (2016). Staying or leaving? An analysis of career trajectories of beginning teachers. *International Studies of Educational Administration*, 44(1), 55-70.

Lincoln, Y. S., Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Louis, K. & Wahlstrom, K. (2011). Principals as cultural leaders. *Phi Delta Kapan*, 92(5), 52-56.

Luekens, M. T., Lyter, D. M., Fox, E. F., & Chandler, K. (2004). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the teacher follow-up survey, 2000-01*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.

Malen, B. (2003). Tightening the grip? The impact of state activism on local school systems. *Educational Policy*, 17(2), 195-216.

Manuel, J. & Hughes, J. (2006). It has always been my dream: exploring pre-service teachers' motivations for choosing to teach. *Teacher Development*, 10(1), 5-24.

Markow, D., Macia, L., & Lee, H. (2013). Metropolitan Life Insurance, C., & Harris Interactive, I. (2013). *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School*

*Leadership.*

Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: HarperCollins. Retrieved from

[www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html)

Maslow, A.H. (1970a). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper & Row.

Maslow, A.H. (1970b). *Religions, values, and peak experiences*. New York: Penguin. (Original work published 1964).

McLeod, S. A. (2016). *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*. Retrieved from

[www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html)

McGregor, D. (1960). *The human side of enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. (2013). *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher:*

*Challenges for School Leadership*. New York: Author.

Missouri High School State Activities Association Official Handbook. (1917). (Available from

MHSSAA, PO Box 1328, Columbia, MO 65205-1328)

National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, N. N. (1996). *What Matters Most:*

*Teaching for America's Future. Report of the National Commission on Teaching &*

*America's Future*. Woodbridge, VA: National Commission on Teaching and America's

Future. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED395931

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, (2007). *The high cost of teacher turnover*. Retrieved May 5, 2011, from <http://www.nctaf.org.html>

Office of Postsecondary Education (ED), W. D. (2013). *Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing: 1990-91 thru 2013*.

Patton, M. Q. (1993, 2003). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pink, Daniel. (2011). *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Rayfield, R., & Diamantes, T. (2004). Task analysis of the duties performed in secondary school administration. *Education, 124*(4), 709-712. Retrieved November 30, 2009 from Academic Search Elite database.

Shields, R. A., Lewis, C., & Education Resource, S. (2012). *Rethinking the value proposition to improve teaching effectiveness. Rethinking teacher compensation*. Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED541223)

Smith, T. K., Connolly, F., Pryseski, C., & Baltimore Education Research Consortium, (2014).

SS High District Board Minute. (2015) (Available from St. Joseph School District, 10th and Felix, St. Joseph, MO 64501)

Strauss, V. (2015, June 12). Why so many teachers leave - and how to get them to stay. *The*

*Washington Post*. Retrieved March 24, 2017, from

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/06/12/why-so-many-teachers-leave-and-how-to-get-them-to-stay/?utm\\_term=.468065d6424c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/06/12/why-so-many-teachers-leave-and-how-to-get-them-to-stay/?utm_term=.468065d6424c)

Teoh, M. & Coggins, D. (2013). *Great expectations: Teacher views on elevating the profession*.

Boston: Teach Plus. Retrieved from

[www.teachplus.org/uploads/Documents/1350917768\\_Teach%20Plus%20Great%20Expectations.pdf](http://www.teachplus.org/uploads/Documents/1350917768_Teach%20Plus%20Great%20Expectations.pdf).

This Fabulous Century (1st Ed.). (1969). New York, Time-Life.

Thomas, A. (2017). Why teachers quit. *The Best Schools*, Retrieved March 24, 2017 from

<http://www.thebestschools.org/magazine/why-teachers-quit/>

TNTP. (2012). *Greenhouse schools: How schools can build cultures where teachers and students thrive*. Brooklyn, NY: TNTP. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED537054)

United States Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education (2013). *Preparing and credentialing the nation's teachers: The ninth report on teacher quality*. Washington,

D. C. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/teachprep/index.html>

*Wahwahlanawah, (1911, 1920, 1921, 1927, 1931, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1943, 1947, 1966, 1971)*.

Watson, J. M. & Olson-Buchanan, J. B. (2016). Can job embeddedness help predict novice teacher retention? *Educational Leadership Review*, 17(1), 1-16.

Williams, W.W. (2009). Back to square 1. *Educational Leadership*, 67(2), 40-44.

Wallace Foundation. (2010). Reimagining the job of leading schools: Lessons from a 10-year journey. *Journal of Staff Development*, 31(2), p. 10-12.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Inc.

## Appendix A

### Informed Letter of Consent

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

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide an urban Midwestern school information concerning perceptions of teachers on why they continue to teach. The study sought to find reasons for why teachers stay in the profession as well as why they stay in the specific building in the study or whether that is a factor at all. The results from the study adds to the body of research available on motivation and satisfiers for teachers, especially in this urban Midwestern school building.

#### Procedures

By giving your written consent to participate in the study, you are consenting to (a) be interviewed or be a member of a focus group for a maximum of one hour, and/or (b) provide relevant documents, and/or (c) be available for follow up questions for a maximum of one hour. With your permission at the time of your interview(s) or focus group, the conversation will be audio recorded, and the recording will be kept in a secure location for seven years after it is transcribed. If you do not give permission for such recording, it will not be done. All materials related to the study will be stored in a locked file cabinet within a locked office when not in use. You may choose to receive a copy of the finished study.

#### Risks

There are no risks to you associated with participating in this study.

#### Benefits

The benefits of participating in this study include gaining a better understanding of why teachers remain in certain school buildings or the profession in general. The benefit to you as a participant include better understanding the motivators teachers need to stay focused and engaged within the profession. The benefit to the academic community includes broadening the understanding of what kind of culture, climate, resources, and organizational structure is needed to hire and retain high quality teachers.

## **Participant Confidentiality**

Although names of individuals and agencies will be collected, they will not be used in any written reports of the findings of the study. Through use of a data coding system and pseudonyms, diligent effort will be made to preserve the anonymity of participants and agencies.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

## **Refusal to Sign Consent and Authorization**

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

## **Cancelling This Consent and Authorization**

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Beery Johnson, 9998 Johnson Rd SE Agency, MO 64401

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

## **Questions About Participation**

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

## **Participant Certification:**

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact the University of Missouri's Campus Institutional Review Board at [umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu), call 573.882.9585, or write the Campus Institutional Review Board, Office of Research, University of Missouri, 483 McReynolds Hall, Columbia, MO 65211.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. I affirm that I am at least 18 years old

and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

**Researcher Contact Information:**

Beery Johnson

Principal Investigator

9998 Johnson Rd SE

Agency, MO 64401

816.271.3620

beery.johnson@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Carole Edmonds, Ed.D.

Faculty Advisor

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Northwest Missouri State University

Maryville, MO

660.562.1258

cake@nwmissouri.edu

## Appendix B

### Teacher Interview Questions

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you taught at this school?
2. How many years of teaching experience do you have overall?
3. Where did you grow up?
4. Were you aware of this school when you were young?
5. What grade and subject do you teach?
6. Have you taught any other grades or subject areas?
7. Tell me about this school.
8. What do you like/dislike about SS High School?
9. Maurice Elias defines school culture as the “sum total of behaviors and interactions of all adults and children, their attitudes and norms, and the extent to which the school is safe, supportive, healthy, engaging, inspiring, and challenging for all. Culture is what we do in the school” (2015). How do you view the culture of South High School?
10. Elias defines school climate as “the collective perception of how well school provides suitable conditions for learning; for positive social, emotional, and character development; for all staff to grow professionally; and for parents, families, and community resources to become engaged in the school” (2015). How do you view the climate of SS High School?
11. If you were to make a list, what would be the top five reasons you have remained at SS

High School?

12. What reasons have your peers given for leaving SS High School?
13. What could SS High do in the future to retain teachers?

## Appendix C

### Focus Group Questions

1. How long have you taught at this school?
2. How many years of teaching experience do you have overall?
3. Where did you grow up?
4. Were you aware of this school when you were young?
5. What grade and subject do you teach?
6. Have you taught any other grades or subject areas?
7. Tell me about this school.
8. What do you like/dislike about SS High School?
9. Maurice Elias defines school culture as the “sum total of behaviors and interactions of all adults and children, their attitudes and norms, and the extent to which the school is safe, supportive, healthy, engaging, inspiring, and challenging for all. Culture is what we do in the school” (2015). How do you view the culture of South High School?
10. Elias defines school climate as “the collective perception of how well school provides suitable conditions for learning; for positive social, emotional, and character development; for all staff to grow professionally; and for parents, families, and community resources to become engaged in the school” (2015). How do you view the climate of SS High School?
11. If you were to make a list, what would be the top five reasons you have remained at SS High School?
12. What reasons have your peers given for leaving SS High School?
13. What could SS High do in the future to retain teachers?

## VITA

Sidney “Beery” Johnson III was raised on a farm in a small, but successful and close-knit community. He was a good, but not excellent, student preferring to follow more often than lead early in life. Childhood entailed school five days per week, Saturdays were for farming, church every Sunday morning followed by the cutting of wood or playing football in the yard with siblings and when lucky, friends.

Beery graduated from East Buchanan High School in Gower, MO where he was active in athletics, music, and was president of the FFA chapter. He then attended the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO where he graduated with a General Agriculture degree with an Economics emphasis. In 1988, he went back to his first love, the family farm, where he became a partner in the farming operation, which consisted of hogs, cattle, corn, and soybeans. He was somewhat a pioneer in farm bookkeeping with computers and enjoyed the working and management of the business.

It was on the farm that he met the love of his life Tracy as they worked to layout a hog manure lagoon. They were married within six months and had their first child after a year and four children in three and half years. Lauren Hequembourg was born in 1993 and graduated from Mizzou in 2016. Sidney Beery IV was born in 1995 and is now in the Air Force in Germany. The “twins,” Alexandra Kirby and Connor Rae, were born five minutes apart in 1997 and have just finished their first year of college. Tracy is a business teacher at Truman Middle School.

After farming for eight years and not much money to show for it, Beery decided to pursue an additional life dream of teaching. He attended Missouri Western State University and earned a second bachelor’s degree, this time in History. Beery began his teaching career at

Truman Middle School in St. Joseph, MO. He taught Civics three years before being selected as an Assistant Principal at Bode Middle School in St. Joe. He was an Assistant Principal for three years before becoming the Principal back at Truman Middle School where he served at the helm for seven years.

Beery was a collaborator and leader during the years the district implemented various middle level principles to the district. The middle school leadership team was able to improve the professional development of staff with an improved model and presented on the topic at the National Middle School convention in Indianapolis, IN.

Beery accepted the position of Assistant Director for Student Services, Safety, and Transportation for the St. Joseph School District in 2010 where he served for three years. He had many hats in this role; one was coordinator for the worker's comprehensive insurance for the district where by the end of his tenure in the downtown office, the experience modification rate, which is how they calculate rates, was the lowest in the state for school districts that in turn lowered rates for the district. He was also the Director of Safety when tragedy struck the district when a student was hit by a bus and killed. As Director of Transportation, Beery took the district through a RFP process that landed the district a contract with a new bus company for the first time in its history. Transportation for the district's over 5,000 daily riders improved dramatically.

Beery's love for students pulled him back to building leadership in 2013 when he was chosen as Principal for Benton High School. He has enjoyed working with high school students while working with a fantastic team of educators. Athletics and music have always been important in his life and the school has an abundance of quality programs that he enjoys working with.

Beery still loves to farm and if not at school, you can usually find him there helping his brother and dad with the farming operation. He also enjoys church activities, movies, golf, and family gatherings. He lives with his wife and children, when they are home, in the original family farmhouse headquarters that he and Tracy remodeled in 2012 and where they first met back in January 1992.