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Understanding the Circumstances That Contribute to Teacher Retention and Attrition in an Urban School District and the Impacts of Financial Incentives on Teacher Retention

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Understanding the Circumstances That Contribute to Teacher Retention and Attrition in an Urban School District and the Impacts of Financial Incentives on Teacher Retention

by
MeShelley Sams

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by MeShelley Sams under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

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MeShelley Sams
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Name

July 24, 2023____
Date

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My journey in education has empowered me to embark on the journey to complete this dissertation in an area that is near and dear to my heart, teacher retention. I would like to take the time to thank all the students, and coworkers whose presence in my professional life ultimately helped to mold me and prepare me for every new adventure along my career path. Each adventure prepared me for the next. I now see why the path I have taken has manifested the way that it has.

It is my desire to continue to make a difference in the lives of others and to work to improve the educational system, one action at a time. The success of our nation is dependent upon the collective efforts of all of society. To show up and be the best for others, we must be the best for ourselves and our family.

To my son, Jordan White, I love you and I thank you for your unwavering support. You have caused me to reflect and have taught me many things along the journey of motherhood. I am forever grateful, and I know that you will continue to be great, giving and a leader of others, as you naturally are. Put all your trust and faith in God, and he will guide your path, just as he has guided mine.

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I thank you for all that you are. I am here to receive and to continue the journey that you have ordained for me. In life, we don't always choose the journey; sometimes, the journey chooses us.

Abstract

Understanding the Circumstances That Contribute to Teacher Retention and Attrition in an Urban School District and the Impacts of Financial Incentives on Teacher Retention MeShelley Sams, 2023: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: financial incentives, working conditions, job satisfaction, organization fit

This study is aimed at understanding the circumstances that contribute to teacher retention and attrition in urban schools in the Southwestern United States. Harris et al. (2019) reported that at the national level, 16% of all teachers attrit yearly. Attrition contributes to the increasing teacher shortage problem that many districts face.

The purpose of the study, guided by Chris Argyris' organizational theory, examined the circumstances that contribute to the attrition of highly qualified teachers and the extent financial incentives are linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers. This qualitative phenomenological study involved 9 teachers, interviewed with a researcher designed interview protocol, who are employed in urban schools serving elementary, middle, and high school campuses, who received a financial incentive as a supplement to their base salary within the past 5 years. Participants discussed circumstances they encountered through their lived experiences working as a classroom teacher may have influenced their decision to remain or stay with a school.

An analysis of the data revealed that financial incentives are not the primary reasons teachers remain in or leave a position. Other factors, such as working conditions, leadership and support outweigh the attractiveness of small, unsustainable financial incentives. The researcher found that if financial incentives are offered as an enticement for retention, they should be substantial and sustainable.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

School districts continue to struggle with teacher recruitment, retention, mobility, and ultimately attrition. These are complex, intertwined issues that districts have tried to address with multiple strategies over the years; yet, the challenge remains, affecting some of our most vulnerable student populations. For students to succeed, they must have access to high-quality teachers delivering instruction in stable teaching environments, with little turnover (See et al., 2020).

Teacher shortages have reached critical levels, and the main cause is teacher attrition (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). As the student population continues to grow, teacher shortages are expected to continue to increase (See et al., 2020). According to Arviv-Elashiv et al. (2021) 20 to 50 percent of new teachers abandon the profession early in their careers, based on international survey data. In the US, 40-50 percent of new teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years of working (See et al., 2020 a). Harris et al. (2019) reported that an estimated 16% of all teachers may attrit at the national level each school year. In an urban district in the southwestern United States, a 2% change in unfilled positions occurred between the '20 -'21 and '21-'22 school year. During the '20-'21 school year, 36 teaching positions were unfilled, and during the '21-'22 school year, 64 positions remained unfilled, and more submitted resignation letters as the school year progressed (Skyward data 2022). 2015-2016 school year, there were over 64,000 teacher vacancies, and by 2018, that number almost doubled, with a shortage of 112,000 teachers. The trend will continue, and according to Sutcher et al., (2016 a),

teacher demand will increase by 20%, with the annual deficit for "reaching 316,000 per year by 2025", (p. 3).

Districts work to attract and retain teachers who are effective practitioners. Over time, veteran teachers become seasoned in their craft, positively impacting student performance. Districts have experienced more difficulty attracting and retaining high-quality teachers in high poverty schools, and harder to staff schools are more likely to experience turnover of experienced, high-quality teachers (See et al., 2020 b; Shifrer et al., 2017). Federal legislation provided a working definition of high-quality teachers under No Child Left Behind.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), authorized by the federal government in 2001, and signed into law in 2002, describes a "highly qualified teacher" (HQT) as a teacher with (a) proof of a bachelor's degree, (b) a state certification and (c) evidence of mastery of content (PSEA Education Services, 2016, p.1). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB in 2015 and left the definition of "highly qualified" up to individual states to determine. (PSEA Education Services, 2016). Even after NCLB, allowed individual states to determine necessary teacher qualifications, challenges remained in the realm of recruiting and keeping "highly qualified" teachers in the classroom (PSEA Education Services, 2016). For this research study, "highly qualified" teachers will be synonymous with the terminology high quality, keeping in mind how NCLB and ESSA defined "highly qualified" (PSEA Education Services, 2016) teachers.

The problem to be addressed in this study is the impact of financial incentives on teacher retention and attrition in urban districts in the southwestern United States. The

financial incentives that are the focus of this study consist of: recruitment and retention bonuses, critical shortage stipends and Teacher Incentive allotment (TIA) funds for teachers who qualify. TIA funding relative to teacher retention has not been investigated. This study aims to discover how financial incentives may impact recruitment, retention, mobility, and attrition of high-quality teachers, and understand the factors that contribute to teacher retention and the impacts of financial incentives on retaining teachers within districts facing critical shortages. Teacher turnover and rising student populations have contributed to the teacher shortage issue. Additionally, teacher shortages of highly qualified teachers are more critical in some subject areas, such as special education, math, and science (See et. al, 2020 a).

Financial incentives have long been one of the strategies used to attract and retain teachers, especially in struggling schools. It has been suggested that in schools with high minority, low socioeconomic student populations, increases of up to 50% compensation may be necessary to attract teachers (See et al., 2020 a). Additionally, See et al. (2020 a) reported that recent studies suggest that during the early careers of teachers, salary supplements be utilized as a tool to retain teachers, especially in critical shortage areas.

Phenomenon of Interest

Classroom teacher shortages have persisted over the years; however, since the pandemic began in 2020, it has become increasingly difficult for districts to recruit and retain qualified teachers. At the start of the 2022-2023 school year, classrooms across the nation did not have enough qualified teachers and resorted to filling vacancies with long term substitute teachers when certified teachers were not available for hire. Many districts raised teacher salaries and utilized incentives and increased teacher salaries to

attract and retain teachers for the 2022-2023 school year (Vivinetta, 2022). The phenomenon of interest is the impact of financial incentives on teacher recruitment and attrition as teacher shortages continue to pose a challenge to districts.

Background and Justification

Lack of teacher retention, increasing mobility, along with high attrition rates contributes to the shrinking pool of qualified candidates, and causation is difficult to identify because it is multi-faceted (Harris et al., 2019). Hanks et al., (2020) asserted that teacher recruitment, student enrollment and student attrition have reached a state of imbalance, increasing teacher shortages. While student enrollment is up, the number of graduates choosing a career in teaching is down, and some teachers are choosing to leave the profession. Student achievement and organizational culture are negatively impacted because of attrition and the lack of high-quality instructors (Harris et al., 2020).

Sullivan et al. (2017) reported that teachers may choose to leave a school or a district and still remain in the profession. However, migration of teachers between schools and districts can negatively impact the shortage issue, especially in schools with disadvantaged students. Sullivan et al. (2017) reviewed data conducted by teams of researchers from the two following organizations: American Institutes for Research, and Empirical Education, submitted to the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), and reported that teacher mobility increased from 19% during the 2011-2012 school year to 22% during 2015-2016 school year (Sullivan et al., 2017). According to Miller and Youngs (2021), mobility and retention may be linked to organizational characteristics, teacher characteristics, working conditions and person-

organization fit. The interpretation of possible linkages of these variables may help policymakers and districts predict which teachers leave and which teachers stay.

Miller and Youngs (2021) maintained that since the 1980s, attrition rates in US schools have continued to be a cause of concern. Furthermore, schools tend to hire teachers with less experience to fill vacant positions. Students taught by teachers with less experience are exposed to less effective instruction than students in schools where turnover rates are not as high (Miller & Youngs, 2021).

 Under ESSA, states were given more autonomy in deciding how to qualify teachers to ease the burden on states (PSEA Education Services, 2016). Even under the new Act, schools have been hard-pressed to combat the shrinking pool of high-quality teachers. Hanks et al. (2020) stated,

> In fact, some states have been so hard-pressed to find sufficient numbers of highly qualified teachers to fill their classrooms that they have had to resort to pushing back against the federal policy with legislation of their own that eliminates (or temporarily suspends) many of the traditional requirements of becoming a teacher (p. 118).

Classrooms have been filled with underqualified and unprepared teachers who end up leaving the classroom early, worsening the teacher shortage problem.

Additionally, students who are taught by highly qualified teachers are more likely to make achievement gains. Schools with higher numbers of minority students from low-

income homes have been hit hardest, with fewer highly qualified teachers choosing to remain in those hard to staff schools (Hanks et al., 2020).

The cost to replace teachers who leave can result in the use of time and resources. Additional resources consist of expenses related to recruitment, training, onboarding, and separation (Sutcher et al., 2016). Attrition can cost a school district over $12,000, up to 30% of the average annual teacher salary as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor (Harrell, et al., 2019). Frontline Education conducted a study and received a response with representation of all 50 states and over 1,180 school leaders. Over 66% of respondents indicated that they experienced a teacher shortage in their district. Furthermore, up to 73 % of large districts and over 75% of mid-size districts are experiencing teacher shortages (Frontline Education, 2021).

Hanks (2020) reported that teacher shortages are a growing challenge in schools across the nation. Teacher shortages are at critical levels in schools serving disadvantaged students, especially in core content courses, bilingual and special education (Gu, 2014; Frontline Education, 2021). Although recruitment is an area of concern as schools are forced to compete for qualified teachers to fill vacant positions, retention seems to be an even greater challenge than recruitment over time, especially in schools with high minority and low socioeconomic populations (Harris et al., 2020). Attrition, whether associated with movement between schools, districts, or teachers leaving the profession altogether, can be attributed to multiple factors, and districts and charter schools have implemented various interventions to try and combat the problem over the years. According to See et al. (2020 a), some strategies that have been utilized consist of:

monetary incentives, professional development, access to mentors, varying certification pathways, perceived and actual support from campus leadership as well as offerings for housing incentives.

Of the latter interventions, monetary incentives seem to be most effective in recruitment and retention efforts by schools; however, the effects have not been lasting, and do not appear to be equally effective in schools with vulnerable populations. According to See et al. (2020 a), the financial enticements connected to schools with greater achievement gains and fewer at-risk students have proven to be effective. See et al. (2020 a) further suggested that financial incentives tied to schools with vulnerable populations should reflect the challenge of teachers working with at risk populations in low performing schools.

All in all, teacher attrition is a costly problem that districts face. Unfortunately, critical shortages occur throughout the nation, but students in disadvantaged schools may suffer the most due to the shortages. Various factors lead to teacher attrition, and there is a need to understand what factors may influence teachers 'decisions to leave a district or remain with a district and how financial incentives impact teacher retention within districts.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

Linkages between financial incentives and teachers' decisions to choose to work in an organization, leave or stay, despite challenges, are yet to be fully understood. How teachers decide on where to work and whether they will stay may be linked to how they feel they fit the organization, and willingness to remain in a challenging environment when presented with financial incentives. Furthermore, it is important to understand how

teachers view themselves within their organization and whether they feel they fit the environment they work in and are satisfied with the job, despite any offering of financial incentives used by districts to attract and retain them.

Tsui et al. (1992) in their seminal work on organizational attachment, a precursor to studies on organization theory, explained how people attach to an organization based on demographic characteristics like age, gender, race and group membership. Assessing teacher job satisfaction through the lens of self-categorization theory, examining how individuals develop their identity within an organization according to social characteristics, and by assessing relational demography among teachers and school leaders, for instance, could help explain why some teachers remain with schools and why others choose to leave (Tsui et. al, 1992). Understanding how likely teachers' decision to leave or remain in a school might be influenced by financial incentives may illuminate why teachers feel the way they do about their workplace environment, how they fit in that environment, the skills they possess, the qualifications they are required to have, and why some may be better suited for one school over another.

Miller and Youngs (2021) examined organizational fit among teachers and their peers and suggested further research in that area as well as expanding research along the lines of developing person-organization fit among first year teachers on a campus and those with more experience. Another area of research would be to compare person organization fit of teachers with more than 15 years of experience with the results of those with five or fewer years to look for trends and commonalties related to assimilation into the organization and financial incentives to better inform hiring practices. By obtaining this knowledge and constructing plans for policy implementation, districts and

schools may get a step closer to solving the teacher shortage and retention crisis.

Additional research on how financial incentives may influence a teachers' decision to leave or stay may provide an understanding of whether financial incentives may offset some of the negative aspects of a school environment, working conditions, and leader support that a teacher may weigh when considering whether to leave or remain in a position.

With this study, I intend on illuminating the factors that contribute to teacher retention. Furthermore, I will add to the research by providing evidence from teachers' lived experiences of how financial incentives impact teachers who choose to remain in urban districts with teacher shortages. This study will assist policymakers in understanding how to best apply financial incentive programs or approaches to impact retention in a school district.

Audience

Teachers, principals, and hiring managers will benefit from future study related to financial incentives and the possible linkages to teachers' decisions to leave or stay. The goal is to place teachers in environments, amongst colleagues, that best support their own qualities and independent professional needs so that they remain, and students are exposed to consistent, high-quality instruction. Hiring managers can utilize information to hire and place qualified candidates in schools that are best suited for them.

Definitions of Terms

Several terms have been identified by the researcher that are critical in understanding the intertwined mechanisms behind teacher retention and attrition. Moreover, the terms help to illuminate the background and justification of this study and

will aid in discovery of how financial incentives may influence a teacher's decision to remain in a school amidst challenges and factors relevant to the job that they may face. Relevant terms used throughout this study are defined below.

Challenging Schools

Challenging schools in this study are schools described as having high poverty, majority minority student populations, low performing campuses. These campuses have difficulty in recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and financial incentives have been used as a recruitment and retention tool (Camelo & Ponczek, 2021; Rice et. al, 2015; Gunther, 2019).

Critical Shortage Areas

Critical shortage areas in Texas consist of bilingual, secondary English, special education, foreign language, career and technical education (CTE) and STEM. Teachers who teach these subjects receive a stipend on top of the base salary (Texas Education Agency, n.d.).

Financial Incentives

For this study, financial incentives are defined as additional monetary payment for the rendering of teaching services in critical shortage areas such as: bilingual, math, science, and special education instruction. Additionally, adjustments to the teacher salary matrix, Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) funds, and recruitment and retention incentives are considered as financial incentives for teachers for the purpose of this study. Other incentives have been used in the past by various educational systems in the U.S. and abroad and have consisted of housing, loan forgiveness, addition to base salary pay, scholarships and tuition assistance (See et al., 2020 a).

Human Resources Practices

Principals play a crucial role in the hiring process due to the level of autonomy they practice in terms of hiring and retention of teachers. HR practices refers to the acts of recruitment, selection, orientation, and retention (Vekeman et al., 2019).

Job Satisfaction

For this study, job satisfaction refers to teachers' satisfaction with the position they hold relative to their level of comfort and whether they feel fulfilled in a position. The level of comfort can further be defined by how satisfied a teacher is with the conditions of employment. Fulfillment pertains to how satisfied teachers are with their own accomplishments and perceived success (Toropova et al., 2021).

Organization Fit

Organization fit is the concept of compatibility between workers and the organization, and can be conceptualized considering the values, skills, goals, and abilities of the worker and how the worker aligns with the characteristics of the organization (Youngs et al., 2015).

Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA)

The Teacher Incentive Allotment is a component of House Bill 3, created by the Texas Legislature, designed to recognize, and award effective teachers. Under TIA, districts receive extra funding from the state; subsequently, 90% of TIA funding must be allocated to teacher compensation. Teachers who qualify to receive TIA funds receive a designation of Recognized, Exemplary or Master teacher, and can move between districts that have developed a designation and been approved by the Texas Education Agency (Texas Education Agency, n.d.)

Teacher Shortages

Teacher shortages are defined simply as the limited number of teachers available to the student population. Additionally, teacher shortages are associated with fewer teacher candidates enrolling in teacher preparation programs, attrition, changing demands for educational preparation programs, changes in the student population and one's desire to become a teacher (Sutcher et al., 2019 b).

Working Conditions

Working conditions refer to the environment and interactions teachers may face when working in schools. The school setting and environment, workload, and characteristics of peers and student body are all factors relevant to teacher perception of their working conditions (Toropova et al, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to discover the factors that contribute to the retention and attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district and to understand how financial incentives such as critical shortage stipends, recruitment and retention bonuses, adjustments to the teacher salary matrix and Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) funds may be linked to highly qualified teacher retention and a reduction in teacher shortages.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This review will highlight the theoretical perspective that will help the reader to understand teacher attrition and retention through the lens of organization fit. An explanation of the seminal work on organization theory sets the tone for an overview of retention and attrition of highly qualified teachers, organization fit, principal and teachers' leadership characteristics. Furthermore, a synthesis of studies on job satisfaction helps the reader to understand predictors of teachers' intent to stay in a school. Next, a review of literature on organizational characteristics and compensation, delving into the importance of human resource practices by campus leaders follows. Finally, an in-depth review of financial incentives and the retention of highly qualified teachers and the reduction of teacher shortages and financial incentive program offerings are reviewed. These topics are shared with the reader to help provide perspective on what policies have promise for future teacher retention.

Theoretical Perspective

Understanding the problem of teacher shortages in urban, public schools in the southwestern United States is grounded in facets of organization theory. Organization theory grew out of the seminal work of Christ Argyris, a psychologist who specialized in organizational behavior. Argyris' work focused on organizational learning and how individuals fit within an organization. Specifically, Argyris (1978) asserted that the distribution of information within organizational hierarchies creates the space for dominant and submissive roles. Furthermore, those who hold the information occupy dominant roles within the organization, with submissive employees holding less

information. These hierarchical structures can be counterproductive to the work environment. However, Argyris (1978) pointed out that, within an organization, workers have the ability to process information and in effect, solve problems, outside of a hierarchical structure. Furthermore, Argyris (1978) contends that if knowledge and information are not applied effectively by those who possess it, it is useless. According to Bokeno, (2003) Chris Argyris' work highlighted how dysfunction within organizations can lead to stifling environments, inhibiting growth, positive change, and the acceptance of mediocrity.

Schneider (1987) later elaborated on Argyris' work with his attraction-selection framework, the center of organization theory. Schneider's theory provides a framework for understanding the complexities of an organization and how people within the organization interact within the structure, impacting recruitment and retention cycles.

Additionally, researchers French, Rodgers, and Cobb (1974) proposed an aspect of organization fit, person-environment (P-E) fit theory, a multi-faceted approach to evaluating how a person's characteristics fit with those of the organization they work in. According to Caplan (1987), person-environment fit theory provides a framework to interpret interrelationships between the needs of the employee and the demands required of the employee on the job, from the lens of objective fit and subjective fit (Caplan, 1987). Objective fit, according to Caplan (1987), is a difficult measure to evaluate within the realm of behavioral sciences. The studies in this review illustrate Caplan's conclusion, regarding objective fit.

According to Youngs and Miller (2021), organization theory is rooted in industrial organization psychology research. The focus of the research in the industrial

sector is worker retention and conservation of costs (Miller & Youngs, 2021).

Organization theory provides a means for understanding how employees integrate into

the work environment, the level of engagement, job satisfaction, certain phenomena in

the workplace, and whether an employee will stay with an organization (Caplan, 1987).

Furthermore, out of all categories of person-environment (P-E) fit, person-organization

(P-O) fit is the most studied (Miller & Youngs, 2021). Although the research on

organization fit and public schools is new and emerging, the concepts mirror that of

previous industrial organization research, encompassing retention of teachers, the impact

of work environment, job satisfaction, and conservation of resources (Youngs et al.,

2015).

Retention and Attrition of Highly Qualified Teachers

Teacher connectedness and whether teachers feel they fit and are received into the

culture of the organization may be a predictor of teacher retention. This section provides

a glimpse of how organization fit may influence teacher retention and attrition. Aspects

of organization theory, a multi-faceted theory, helps the reader to understand how an

employee fits within an organization and the implication of fit relative to retention and

attrition of teachers in public schools.

Organization Fit

Miller and Youngs (2021) asserted that organization fit is a determinate of

whether first year teachers leave or stay with a school. Miller and Youngs conducted a

study, utilizing retention data from a large mixed-methods study, the Elementary Teacher

Preparation Project (ETPP) of first year teachers (FYT) over a period of four years. The

ETPP program graduates were invited to participate in the Miller Youngs study. The

purpose was to determine what might be the strongest predictor of teacher retention. Miller and Youngs (2021) utilized the following measures to assess fit: retention, school characteristics, teacher characteristics, principal observation and mentoring, and teacher preparation program experiences of teachers. The teachers were followed from pre-service training up to the second or third year of teaching. The study revealed that FYT who had stronger connections with their teaching colleagues were less likely to leave the school where they first started teaching. Furthermore, Miller and Youngs (2021) suggested that schools should work with first year teachers to evolve person-organization fit with other teachers in the school to increase retention. Miller and Young (2021) suggested that there is a deficiency in the evidence regarding organization fit within schools, and future studies should focus on how to accomplish the development of person-organization fit between FYT and other teachers on a campus.

Conversely, Player et al. (2017) examined teacher mobility, person-job fit, and the relation to principal leadership, rather than fit among teacher colleagues. The purpose of the quantitative study was to understand how principal leadership and person-job fit impacted mobility. Utilizing data from Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS), connected to over 3000 teachers, along with principal and teacher questionnaires, researchers concluded that principal leadership was a predictor of whether teachers stay with their current school. Interestingly, Player et al. (2017) found that teacher and school organization-fit were not as closely associated with teacher retention as principal leadership characteristics. Furthermore, teachers who perceived their principal leaders to had strong leadership characteristics were more likely to remain within their school, but this factor did not influence their decision to remain

with the profession over time (Player et al. 2017).

Finally, different groups reported differing opinions of principal leadership. Teachers who worked at the elementary level perceived a stronger level of principal leadership in comparison to secondary teachers. Teachers who were new to the profession reported their principal leaders to have stronger leadership characteristics than their experienced peers, and teachers over 50 reported weaker leadership than younger teachers. In comparison to male teachers, female teachers reported weaker principal leadership, and minority teachers in the study reported their principal leaders to have stronger leadership qualities than their white counterparts. Finally, those who were members of the teacher union were more likely to report weak principal leadership (Player et al., 2017).

Both the Miller and Youngs (2021) and Player et. al (2017) studies had limitations that inhibit interpretation and warrant future examination. The Miller and Youngs (2021) study utilized a smaller sample size for data collection (n=159), indicating that some variables were likely unobserved. Player et. al (2017) pointed out that the data from TFS and SASS did not identify who left the teaching profession altogether and those who left to pursue other interests but eventually returned to teaching. However, both studies point out that the influence and cooperation of fellow teaching colleagues and principal leadership impact a teacher's perceived P-O fit. In conclusion, worker congruence among workers is a strong determinate of P-O fit and whether a teacher chooses to stay at a school (Miller & Youngs, 2021; Player et al., 2017).

Principal and Teachers' Leadership Characteristics

In two studies on principal and teacher leadership characteristics that I review in

this section, the researchers investigated the impact teacher characteristics and principal characteristics had on teacher retention. Teachers who are in environments with campus leaders who are perceived to be supportive and whose characteristics align with the characteristics a teacher perceives their principal should have, are more likely to remain on that campus (Urick, 2016). When characteristics of the principal and teacher align, a shared approach to collective decision-making evolves, and has a positive effect on relationships, promoting a positive environment, conducive to teacher retention, according to Urick (2016). The following two studies illustrate that point.

Urick (2016) conducted a quantitative study utilizing a multilevel class approach to identify teacher leadership and principal leadership with the purpose of uncovering teacher perception of school leadership, school leaders' perception of their own leadership, and how teachers may correlate the two, drawing conclusions based on those perceptions. The study results indicated that based on those perceptions, teachers make decisions about whether to remain in a school or leave (2016). The study provided a means of examining how different teacher styles and leadership styles correlate, concluding that teachers who viewed their principals as transformational leaders who engaged staff and encouraged professional development perceived the school environment to be a positive environment; consequently, they were more committed to the job of teaching and working in the school. Conversely, teachers who viewed their principals as less supportive were more likely to leave the school (Urick, 2016). Campus leadership's perceived level of support seems to play a prominent role in why teachers leave schools; the next study illustrates that observation.

Using a mixed method approach, combining interviews, district test scores, and

focus groups involving the participants in the analysis, Tricarico et al. (2015) surveyed teachers' own perceptions of characteristics that impacted their retention and effectiveness in a school over the course of 5 years. The purpose of the study was to gain insight on what characteristics are common among teachers who continued to teach for at least 5 years (Tricarico et al., 2015). Resilient teachers, described as: exhibiting balance in personal, professional, and situational contexts, along with perceived strong support from school leadership, remained in schools (Tricarico et al., 2015).

Berry et al. (2021) reviewed the results of several different studies conducted over the course of 2 decades for the purpose of understanding the interconnectedness between teachers' perceptions of working condition, student achievement and attrition in North Carolina schools. Urban and rural schools across the state were included in the studies. According to Berry et al. (2021), there is evidence that schools' organizational characteristics may influence teachers' decisions to work in a school or leave the profession. Teachers' perceptions of working environments and their career plans were influenced by the characteristics of the organizations they worked in. Additionally, Berry et al. (2021) reported that within the studies, strong, supportive, campus leadership emerged as the most important factor influencing teachers' decisions to remain in their schools or leave them. Their research revealed that teacher attrition has a detrimental impact on student achievement and reiterated the high costs associated with filling vacated teaching positions.

The research from both studies and the works reviewed by Berry et al. (2021) indicated that characteristics such as work ethic, self-efficacy, passion for teaching, and beliefs about education were strengthened in teachers when they perceived a high level of

support from fellow teachers and campus leadership; all the latter variables influenced teachers to stay with their urban schools and were closely linked to job satisfaction (Tricarico et al., 2015; Urick, 2016).

Job Satisfaction

To gain a deeper understanding of what factors influence teachers' decisions to leave or stay with a school, researchers have conducted studies to understand the complexities of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is closely linked to organization fit and aspects of school environment, such as working conditions (Sass et al., 2011; Toropova et al., 2021). Teachers' intent to quit can be measured by analyzing stressors and characteristics of the work environment (Sass et al., 2011). With studies ranging from 2011 to 2021, researchers have focused on studying how job satisfaction is related to teacher retention.

Sass et al. (2011), investigated how stressors and supports in the work environment impacted teacher retention. The purpose of the Sass et al. (2011) study was to develop a theoretical model to aid in analyzing the complexities of interrelationships of variables involved in teachers' job satisfaction. The researcher collected quantitative data from teachers in three school districts and measured the intent to quit. The variables measured were stressors related to levels of student engagement, workload, job dissatisfaction because of stressors, and support received from fellow teachers and school administrators. Findings revealed that social support from school leadership, along with self-efficacy and how it relates to student engagement were the strongest predictors of whether a teacher intended to remain in a school (Sass et al., 2011).

According to Sass et al. (2011), teachers who felt supported by school leadership

and experienced better behaved students were more likely to be able to handle the job and expressed increased job satisfaction. Furthermore, Sass et al. (2011) suggested that lack of support from school leadership and stressors brought on by students were predictors of job dissatisfaction. Working conditions such as principal leadership, teacher support from professional development and colleagues, and student stressors are all factors that contribute to the characteristics of the organization. Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs and the conditions of the organization may be more likely to remain.

Like the earlier study by Sass et al. (2011), Toropova et al. (2021) studied job satisfaction as it relates to teacher working conditions and teacher characteristics. The research was conducted utilizing quantitative research methodology, using latent variables. Data were collected on 200 eighth grade math teachers, measuring how job satisfaction, working conditions and teacher characteristics are related, with the purpose of investigating how those variables influence teacher retention. Toropova et al. (2021) found that teachers who received meaningful and effective staff development expressed more job satisfaction. Male teachers expressed more job satisfaction with more frequency and positively associated job satisfaction with the cooperation of other teachers. Teachers who deemed themselves as less effective expressed more concern about student behavior when considering job satisfaction.

Sass et al. (2011) and Toropova (2021) highlighted the importance of teacher job satisfaction as it relates to teacher retention. The theoretical model provided by Sass (2011) established a framework for understanding how the interrelationship of variables impacted teacher retention. Job satisfaction and working conditions are directly correlated. Both studies reviewed in this section (Sass et al., 2011; Toropova et al., 2021)

explained the connectedness between job satisfaction and working conditions and indicated that there is no simple explanation as to why teachers leave positions, and the complexity of the issue of job satisfaction can involve multiple variables and is situational.

Human Resources Practices

The characteristics of an organization can have a profound effect on teacher job satisfaction. Leadership support, resources, workload, student characteristics and salary are all factors that teachers consider when deciding whether to remain in a district (Hughes, 2012). Another important aspect of teacher retention is hiring. Hiring practices should encompass strategic planning and provide a preview of the job for teacher candidates to provide candidates a preview of the job and the environment in which they might work (Ellis et al., 2017). The studies highlighted in this section reveal how organizational characteristics and human resource practices impact teacher retention and attrition.

Ellis et al. (2017) conducted a study on hiring practices relative to organization fit. The purpose of the study was to determine how person-organization (p-o) and person-job (p-j) fit are related to teacher satisfaction and the candidate for employment receiving accurate information on what doing the job of teaching is like on a campus. Ellis et al. (2017) concluded that an important predictor of job satisfaction is person-job and person-organization fit, and the effective use of HR practices by school leaders during recruitment is critical in selecting the candidates who best fit the position and organization. Using data from Texas Public School Research Network, districts were selected to participate in a teacher questionnaire as part of a quantitative study. The

questionnaire was designed to interpret how much teachers understood about what to expect in the position, satisfaction with a teaching position, how well they thought they would fit and what they perceived their position would be like prior to beginning work (Ellis et al., 2017). According to Ellis et al. (2017) teacher job satisfaction and organization fit can be directly correlated to an accurate preview of what to expect while on the job. Teachers who had an accurate preview of the job prior to acceptance experienced greater levels of job satisfaction. Ellis et al. (2017) found that hiring managers and principals should do the work to provide prospective employees an accurate preview of the job and school setting to increase job satisfaction and retention.

Much like urban schools, rural schools also experience challenges related to recruitment and retention, and the severity is markedly increased in southern states in comparison the rest of the United States. In comparison to urban schools, rural schools have a more difficult time recruiting and retaining English language learner (ELL) teachers and STEM teachers than their urban counterparts. This challenge leads to hiring managers hiring teachers who are available, rather than qualified in the subject area they teach (Tran et al., 2020). Recruitment can be more of a challenge in rural schools due to lower salaries, geographic location with fewer conveniences than urban locations, as well as fewer resources and professional development opportunities for teachers. Tran et al. (2020) suggested utilizing human resource strategies such as providing teachers with the opportunity to preview the job in the setting in which they might work to aide in teacher recruitment.

Tran et al. (2020) studied teacher shortages, relative to advantages and disadvantages, in rural areas for the purpose of developing realistic job previews (RJP).

The RJP was directly correlated to person -organization-fit. The setting of this study was the South Carolina Lowcountry and involved 11 teachers and one administrator from 5 low-income districts. The districts had limited access to resources and a community comprised of properties with lower values relative to tax base; therefore, revenue was greatly constrained. The Lowcountry, as described by Tran et al., (2020), had many attributes of other rural districts as well as urban school districts. Rural attributes shared by Lowcountry districts other rural districts in coastal South Carolina and included limited industry, entertainment, and grocery stores. Furthermore, the rural districts had high minority populations, gang activity and a high concentration of crime, similar to urban districts (Tran et al., 2020).

According to Tran et al., (2020), realistic job previews (RJP) were used to determine compatibility in teacher candidates, and to improve teacher recruitment and retention, to create a stable rural workforce required that candidates understand the advantages to working in a rural environment while understanding the associated challenges. Some advantages of working in a rural school setting that were mentioned were lower class sizes, desired rural lifestyle, and perceived connectedness. Disadvantages discussed included relatively low compensation in comparison to other careers among people with similar degrees, undesirable geographic areas with limited access to convenience, and less access to professional development. Tran et al. (2020) suggested that the advantages and disadvantages identified in the study provided information useful in developing the RJP in rural schools.

Tran et al. (2020) found that rural teachers considered administrative support, familial culture, connectedness to community, relational ties and networking, smaller

class sizes, a level of autonomy as advantages of working in a rural environment. Challenges expressed by teachers included financial constraints, lack of economic opportunity and low pay, and cultural differences between teachers and students. Ultimately, Tran et al. (2020) suggested that since poor, rural districts have a more difficult time attracting qualified staff, especially due to financial reasons, a different approach to recruitment and retention must be considered. Suggestions considered to increase poor rural schools' competitive advantage were improved professional development and analyzing p-o fit between teachers and the schools and communities in which they serve.

Similar to Ellis et al. (2017), Vekeman et al. (2016) delved into the topic of strategic hiring practice by examining how campus administrators can use Human Resources (HR) practices to determine organization fit for prospective teachers. The purpose of Vekeman et al.'s (2016) study was to help uncover how HR practices utilized by principals may influence organization fit of new teachers. The study was conducted using mixed methods, collecting qualitative and quantitative data with a multi-analysis approach. The qualitative data was collected from principals and converted to a numeric value to compare it with the quantitative collection from teachers.

Findings revealed that principals had varying levels of HR practice competency. The competencies were described as administrative, developmental, and strategic (Vekeman et al., 2016). Additionally, a direct correlation between principals with extensive command (strategic) of HR practices and positive employee job-fit was noted. Furthermore, Vekeman et al. (2016) stated that principals should be supported in learning HR practices as well as work to develop teachers in HR practices. Consequently, shared

leadership emerges on the campus. This collaborative environment lends to collaborative teachers, able to serve as mentors, within a professional learning community. Finally, the researchers found that principals implementing human resource practices can promote a positive culture within the campus, by selecting candidates who are best fit with the organization, resulting in teacher job satisfaction and ultimately retention within a professional learning community (Vekeman et al., 2016). Ultimately, improving human resources practices among school leaders, like providing a preview of the job and increasing principal awareness of human resource practices when recruiting teachers all increase teacher retention (Ellis et al.,2017; Tran et al., 2020; Vekeman et al., 2016). Similarly, organizational characteristics that mesh with the teacher may improve job satisfaction, and retention. The following section highlights connections between organizational characteristics, compensation, and teacher retention.

Organizational Characteristics and Compensation

Within a school district, factors such as: strong leadership supports, teacher perception of self-efficacy, student achievement, job satisfaction and working conditions, minimized stressors, and efforts by the organization to increase teacher salaries, devised with strategic compensation plans, have an effect on teacher retention (Colson and Satterfield, 2018; Hughes, 2012; Sass et al., 2011; Toropova, 2021). Research in this section includes earlier research by Hughes (2012) that supports the notion that the issues have been longstanding and merit attention to help address teacher retention.

Hughes (2012) analyzed organizational characteristics, along with teacher characteristics and teacher efficacy. A quantitative study utilizing teacher surveys and block chain regression analysis was conducted in a southern state for the purpose of

studying how job satisfaction is impacted by organizational and teacher characteristics, school characteristics and teacher efficacy. According to Hughes (2012), the sample size consisted of 10% of the schools in the state. Schools represented in the sample were from all levels, including elementary, middle, intermediate, and high schools.

Organizational characteristics consisted of principal support, facilities, resources, teacher salary, workload and parent and student cooperation. Teacher characteristics included the number of years of teaching experience, level of education, gender, ethnicity, educational attainment level, and subject or content area. Furthermore, school characteristics, for the purpose of this study, consisted of socio-economic status of students, student demographics, performance on standardized tests and school size. Finally, teacher efficacy was described by teachers' ability to motivate, classroom instruction, classroom management practices and use of technology (Hughes 2012).

Survey participants varied in age, race, and teaching experience. Over 86% of survey respondents were female and had an average of 44 years of age. All respondents surveyed held either a bachelor's, and almost 48% earned a master's degree, while just over 3% earned a specialized certificate or doctoral degree. Hughes (2012) found that teachers who worked in high need environments with low socioeconomic students were more likely to remain in teaching. Teachers who indicated that they were considering leaving teaching had plans to advance their careers within the field of education (Hughes, 2012).

Hughes (2012) suggested that districts should reduce teacher workload and offer higher salaries to prevent attrition. Hughes' (2012) study highlights the importance of supports within the work environment, management of workload, salaries, teacher

efficacy and student achievement related to teacher retention. Different from the other two studies mentioned, Hughes points out how increasing teacher salaries can benefit retention of highly qualified teachers over time.

Another study, conducted by Colson and Satterfield (2018) revealed the impact strategic compensation had on teachers described as being highly effective, working in hard to staff areas of special education, secondary math, science, and language arts, compared to highly effective teachers who elected not to participate in the strategic compensation plan in a rural district in Tennessee. The purpose of the study was to identify how financial incentives impacted teacher retention of highly effective teachers as defined by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). The TVAAS measured teacher and school effectiveness and the impact both variables had on student achievement. Information from value-added effectiveness for core content courses and comparison data specific to subject matter for grades 9-12 was also derived from TVAAS.

Using a quasi-experimental method, researchers analyzed retention rates of teachers who elected to participate in a strategic compensation retention plan devised by the district over a period of 4 years and those who elected to remain on the traditional salary schedule (Colson & Satterfield, 2018). Based on the findings of the study, teachers who participated in the strategic compensation plan were retained at the same rate as those who elected not to participate in the plan (Colson & Satterfield, 2018). This study was conducted in a rural district over a 4-year period, and the researchers stated that the results of the study did not reveal any conclusive evidence on whether strategic compensation affected teacher retention. Furthermore, no negative effects on

participation rates were observed as a result of the implementation of the strategic compensation plan among teachers who chose to participate in the program. (Colson & Satterfield, 2018). The Colson and Satterfield (2018) study provided evidence that compensation may play a role in retaining effective teachers. Different from Hughes (2012), Colson and Satterfield (2018) suggested that changes to salary structure, not just a temporary strategic plan, along with training to support teachers in teaching in hard to staff content areas may be of benefit to school systems over time.

In conclusion, the research of Colson and Satterfield, 2018; Hughes, 2012; Sass et al., 2011 and Toropova et al., 2020, supported the notion that work environments, strong leadership supports, teacher perception of self-efficacy, student achievement, minimized stressors, job satisfaction and efforts to increase teacher salaries, play a role in teacher retention. These studies add to the body of knowledge by providing context for school leaders and policy makers regarding complex variables associated with school environment, working conditions, leadership support and teacher retention.

Dimensions of Financial Incentive Programs

In this section, I present a review of several studies that highlight various programs that have been implemented in Brazil and in urban and rural school districts in the US, which help to illustrate how different types of funding and incentive programs yielded different outcomes, depending on the phenomena addressed in the studies. The incentive programs discussed targeted teacher performance as it relates to student achievement, as well as teacher recruitment and retention. This section includes the following subsections: financial incentives to improve teacher retention in urban and rural schools, impact of financial incentives on recruitment and retention in challenging,

hard to staff schools, grant funded programs to impact student achievement and teacher retention, teacher mobility under ProComp, scholarship programs, tuition reimbursement and bonus pay to target critical shortage areas and struggling schools and finally, the use of financial incentives for the purpose of recruitment and retention of National Board-Certified Teachers. A summary of the literature is presented in Appendix A. The appendix provides a summary of the studies presented in the review of the literature in chapter 2 that are specific to financial incentives. The appendix includes a review of the focus and major findings of studies focused on financial incentives to improve teacher retention, the impact of financial incentives in challenging schools, grant funded financial incentives, the ProComp plan and teacher mobility, scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs, and finally, the use of financial incentives for the purpose of recruitment and retention of national board-certified teachers.

The first subsection includes a brief review of two studies that focused on the topics of the retention of highly qualified teachers and the value teachers place on non-monetary incentives in comparison to financial incentives in rural and urban schools. Shifrer et al. (2017) studied how financial incentives might impact the retention of highly qualified teachers, with mixed results. Solomonson et al. (2018) reported that financial factors were not the leading cause of teacher retention in their study on rural agriculture teachers. Collectively, the studies provide a glimpse of how financial incentives have been utilized in some districts to address teacher retention.

Next, I present an overview of four studies that highlighted the effects of financial incentives on recruitment and retention in challenging, hard to staff schools. Each study focused on the impact of financial incentives in schools that were considered challenging,

with high need student populations (Camelo & Ponczek, 2021; Gunther, 2019; Rice et al. 2015; See et al., 2020 b). Camelo and Ponczek, 2021 and Rice et al., 2015, focused their studies on compensation in challenging schools, while Gunther (2019) focused factors related to why teachers choose to work in challenging schools. Finally, See et al. (2020 b), focused on the impact of financial incentives on teacher recruitment and retention in challenging schools.

An overview of 6 studies on grant funded programs that targeted teacher retention and student achievement is also covered under the subsection entitled Grant Funded Programs to Impact Student Achievement and Teacher retention. The Governors' Education Excellence Grant, The IMPACT program in District of Columbia Public Schools, Denver's ProComp, funding disseminated within Texas and Tennessee to public schools, as well as a review of grant funding disseminated to urban charter schools are outlined. The studies included illustrated that grants that were utilized to fund financial incentives, have been consistently sought by different states to impact student achievement and teacher retention, with varying results (Atteberry et al., 2020; Dee & Wycoff, 2017; Henry et al., 2020; Kamal & Jordan, 2016; Springer et al., 2016; Springer & Taylor, 2016).

Additionally, the Denver ProComp program was analyzed with a different angle by Fulbeck and Fulbeck and Richards (2014;2015) with two studies focused on teacher mobility. Fulbeck and Fulbeck and Richards (2014; 2015) measured the effects of teacher compensation on teacher mobility. The 2014 study focused on incentivized program participation and mobility, while the 2015 study delved more into teacher mobility and highlighted some of the reasons teachers provided for why they chose to leave schools

even under the ProComp plan. This study is covered in the section on the impacts of ProComp on teacher mobility.

In the section on scholarship programs, studies focused on the Noyce Scholarship, the Teach for America program (TFA), the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program and the Florida Critical Shortage program are discussed. These programs were designed and implemented to help alleviate teacher shortages in critical need areas and in struggling schools (Feng & Sass, 2015; Smith, 2021; Whitfield et al., 2021; Zahner et al., 2019).

Finally, 3 studies with a focus on financial incentives that were offered by districts for the purpose of recruitment and retention of National Board-Certified teachers are reviewed. The studies included in this section highlight the quality of teachers produced because of gaining National Board certification and how districts sought teachers who earned the certification with the offering of financial incentives but were not always successful in retaining them (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012; Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018; Liang et al., 2015). Studies covered under the headings in this section are summarized in tables in Appendix A.

Financial Incentives to Improve Teacher Retention in Urban and Rural Schools

Urban and rural schools alike have strategized to attract and retain teachers. This section offers an overview of two studies, one centered around urban schools and another with a focus on rural schools. Ultimately, research by Shifrer et al (2017) and Solomonson (2018) indicate the need by policymakers to consider what other factors may influence teachers' decisions surrounding job selection and their intentions related to continued work as a teacher and in what environment.

Shifrer et al. (2017) suggested that financial incentives could be a valuable tool used by districts to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. Shifrer et al. (2017) examined financial incentives relative to student achievement and teacher retention and whether those teachers who made achievement gains were likely to be retained the following year. The financial incentives described in the study included compensation for skills, starting base pay for individual performance as well as pay incentives based on organizational performance. Shifrer et al. (2017) focused on teachers who received large financial awards in comparison to those who received smaller awards within the same school district. The research team evaluated whether the award amount that teachers received, which varied, impacted the teacher performance and retention. Award amounts ranged from $1,200 to $3,500. The study was conducted in an urban, majority minority district and included 3, 363 teachers.

Results of the regression discontinuity quantitative study using census data of students, teachers and schools of a large, urban majority-minority district revealed that financial incentives could not be consistently correlated with teacher retention or student achievement. Shifrer et al. (2017) pointed out that evidence of consistent positive effects of the dissemination of financial incentives to teachers in schools across the district studied and linkages to improved student achievement were not found. It was also noted that there was no evidence to suggest that teachers who received a larger award were more likely to improve student achievement. Shifrer et al. (2017) suggested that students of teachers who received performance pay experienced greater achievement gains compared to students whose teachers did not receive performance pay. Additionally, Shifrer et al. (2017) correlated teacher effectiveness with student achievement, and higher

quality teachers' eligibility to earn bonuses and financial rewards, due to their skills and qualifications, in comparison to their less qualified counterparts, was a direct result of their effectiveness.

However, Shifrer et al. (2017) suggested that the findings relative to teacher retention and financial rewards revealed mixed results. Interestingly, teachers in the study who received larger award amounts were less likely to remain in the district than those who received smaller awards. Finally, it was concluded that in some cases, teachers who received financial incentives may have been more apt to remain in the profession because incentives to augment compensation were available.

In contrast Solomonson et al. (2018) assessed factors related to teacher attrition among Illinois agriculture teachers and determined that factors other than salary were more important to teachers in the rural setting than salary. The purpose of the study was to uncover what factors led to teachers' decisions to leave the profession. The sample population included 91 agriculture teachers who no longer taught and had left within 10 years of the study. The average tenure of the teachers surveyed was 7 years, with 45 out of 91 leaving after serving fewer than 5 years.

Additionally, the survey sample included a sample that reflected similar percentages regarding demographics of agriculture teachers within the state of Illinois. For instance, 51 of the surveyed population were male while 40 were female. The percentage of males teaching agriculture within the state was 57% and 43% were female (Solomonson et al. 2018). This data supported the conclusion by Solomonson et al. (2018) that one gender does not leave the profession at a higher rate than the other.

Teachers in the study reported that salary and financial incentives were not the leading cause of attrition. Teachers in the study worked extended contracts and received additional compensation. This finding was inconsistent with the literature on the topic that Solomonson et al. (2018) reviewed. However, when teachers left their agriculture teaching positions, they had the opportunity to increase their earnings. The average increase in salary reported was 10.1%. Ultimately, teachers cited personal reasons, working conditions, professional development and finally, compensation, as reasons for leaving. In this study, compensation was rated as being the least influential factor considered when teachers were deciding on leaving their positions, while personal reasons ranked first (Solomonson et al. 2018).

The studies conducted by Shifrer et al. (2017) and Solomonson et al. (2018) both revealed that while financial incentives are important factors for teacher retention, teachers may consider other factors when deciding to remain in a district. Shifrer et al. (2017) focused more on teachers in an urban district who were offered financial rewards based on student achievement and found that teachers who received bigger awards did not always remain with the district. The research by Solomonson et al. (2018) focused on agriculture teachers in a rural environment and revealed that teachers in the study prioritized other factors over financial compensation. Compensation was important but was not always the leading cause of teacher attrition. Based on the findings of the latter studies, it is evident that consideration of non-monetary factors must also be considered by stakeholders when evaluating the impact of financial incentives on teacher retention.

Impact of Financial Incentives on Recruitment, Retention and School Improvement in

Challenging, Hard to Staff Schools

In this section I will review studies that covered the impact of financial incentives on recruitment, and retention in challenging schools, both internationally and nationally. The financial incentives reviewed in the 3 studies in this section included augmented compensation schedules, and federal funding to provide for teacher grants for teachers who worked in challenging school environments (Gunther, 2019; Rice et al. 2015). Camelo and Ponczek (2021) studied wage compensation on teacher retention in a high-poverty environment in Brazil, while Rice et al. (2015) researched teachers who worked in challenging environments where Teacher Incentive Funds (TIF) were dispersed within Prince George Public Schools in the state of Maryland. A study by Gunther (2019) ranked factors relevant to teacher retention in challenging schools and indicated that salary was the most important factor in their choice to remain in those challenging schools. Finally, See et al. (2020 b) conducted an analysis using previously collected data to determine the effectiveness of various financial incentives in hard to staff, low-income rural and urban districts.

Students in some of the most challenging environments may have less access to high quality teachers. Turnover in high poverty schools has a negative effect on student achievement. Institutional knowledge like culture, routines and student challenges is lost, and schools are faced with the challenge of rebuilding with new staff when teachers leave. Therefore, retaining teachers in high-needs environments is even more critical. Financial incentives may be an essential factor in attracting and retaining teachers in high

poverty environments. A study on teacher compensation, highlighting working conditions in Brazil by Camelo and Ponczek (2021) offered support for this notion.

According to Camelo and Ponczek (2021), additional compensation can help offset some of the negative consequences of working in less-desirable schools, such as those that have high-need. They suggested that teachers were more willing to work in high-need schools despite any preferences they had prior to choosing a high-need campus.

Camelo and Ponczek (2021) evaluated the effects of wage compensation on teacher retention at a school system in Sao Paolo, Brazil and asserted that wage compensation can help reduce turnover, especially in underperforming schools. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the wage compensation program established in a school system that served over 3 million students and employed over 150,000 teachers, and whether salary increases would offset poor working conditions.

The quantitative discontinuity design study was focused solely on the effect of financial incentives on teacher retention, not connected to performance. Camelo and Ponczek (2021) pointed out that turnover rates in developing countries were higher than in the United States, and teachers in the United States were typically more experienced. Replacing more experienced teachers was more costly since when those teachers left, valuable knowledge and skills were also lost. Additionally, teachers in developing countries faced different challenges than their US counterparts, such as violence, lack of basic infrastructure, extreme poverty, and very low compensation. Camelo and Ponczek (2021) concluded that due to the aforementioned factors, financial compensation programs were more expensive to implement.

Teachers in the Brazil study were compensated an additional 24%-34% on top of their base salaries each month. The base salary equated from $535.20 US to $830.40 US for elementary teachers and from $620.40 US to $961.20 US for secondary teachers. Compensation varied based on teacher certification, with base pay increasing 5% every 5 years. Camelo and Ponczek (2021) revealed in their findings that because of the compensation policy; teacher turnover was reduced because of wage premiums that were provided to teachers working in high-needs schools. As a result, teachers were retained, positively impacting institutional knowledge. Additionally, Camelo and Ponczek (2021) concluded that students reaped the benefit of having veteran teachers and performance improved. Veteran teaching staff contributed to the stability of the learning environment because of their knowledge of leader characteristics, consistent peer relationships, school routines and other institutional knowledge that contributed to the school environment. However, it is important to note that Camelo and Ponczek (2021) pointed out that the wage premium offered did not necessarily attract or retain high quality teachers, and it could not be concluded that the wage premium itself led to improved student achievement. Rather, they suggested that student achievement improved due to the retention of teachers, creating a stable learning environment.

In the United States, Teacher Incentive Funds have been utilized to entice teachers to go to work in and remain in challenging settings. Rice et al. (2015) evaluated how Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) financial incentives motivated teachers to work in certain positions. The TIF funds are federal funds utilized for incentive programs associated with school reform. The researchers utilized a mixed methods design for the purpose of understanding how teacher motivation was influenced by opportunities to

receive financial rewards. There were 280 teachers included in the sample out of 500 that were invited to participate. Specifically, Rice et al. (2015) focused on the TIF grant and how teachers made decisions about program participation based on financial incentives. Study participants included teachers in Prince George County Public Schools (PGCPS) who participated in the FIRST program, which was a performance-based incentive pay program.

The district in the study had a diverse student population, with few resources and 29% of schools were considered low performing under NCLB. Under FIRST, teachers could earn up to $10,000 in incentive pay for improving student achievement, participating in professional development, and working in a critical shortage subject area. The average payout was around $6,000 and Rice et al. (2015) reported that less than half of program participants earned the full $10,000, and some teachers expressed that they felt that the full amount was unattainable, based on the program requirements relative to student achievement (Rice et al. 2015).

Rice et al. (2015) pointed out that teachers based their decisions on where to work, whether to remain in a position or profession and even whether to pursue advance studies on salary and financial incentives. According to Rice et al. (2015) teachers who perceived a small payout associated with incentives left schools at a higher rate than those who received a larger payout. Additionally, elementary teachers were more satisfied with the payouts they received in comparison to middle and high school teachers who participated in the FIRST program.

Rice et al. (2015) concluded that for financial incentives to be impactful, the full award amount must be attainable and eligibility requirements fair and clear. Furthermore,

it was suggested that more research is necessary regarding how incentive programs may change the teacher talent pool and how incentive programs might be used to continue to improve teacher performance and retention.

Gunther (2019) researched the value teachers placed on nonmonetary incentives in comparison to financial incentives when considering teaching positions. The study compared the value teachers placed on working conditions, school characteristics and personal characteristics when choosing positions among competing schools. Using a mixed method design, Gunther (2019) studied 2,212 classroom teachers. The participants were comprised of charter and public-school teachers in the state of Utah in the 2016-2017 school year.

Gunther (2019) utilized a demographic survey and Adaptive Choice Based Conjoint Analysis (ACBC) survey to evaluate financial factors such as salary as well as nonmonetary factors related to job satisfaction, student demographics, school characteristics, leader characteristics, teacher autonomy, teaching assignment, professional development, mentoring, collaboration and planning, and organization fit. The ACBC study was conducted in four phases and was designed to evaluate the importance of the aforementioned factors to teacher candidates. Gunther (2019) pointed out that not all factors could be evaluated by ACBC, resulting in limitations to the study. Additionally, Gunther suggested that some nonmonetary factors mentioned might have been interpreted by teachers completing the survey as proxy to other factors, and these considerations could not be effectively measured. For example, if teachers make inferences regarding socio-economic factors being related to resources, then the survey response would have been impacted by the inclusion or exclusion of that factor. The

researchers could not associate an absolute valuation of non-monetary factors mentioned by teachers (Gunther, 2019).

The first stage of ACBC survey consisted of the concept of participants building their own school, based on desired attributes, and working conditions. Salary was the only factor that candidates did not rank in the first stage of the survey. Candidates selected their preferred level of each factor consider and ranked them from must have to unacceptable (Gunther, 2019). Next, candidates reviewed 50 hypothetical schools and ranked factors that were appealing to them. Based on the candidate responses to the build your own and screening portion results, 3 hypothetical schools were adaptively generated. Finally, the survey results were calibrated, to produce 1 hypothetical school, and study participants were asked to rate how likely they were to work in that school.

Gunther (2019) found in the data analysis that salary was the most important factor to teachers when considering a job. Furthermore, teaching assignment was the most important nonmonetary factor and all nonmonetary factors investigated in the study were less than half important than salary. Additionally, Gunther (2019) found that salary was more of an important factor to experienced teachers compared to novice teachers. Inexperienced teachers were more concerned with the level of support available to them.

Teachers who teach in high shortage areas are less likely to hold a degree relevant to the content they teach (See et. al, 2020 b). Teacher shortages continue to fuel this trend. Financial incentives may help support teacher recruitment and retention, but some evidence indicates that the effectiveness of financial incentives is unclear, due to the lack of cumulative synthesis of results of research studies on the topic (See et al., 2020 b).

See et al. (2020 b) reviewed the research on recruitment and retention from 20 different research studies in order to determine effectiveness of various financial incentives. Data from schools in hard to staff areas like rural or urban, low-income areas was considered for the review. Financial incentives discussed in the research included: stipends, bonuses, wage increase, loans, housing assistance, benefits related to health care and child- care as well as pension and retirement benefits (2020 b).

The analysis by See et al. (2020 b) revealed that the financial incentive approach seems to work. Specifically, teacher recruitment was positively impacted when incentives were offered to teachers to teach in hard to staff areas. See et al. (2020 b) noted that financial incentives were promising tools for recruitment, but less effective for retention. Once the funds were no longer available, teachers were less likely to stay in hard to staff school environments, and in many instances, teachers were required to remain with a district for a specified amount of time if they received a financial incentive to stay (See et al. 2020 b). Ultimately, to retain teachers, See et al. (2020 b), like Gunther (2019) suggested that overall working conditions should be improved in addition to offering financial incentives.

In summary, school systems must prioritize teacher salaries and financial incentives to recruit and retain teachers, especially in challenging environments like those mentioned in this review. The latter should be considered because of the impact on student achievement and the long-term implications of high teacher turnover and subsequent loss of institutional knowledge. Furthermore, as the researchers in this section revealed, financial incentives have been used as a tactic to recruit and retain teachers, but it is important to note that non-monetary incentives hold value for teachers. Teachers'

decisions on choosing where to work and remain in the profession are oftentimes based on non-monetary factors as well (Camelo, R., & Ponczek, V., 2021; Gunther, J., 2019; See et al.2020 b). However, the research presented by Gunther (2019), revealed that salary was the most important factor teachers considered when choosing to work in a school.

Grant Funded Programs to Impact Student Achievement and Teacher Retention

Springer et al. (2016) researched teacher recruitment in the state of Tennessee, while Dee and Wycoff (2017) researched the IMPACT program, designed to assist schools in recruiting highly qualified teachers and improve student achievement. Additionally, Atteberry et al. (2020) analyzed the ProComp program on teacher workforce and student achievement in high needs public schools in Denver. Springer and Taylor (2016) researched the Governor's Excellence Grant on teacher retention and productivity. Henry et al. (2020) examined factors critical to school improvement and the retention of effective teachers. Finally, I review a study conducted by Kamal and Jordan (2016), who analyzed teacher recruitment, retention and subsequently student achievement in charter schools.

According to Springer et al. (2016), highly qualified teachers are less likely to teach in struggling schools with majority-minority, low-income students. Therefore, it was concluded that teachers who work in challenging environments should be better compensated to ensure that they remain in hard to staff rural and urban schools. Furthermore, consideration must be given to nonmonetary incentives when financial compensation cannot be adequately augmented by school districts (Springer et al, 2016).

Researchers Springer et al. (2016) conducted a quasi-experimental evaluation of a retention bonus program that was implemented in the state of Tennessee. The program was designed for effective teachers who taught in schools that were labeled as Priority Schools. Priority schools were considered low performing schools. These schools were ranked at the bottom 5% of the state performance-wise. This study included 2,005 teachers from 56 schools.

The Tennessee retention program, created in the spring of 2013, provided for Priority schools to offer teachers a one-year sign on bonus of $5000 and a $7,000 bonus to entice highly qualified teachers to transfer to Priority schools. This incentive program was created to address the attrition of highly qualified teachers from low performing schools. Teachers who received the incentives were required to remain in the low-income schools for the 2013-2014 school year (Springer et al., 2016).

Springer et al. (2016) investigated how much the retention bonus influenced teachers' decisions to work in a Tennessee priority school as well as whether the retention bonuses impacted students and the state budget because of reduced teacher turnover and associated costs. The researchers found that high performing teachers in tested subjects were 20% more likely to remain in high priority schools when a retention bonus was received compared to teachers who were described as just under highly qualified in tested subjects. Furthermore, Springer et al. (2016) concluded that small amounts given to teachers to augment compensation helped reduce the attrition rate in high needs schools and suggested that further study should be directed toward examining the implications of working conditions and non-monetary incentives on teacher retention.

Critical to understanding how working conditions influence teacher decision making is developing and understanding how working conditions are defined within the space of educational research. With a study with the purpose of constructing an operational definition of teacher working conditions that included a review of 9 researchers' explanation of what teacher working conditions consist of, Merrill (2021) found through a comparison of 9 the authors' language on teacher working conditions that working conditions are "those elements related to a teacher's ability to do their job" (p., 172). Furthermore, Merrill (2021) reported that understanding the elements of what working conditions consist of in the eyes of teachers is critical to improvement. empowering policymakers and school leaders. Both should be informed of what teachers perceive as working conditions and how those working conditions impact their work and ultimately employment decisions.

The next retention program discussed, implemented by District of Columbia Public Schools, and researched by Dee and Wycoff (2017), was implemented to address the need to recruit and retain high performing teachers in struggling schools, with challenging working conditions. Due to the challenge of staffing schools, financial incentives have been utilized to improve recruitment and retention, and as a catalyst improve teacher performance (Dee & Wycoff, 2017; Gunther, 2019; See et al., 2020 b). Districts strive to improve teacher performance and retention to provide students with the best opportunity to succeed, and often implement programs to support the overall success of the school and district. The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) implemented the IMPACT program to address teacher performance and retention. The IMPACT program was designed to improve teacher quality and improve student achievement in

struggling schools across the district. The IMPACT program linked teacher bonuses and pay to performance (Dee & Wycoff, 2017).

The IMPACT reform program implementation consisted of teacher evaluations, multiple observations by administrators and instructional coaches and concrete evidence of student progress. Under the plan, teachers who were rated "highly effective" (HE) could earn up to $25,000 in the year in which they received the HE rating, and up to $27,000 if they received a HE for two years in a row or more. Teachers who were consistently high performing received a 5-year jump on the Master's base pay scale (Dee & Wycoff, 2017).

Dee and Wycoff (2017) included 2,630 teachers in the analysis and observed outcomes because of the IMPACT program relative to teacher performance, student outcomes and retention, and with the implementation of IMPACT, teachers who were rated as "minimally effective" had a year to improve or be threatened with dismissal, and "ineffective" teachers were dismissed. Teachers who received a "minimally effective" rating were more likely to voluntarily leave within two years of program implementation, and teachers who received "ineffective" or "minimally effective" ratings were not eligible for financial incentives outlined in IMPACT. Ultimately, the quality of teachers in DCPS changed over time as a result, and the most effective teachers were retained (Dee & Wycoff, 2017).

For "highly effective" teachers, the financial incentives were impactful. "Highly effective" teachers received an increase in base pay. Those who were "ineffective" or "minimally effective" left DCPS. Over a period of 3 years the teaching force of DCPS changed, and financial incentives seemed to be an important factor relative to the

retention of highly effective teachers. Much like the outcome of the Shifrer et al. (2017) study, some teacher attrition was attributed to dismissal and others decided to leave on their own; furthermore, the attrition did not negatively affect student achievement because less effective teachers were more likely to leave. DCPS retained the most effective teachers with financial bonuses and permanent salary step increases (Dee & Wycoff, 2017).

Atteberry and LaCour (2020) analyzed the effects of ProComp on Denver Public Schools' teacher workforce and student performance within high poverty schools. The analysis included data from 4, 500 teachers over a span of 16 years. The qualitative study included comparative interrupted time series and student and teacher data provided by Denver Public Schools. The data were retrieved from both Assessment, Research and Evaluation (ARE), human resources, as well as the Colorado Department of Education that was available publicly. The student and teacher data retrieved from the district included test scores, demographic data, as well as years of experience and education level.

Ultimately, similar to the results in the Dee and Wycoff (2017) study, Atteberry and LaCour (2020) concluded that highly effective teachers who were recruited into DPS after the inception of ProComp were more likely to be retained, but a notable improvement in teacher performance was not observed as in the Dee and Wycoff (2017) study on the IMPACT program. Teacher attrition declined during the period that ProComp was in effect, and the teaching force evolved over time to reflect more effective, qualified teaching staff. Interestingly, Atteberry and LaCour (2020) concluded that although fewer teachers left the district, the result was not drastically different in

terms of attrition than other schools within the state that did not participate in the ProComp program.

Another example of a program implemented to increase performance as well as improve teacher retention was the Governor's Educator Excellence Grants (GEEG), analyzed by Springer and Taylor (2016). The Springer and Taylor (2016) study was designed to discover the impact of financial incentives on teachers' productivity and retention and to understand how incentives and the collaborative design of those incentives impacted teacher performance and retention in GEEG recipient schools (Springer & Taylor, 2016).

Using quantitative methods, with regression analysis, Springer and Taylor (2016) examined 99 schools with similar demographics and performance levels in Texas. Schools included in the study were comprised of campuses with high numbers of low-income students with high performance levels. The collection of schools qualified to receive the GEEG based on these metrics. Furthermore, any school receiving the GEEG was required to submit a design for incentives, outlining qualifications and payout, to the Texas Education Agency, TEA. Teachers took part in program design for their campus. The GEEG provided awards, a total of $10 million, disseminated to high performing campuses, with low-income populations, over a period of three years. The range of funding spanned from $60,000 to $220,000, constituting a little over 5% of the receiving schools' payroll allotment (Springer & Taylor, 2016).

In contrast to the ProComp program, studied by Dee and Wycoff (2017), and Atteberry and LaCour (2020), GEEG participant schools did not yield improved teacher performance. Springer and Taylor (2016) reported that the teacher designed incentive pay

did not result in improved productivity. However, the program design and associated incentives had a positive effect on teacher retention. More teachers stayed, and they suggested that as a result student achievement would improve. It is also important to note that Springer and Taylor (2016) found that the incentive design created by teachers were relatively mild and group oriented. Therefore, more teachers were eligible to receive a reward. The researchers suggested that the reward itself was enticing enough to motivate teachers to stay.

School improvement financial incentives target teacher recruitment, teacher retention and teacher performance to improve campus performance and reverse chronically low performance. School improvement funds, injected from the state, have been disseminated to improve schools at various levels of required intervention. Schools facing required intervention from states are at risk of closing due to chronic low performance. Improving student performance and turning around chronically low performing schools requires recruitment and retention of high-quality staff. Furthermore, financial incentives have been crucial components of turnaround programs (Henry et al., 2020). Henry et al. (2020) conducted a study using quantitative analysis for the purpose of understanding what factors are critical to positive outcomes relative to school improvement, such as school turnaround programs. Reform efforts profiled and studied were in the state of Tennessee and included 28 schools from the Achievement School District (ASD) and the Innovation Zones (iZones). The latter two groups of schools received funding from trickle down Race to the Top funds (RttT). In total, the state of Tennessee was awarded $500 million. Schools were selected by the state to receive

funding based on academic achievement, with recipients classified in the bottom of the lowest 5% performance-wise.

The schools selected were either classified as transformation, turnaround, restart, or closure schools (Henry et al., 2020). Reform efforts required that the principal and some members of the teaching staff be replaced. Furthermore, teachers and principals who were deemed effective were offered financial incentives to work in these schools (Henry et al., 2020).

Henry et al., (2020) found that reducing teacher and principal turnover was important to stability and improved student achievement. Teacher replacement was necessary at the beginning stages of reform, but that stabilization was ultimately critical to improving low performing schools. As suggested by Amrein – Beardsley (2012) and Liang et al. (2015), when teachers leave schools, they are typically replaced by less experienced teachers. Furthermore, Henry et al. (2020) suggested that emphasis on retention of highly effective staff members was necessary to retain valuable institutional knowledge in all schools.

Urban charter schools also have implemented financial incentive programs, funded by grants, to retain staff and valuable institutional knowledge. Kaimal and Jordan (2016) studied teacher retention and incentive-based school improvement programs in charter schools, using a mixed methods research design. The purpose of the study was to study the impact of incentives on reform programs in an urban charter school. The study included 12 charter schools in an urban district, and program participants consisted of teachers, administrative staff, program staff and consultants. Like the aforementioned study in Tennessee turnaround schools, the incentive program studied consisted of

financial incentives for teacher and leader development, recruitment, and retention to improve student achievement (Henry et al., 2020; Kaimal & Jordan, 2016).

The incentive-based approach included master and mentor teachers who were typically veteran teachers. These teachers were highly skilled as well as respected and revered by their peers. Master teachers received $10, 000 and mentor teachers received $5,000 in incentive funds, salary incentives were also provided for teaching assistants, teachers, and principals. The latter group awarded incentive funds for performance in the amounts of $750, $2,300, and $4,000, respectively (Kaimal & Jordan, 2016). According to Kaimal and Jordan (2016), teachers surveyed revealed that their performance was not affected by the incentive pay, but they were appreciative of the extra funding. They revealed that they were intrinsically motivated to teach, like the teachers surveyed by Zahner (2019), who were recipients of the NOYCE scholarship, which I discuss in a subsequent section covering critical shortages in struggling schools. The payouts were viewed more as a reward, rather than a performance or retention incentive. The data from the surveys collected and teacher interviews revealed that the financial incentive given to teachers was not enough to entice teachers to stay in their positions or to motivate behavioral changes that would positively impact student achievement.

Teacher Mobility Under ProComp

In this section I delve into two studies by Fulbeck (2014) and Fulbeck and Richards (2015) on compensation as it relates to teacher mobility. Both studies involved an analysis of a compensation program that was designed to increase effectiveness and retention. In the 2014 study, Fulbeck measured the effects of teacher compensation on teacher mobility and concluded that teachers were incentivized to remain in high needs

schools and opted to participate in the compensation program offered in Denver Public Schools. Fulbeck and Richards (2015) expanded the research with a subsequent study, and identified factors related to a reduction in teacher mobility with a study that included 989 participants.

Fulbeck (2014) examined the effects of a teacher compensation system on teacher mobility under the Professional Compensation System (ProComp). The researcher analyzed longitudinal teacher data from Denver Public Schools from the 2001-2002 school year until the 2010-2011 school year, and included 29, 234 teachers in the study sample. The purpose of the study was to determine the possible impact of the Professional Compensation System (ProComp) on teacher mobility. The study was conducted in DPS and was comprised of about 4,500 teachers. The student demographic consisted of a majority minority, and over 72% of students were considered economically disadvantaged and eligible to receive free school lunch. Academically, students scored low on achievement tests, like students in other comparable districts like Seattle Public Schools and San Diego Unified.

ProComp was designed to improve teacher effectiveness and retain high-quality teachers. Teachers were able to decide to participate in the ProComp plan or be compensated on the previously established salary schedule. Under ProComp, teachers were eligible to receive up to $4,409 in financial incentives. Incentives were awarded based on student growth metrics and for continued professional development in the form of an advanced degree or licensure. Additionally, teachers who served in high-needs campuses were eligible for retention bonuses. Teachers could receive more than one incentive, and were paid monthly, in addition to their base salary.

Fulbeck (2014) included teachers who were eligible to participate in ProComp and those within good enough standing could choose to remain at their campus and were not at risk of dismissal. Recipients of ProComp funds had to be members of a teacher union, and new teachers were required to join the union, whereas veteran teachers could choose to opt into the program. The percentage of participants grew from 42% to 77% over the course of the study, as a result.

Over 95% of participants received ProComp incentive funds, and the average amount paid was $4,000. Over time, fewer veteran teachers who participated in the program left their positions during the first year of implementation. Not all teachers who left their positions left the district. Some teachers transferred within the district, and Fulbeck (2014) suggested that turnover within the district could be associated with working conditions, principal leader characteristics and student characteristics. Teachers who decided to leave a school within the district and transfer to another school could have the opportunity to earn more because of incentives that were offered to teachers choosing to work in a high-need school; therefore, ProComp recipients could experience different working conditions and receive additional incentive pay without leaving the district or profession.

With a subsequent study, Fulbeck and Richards (2015) expanded the research on teacher financial incentives and linkages to mobility in the context of Denver's ProComp compensation program. Teachers who participated in the study had to be eligible to participate in the program, even if they had chosen not to enroll in the incentive program as well as have transferred at least once within the district voluntarily. This study was conducted as a descriptive statistical research design, and the purpose of the study was to

analyze the effects of financial incentives on teacher mobility within Denver Public Schools.

Fulbeck and Richards (2015) pointed out that when teachers transfer to different schools within their own district, working conditions may change as well as the grade level or content that is taught. Additionally, colleagues, leaders and student demographics change as well. Some teachers who sought to work in a different environment due to working conditions made the change for increased job satisfaction, rather than a change in salary.

Furthermore, the researcher found that a 10% increase in teacher salaries resulted in up to a 4% decrease in teacher mobility. Denver Public Schools saw a 30% reduction in teacher attrition and attributed it to ProComp. However, Fulbeck pointed out that school vacancies could not be accounted for. Additionally, competitiveness among applicants, and principals' preference to hire ProComp teachers may have been factors that impacted the resulting data; therefore, linkages of financial incentives and reduction in turnover was not established. Furthermore, Fulbeck (2015) found that teachers were likely to transfer to schools that did offer financial incentives, even if they were not enrolled in the ProComp program, suggesting that the program itself did not lend to teacher recruitment or retention and that vacancies would have been filled either way. Finally, the researcher suggested that further studies be conducted to determine a threshold of financial incentives that would greatly influence a teacher's decision to remain in a school (Fulbeck & Richards, 2015).

The results of the Fulbeck and Richards (2015) study indicated that teachers were likely to transfer to schools that had better school-based incentives than the schools they

worked in. Interestingly, the trend was the same for ProComp and non ProComp participants. However, non ProComp teachers were more apt to leave a campus for a lesser amount than those who were ProComp teachers. Non ProComp teachers received an average of $196 more after a transfer; in contrast, ProComp recipients received $567 more than their counterparts.

Fulbeck and Richards (2015) suggested that ProComp teachers' decision to transfer were strategic financial transfers. In addition to strategic monetary moves, teachers who transferred typically chose to transfer to schools that were close to the school they left, rather than schools further away from that locale. It was also noted that teachers chose schools based on perceived characteristics of the schools they considered; essentially, teachers looked for improved working conditions. All in all, financial incentives were not the only reason teachers transferred schools. Some made strategic moves based on financial incentives, location, school incentives and perceived improvement in working conditions.

In summary, DPS retained more teachers who participated in the ProComp programs, and over time more teachers opted to enroll in the ProComp program. Additionally, fewer veterans left their positions over time (Fulbeck, 2014; Fulbeck and Richards, 2015). Fulbeck and Richards (2015) reported a 39% decrease in attrition amongst those who were program participants. Similar to the Camelo and Ponckzec (2021) conclusion, Fulbeck and Richards (2015) pointed out in this study that institutional knowledge is lost when veteran teachers leave. Under ProComp, of the 3%, who chose to leave, most were more likely to work in high poverty schools.

Scholarship Program, Tuition Reimbursement and Bonus Pay to Support Critical Shortage Areas in Struggling Schools

The four studies in this section highlighted various programs designed to entice students to pursue a career teaching in a critical shortage area. Critical shortage areas like Science, Technology, Engineering and Math are sometimes harder to staff due to the specialized skills and certification requirements. This section offers a glimpse into programs that were established to recruit and retain staff who taught in content areas that were deemed critical shortage areas. These programs differ from incentive programs previously mentioned in that they focused on critical shortage teachers in high needs schools. Recruitment, teacher placement and initial career trajectories of participants in the various programs are reviewed.

Whitfield et al., (2021) studied the impact of financial incentives on retention of critical shortage STEM teachers. Using a longitudinal mixed methods study, Whitfield et al., (2021) researched whether STEM teachers were influenced to go to work in and remain in high-needs schools. The data for the study was retrieved from 29 recipients of the Noyce Scholarship. The Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship program (NSF Noyce Program), funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) was developed to address teacher shortages in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) courses. A university in Texas offered the program, and recipients who completed licensure requirements were motivated to teach in high-needs schools, but in the long run did not remain in teaching positions. To be eligible to receive the Noyce scholarship, scholars were required to major in a STEM field, complete at least 18 hours of pedagogy courses,

have at least a 3.0 grade point average, participate in field observations, and clinical teaching assignment or an internship for a term of one year.

Scholarship recipients had to agree to work in a high needs school for a period ranging from 1 to 4 years, and the time commitment was based on the amount of funding received. Participants who were recruited to participate in the study were already in the teaching profession, and by the end of the 3-year study, 3, out of 61 were dropped from the study because they left the teaching profession. The results of the study revealed that the scholarship influenced participants to pursue work in high needs schools but did not influence their decision to remain. The majority (70%-90%) of the study participants had remained in high-needs schools at the conclusion of the study. Interestingly, Whitfield et al. (2021) concluded, based on study results, that the scholarship recipients had decided to teach in a high-need school before scholarship acceptance. Ultimately, the scholarship had little influence on the recipient's decision to teach and where they chose to teach.

Study participants indicated potential reasons they might leave a high-needs school and revealed that support of campus leadership and working conditions would be factored in when considering whether to leave or remain. The support of campus leadership was noted as the greatest factor considered when determining whether a campus was a fit for the participant. Finally, the Noyce scholarship ensured that recipients worked in a high-need school for the term of their commitment. Ultimately, the study suggested that scholarship recipients may have chosen to remain in high need schools to fulfill a sense of purpose, and the scholarship helped ease financial burdens along the way (Whitfield et al., 2021).

Zahner et al. (2019) expanded on the research of the Noyce program by studying the impact of teacher preparation programs on teacher recruitment and retention in high needs secondary schools in the greater Boston area. The purpose of the study was to analyze and compare the recruitment, teacher placement and initial career trajectories of the participants. The study participants included 158 mathematics teachers; of which, 48 had received Noyce scholarships. The remaining 110 teachers participated in Teach for America, and both programs required that participants commit to at least two years in high needs schools.

A quantitative comparative design along with logistic regression and survival analysis were used to compare career trajectory between the participants of the two programs. Both programs consisted of some level of financial support. The Noyce scholarship recipients received $20,000 in benefits in addition to tuition support, while TFA program participants received up to $5,500 each year, along with financial aid from the university they were enrolled in (Zahner et al., 2019).

According to Zahner et al. (2019), TFA program participants were comprised of individuals who would have been less likely to teach had they not been accepted into the program. Whereas, Noyce scholarship recipients had considered teaching as probable or likely career, even without program participation. Furthermore, TFA program participants were placed in high need schools upon program completion, and Noyce recipients had the opportunity to research schools and districts to work in that were suitable for program requirements and perceived to be good places to work. Similar to the Fulbeck (2014) study, Zahner et al. (2019) suggested that the working conditions were

critical in a teachers' decision to remain in schools and the financial incentives provided by the programs discussed helped to recruit teachers into those roles.

Zahner et al. (2019) reported that STEM majors were recruited into the Noyce program and trained to become teachers and work in high needs schools. Those who were recruited into the TFA program were less likely to be STEM majors, and those teachers left the teaching position they held at the close of the two-year commitment at a higher rate than the Noyce participants. However, a more diverse group of teachers were typically recruited into the TFA alternative certification program, and those teachers were placed on campuses serving higher numbers of low socio-economic status students (Zahner et al., 2019).

Another study, conducted by Smith (2021), also focused on the recruitment of minority teachers to work in critical shortage areas in high needs schools. Financial incentives in education vary, and typically, incentives that have a limited time frame for dissemination of funding associated with them are utilized to attract and retain teachers. Loan forgiveness programs that support the recruitment of critical shortage areas, like math and science have been effective in some circumstances. Teachers have been able to reap the benefits of partial or total loan forgiveness when they agreed to work in shortage areas or low performing schools for a specified time frame (Smith, 2021).

Smith (2021) conducted a qualitative research study with 10 students who participated in the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program (NCTFP) from 5 universities. Originally, NCTFP was formed to target minority, low-income students, and students from rural areas to entice them to teach in high need schools. However, the program context changed due to limited availability of partner institutions. For example,

Smith (2021) stated that minority, low income, and rural students often chose to attend

school closer to home, and historically black institutions were not located in many

geographic areas where these students lived. The students who would have been recruited

for NCTFP participation often chose to attend school closer to home. Ultimately, the

areas that failed to recruit program participants also struggled to recruit new teachers. The

program, previously administered by a nonprofit organization, Public School Forum,

evolved and was later administered by the University of North Carolina.

Under the new program, participants were granted $8,250 each year. Teachers had

to commit to teaching in a low performing school, according to state definition, for one

year for each year of funding. If teachers decided not to work in a low performing school,

a two-year commitment for each year of funding was required. Furthermore, Smith

(2021) reported that up to 30% of teachers who participated in the NCTFP failed to meet

the terms of the agreement, not fulfilling the service term commitment. Some teachers

reported leaving due to bureaucratic reasons, difficulty in finding an approved position,

and career changes. Those teachers received partial loan forgiveness. All in all, Smith

reported that financial incentives have been proven to be effective, but effectiveness is

contingent upon teacher characteristics, and geographic area (Smith, 2021).

Smith (2021) found that the NCTFP helped to influence students' education and

career decisions relative choice of university, choice of degree study, and career plans in

secondary STEM content. Some program participants had chosen to participate in the

program because of the up-front financial assistance afforded, and others chose the

program because they were already intent on studying STEM content and pursuing work

in STEM education. The financial benefit of the NCTFP had an influence on the decision

of program participants regarding choice of institution, cost effectiveness related to obtaining a degree, interests, and overall career plans. This suggested that the financial benefit of the program could influence the decision of students to enter STEM programs, teach in selected schools for a time frame and influence decisions to remain in the field and in selected schools, similar to the Noyce scholarship (Smith, 2021; Whitfield et al., 2021; Zahner et al., 2019).

Another study by Feng and Sass (2015) delved into the evaluation of financial incentive programs aimed at the recruitment and retention of teachers in critical shortage areas. In addition to the challenges associated with STEM teachers, recruiting and retaining special education teachers has been a challenge for high-need schools. Special education certification requires specialized training and certification to meet the diverse needs of the student population served. Teachers recruited to work in high-needs schools are typically uncertified and underqualified (Feng & Sass, 2015). According to Feng and Sass (2015), secondary schools face a 3-to-4-fold increase in challenges in recruiting high-quality teachers.

Feng and Sass (2015) evaluated the impact of two financial incentive programs focused on teacher recruitment and retention in the critical shortage areas of STEM and special education in the state of Florida. The purpose of the study was to determine if the two programs had an impact on teacher recruitment and retention. The first reviewed program, the Florida Critical Teacher Shortage Program (FCTSP), was established in 1984 to assist teacher candidates in obtaining certification by providing for tuition reimbursement if teachers sought to work in critical shortage areas such as special education, math, and science. The purpose of the loan forgiveness incentive was to

increase the number of qualified candidates in those content areas, and recipients could receive a reimbursement of up to $2,808.

The second plan, that Feng and Sass (2015) reviewed and evaluated was the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Fund (TRRF), established in the year 2000. This plan targeted the recruitment and retention of teachers, and teachers were eligible to receive $850 as a sign-on bonus and $850 in retention funds as well as $1200 bonus for those working in critical shortage areas. A total of $60 million was allocated by the Florida legislature for program implementation; however, the funding ceased in 2002. Some districts worked to maintain the bonuses even after state funding ceased.

Feng and Sass (2015) conducted a quantitative statistical analysis of data from the 1995-1996 school year through the 2012-2013 school year, comprised of records of teachers who had received financial rewards from the FCTSP program and the TRRF program in the state of Florida. According to Feng and Sass (2015), recipients of the FCTSP were less qualified and had less experience than teachers who did not receive the reward. Furthermore, those who participated in the programs changed schools at a higher rate than non-reward recipients. However, program fund recipients continued with teaching; whereas, those who did not participate were more likely to leave the profession. Once the funding was no longer available, some teachers chose to attrit.

The Use of Financial Incentives for the Purpose of Recruitment and Retention of National Board-Certified Teachers

In this section, I review three studies that analyze how financial incentives impact districts that offer incentives to National Board-Certified Teachers (NBCTs). Cowan and Goldhaber (2018) focused on financial incentives and the effect on recruitment and

retention. Liang et al. (2015) looked at award incentive offerings by districts to recruit NBCTs, and Amrein-Beardsley (2012) reviewed the impact of the recruitment and retention of NBCTs in schools.

Districts strive to place high quality teachers in high need schools so that all students have equitable access to teachers with the skills and credentials who are inclined to help them achieve success. National Board-Certified Teachers (NBCTs) who have obtained a board-certified certification are highly qualified, expert and are highly sought after. Policy makers look for ways to recruit and retain NBCT into high needs schools (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012).

Cowan and Goldhaber (2018) conducted a study to assess whether financial incentives in the form of bonuses improved recruitment, retention, and teacher quality in high need schools. The quantitative study utilized regression discontinuity design. The study was conducted in Washington State where an incentive policy, the Challenging Schools Bonus (CBS), was established to attract and retain National Board-Certified Teachers (NBCTs). Teachers who qualified received a $5000 bonus, and the targeted group of teachers were those who worked in the most challenging, high-need schools in the state (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018).

According to Cowan and Goldhaber (2018), to be eligible for the bonus award, teachers had to obtain certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Teachers who achieved National Board Certification generally did not choose to work in high-need schools prior to Washington's incentive program. Cowan and Goldhaber (2018) suggested that teachers were less likely to work in low-

income schools for the same salary they would receive if they were to work in wealthy schools with better working conditions.

As a result of the incentive policy, the researchers found that the number of teachers who received NBC increased, and the number of NBCTs teaching in high-need schools increased. Lastly, like the Fulbeck (2014) study on ProComp, retention rates improved, and the talent pool changed over time. More veteran, highly credentialled teachers remained in schools over time when financial incentives were utilized (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018; Fulbeck 2014).

Liang et al. (2015) also suggested that high-need schools are typically more difficult to staff. These schools, usually comprised of racially and ethnically diverse, low-income students, in urban areas typically offer more financial incentives to attract high quality teachers than better performing, racially and ethnically homogenous schools. Conversely, according to Ling et al. (2015), rural schools were less likely to offer financial rewards to attract NBC teachers, and as a whole offer fewer incentives, in general.

Multiple incentive programs have been implemented in both rural and urban districts throughout the nation. According to Liang et al. (2015) financial incentive programs target critical shortage areas, schools that are hard to staff due to location or demographics, and high performing teachers. The distribution of highly qualified teachers necessitates the offering of financial incentives to attract and retain teachers in a competitive market. Financial incentives and incentives focused on recruiting high-quality teachers to high need schools are market-based approaches. On the other hand, financial incentives have also been utilized to reward skills and performance. Teachers

with greater skills and qualifications like NBC add value in some of the most challenging environments. Additionally, due to their expertise and experience, these teachers benefit schools and students when they are retained.

Furthermore, teachers who have received NBC are linked to improved student achievement. However, evidence from previous studies does not indicate that performance-based incentives, tied to performance evaluations, are directly correlated with an increase in student achievement. Lastly, this form of incentive does have promise for helping to improve teacher retention but is not directly correlated with teacher retention (Liang et al., 2015).

Liang et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study utilizing stratified probability sample design to analyze the impact of union influence on types of incentive pay offered in districts across the nation. The researchers investigated whether the districts awarded teachers who had obtained a National Board Certification to assess recruitment of high-quality teachers for high-need schools. The districts chosen for the study had similar demographics as far as percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, percentage of ethnic minorities, district size and location. Sample data from the 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) was utilized for the study and included districts in Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Nevada, and West Virginia.

Districts with more wealth typically paid more in terms of salary, utilized more financial incentives, and attracted more NBCTs. Liang et al. (2015) reported that districts comprised of majority ethnically diverse, low-income student populations were less likely to offer incentives than their counterparts for NBCTs. Furthermore, Liang et al. (2015) found that unions typically focused on increasing teacher salaries for all teachers

to attract and retain, not just those with additional certifications like NBC. In contrast, rural districts offered less financial compensation and incentives and endured more teacher attrition.

In another study that highlighted National Board-Certified teachers, Amrein-Beardsley (2012) stated that teachers who leave schools possibly would have stayed if salary and working conditions were better. Amrein-Beardsley (2012) conducted a quantitative study to analyze recruitment of highly qualified teachers in Arizona into high-needs schools, and what factors were important to consider regarding recruitment and retention of those teachers from the teachers' perspective. Specifically, teachers cited class size, discipline, autonomy, access to resources, opportunities for advancement and access to merit pay and tuition advancements as factors that would hypothetically influence their decision to remain in schools. With that in mind, the teachers who left high needs schools were often replaced by inexperienced teachers. Therefore, less qualified, less effective teachers often remained in high-needs schools, and student achievement declined.

Teachers who had accomplished National Board Certification (NBC) were included in the study sample. The study sample consisted of 89 out of 207 teachers who were invited to participate in the study, and Amrein-Beardsley (2012) acknowledged that this was a relatively small sample size and suggested that there were noted differences in the teachers who chose to participate in the study in terms of teacher characteristics than those who chose not to participate (2012).

Amrein-Beardsley (2012) found that students who had been taught by the teachers who were considered expert, with the NBC credential, outperformed their peers who

were not taught by NBC teachers. However, expert teachers were less likely to work in high-need schools. Students who were racially and ethnically diverse, and from low-income homes, were disproportionately taught by less experienced teachers. National Board Certified (NBC) teachers were most concerned with salary and financial incentives more than working conditions or leader characteristics, suggesting that policymakers focus on compensation to recruit and retain expert teachers (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012).

In summary, National Board-Certified teachers have been sought out and highly compensated in comparison to their non-NBC peers. Districts rely on financial incentives to recruit and retain these highly qualified teachers. In struggling schools in urban settings, financial incentives are often used to attract all teacher talent and are supported by large teacher unions. In the rural setting, financial compensation may not be adequate to encourage teacher retention, and teachers may consider non-monetary factors, such as working conditions and professional development when deciding to remain in or leave a district (Amrein-Beardsley, 2012; Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018; Liang et al., 2015).

Summary

The studies presented indicate that organizational fit is a strong predictor of teacher retention. Both fit with colleagues and fit with leadership have implications on whether a teacher leaves or stays with a school (Miller & Youngs, 2021; Player et al., 2017). Teachers who perceive that school leaders are strong, supportive leaders are more likely to stay with their schools (Tricarico et al., 2015; Urick, 2016) In high stress environments, teachers are less likely to leave when supported by leadership and fellow teachers (Sass et al., 2011; Toropova et al., 2021). Attention to HR practices, such as providing candidates an overview of the job and working conditions, and development of

campus teams can shed light on why teachers leave and under what circumstances they remain in schools (Ellis et al., 2017; Vekeman et al., 2018). Although financial compensation has been utilized in hard to staff areas, results from studies reviewed indicate that teachers are no more likely to stay with a school than if they did not receive financial rewards; however, over time, higher salaries tend to improve retention of veteran teachers and highly qualified teachers, and as a result, the retention of valuable institutional knowledge is lost (Colson et al., 2018; Dee & Wycoff, 2017; Hughes, 2012; Rice et. al, 2015; See et. al, 2020b; Springer & Taylor, 2016). Improvement of teacher performance was not consistent in the studies presented, but the institutional knowledge that was preserved as a result of financial incentives led to more stable learning environments, impacting school improvement efforts (Henry et al. 2020; Kaimal & Jordan 2016).

The studies highlighted multiple strategies that have been implemented in districts to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and reduced attrition. There is a need to review the teacher selection process, whether candidates know the expectations and demands of the job ahead of time and how they will fit with the organization over time, and the impact of financial incentives relative to attraction and retention. The background information presented indicates a need to delve into how financial incentives may influence teachers' decisions to leave a school or remain. The overall purpose of the study is to discover the factors that contribute to the retention and attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district and understand how financial incentives such as critical shortage stipends, recruitment and retention bonuses, adjustments to the

teacher salary matrix and Teacher Incentive allotment (TIA) funds may be linked to retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages.

Research Questions

This phenomenological qualitative study is organized around 2 research questions. The research questions being posed are:

RQ 1. What are the circumstances that contribute to the attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district?

RQ 2. To what extent, if any are financial incentives linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages in an urban school district?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The researcher conducted a phenomenological qualitative study, using interpretive phenomenological design, focusing on the general experiences and reflections of the study participants. The aim of the research was to understand to what extent financial incentives impacted teachers' decision to accept a teaching assignment or remain in a position or district. The work of Fulbeck and Richards (2015) and Springer et al. (2016) discussed in Chapter 2 revealed that teachers chose to remain in an assignment, school, or the district if they felt supported and were satisfied with the working conditions, regardless of any financial incentive offerings. Other works highlighted strategies that have been implemented to address recruitment, retention, and attrition. However, questions remain about the factors that contribute to teacher attrition and if and to what extent financial incentives are linked to a reduction in teacher shortages. The researcher was able to gain context about the extent financial incentives influence teacher decisions in urban districts in the Southwestern United States at the conclusion of the study.

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to discover the factors that contribute to the retention, and attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district and to understand how financial incentives such as critical shortage stipends, recruitment and retention bonuses, adjustments to the teacher salary matrix and Teacher Incentive allotment (TIA) funds may be linked to highly qualified teacher retention and a reduction in teacher shortages. This study was organized around 2 research questions.

RQ 1. What are the circumstances that contribute to the attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district?

RQ 2. To what extent, if any are financial incentives linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages in an urban school district?

This study documented participants' personal thoughts and lived experiences of teachers working in urban districts and having received a financial incentive as a supplement to their base salary. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was utilized to identify themes and patterns that emerge from the data obtained through open-ended surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Qualitative Research Design

The purpose of qualitative research is to "understand and interpret" phenomena without making inferences about cause and effect, opposite of quantitative research. The focus of qualitative research is on finding meaning behind the data collected (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The purpose statement and research questions in qualitative research alerts the reader to the direction of the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), qualitative purpose statements and research inform the reader about the direction of the study, just as in quantitative research. However, there are major differences in the research design. As discussed by Creswell and Guetterman (2019), qualitative research involves (a.) the investigation of a "central phenomenon", (b.) does not test theories, (c.) is open ended and inductive, and finally (d.) is used to understand the viewpoint of an individual or group. Furthermore, qualitative research involves a central phenomenon, which is the concept that is the focus of exploration in a study. Another quality that sets qualitative research apart from

quantitative research is that the process allows for the researcher to change the purpose of the study based on the feedback that emerges during the study. This is referred to as "emerging processes" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 129). For this study, I sought to understand whether financial incentives influence teachers' decisions to accept a position or remain in a current position or school and to discover any emerging factors that may also influence their decisions. Themes emerged among the participants which prompted further questions leading to more details surrounding the topic.

Phenomenological Analysis

Phenomenological analysis is defined as a person's lived experience. According to Edmonds and Kennedy (2017), the phenomenological approach has underpinnings in the philosophical work of Edmond Husserl, who believed that a person's experiences, perceptions from those experiences and feelings that arise from those lived experiences are a starting point for and contribute to knowledge. Later, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty expanded on the approach (Probert, 2006). The Heideggerian approach is an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA). With this approach, the researcher uses priori knowledge during the research process; the phenomenological approach helps the researcher make meaning of lived experiences but does not explain why those experiences happen (Pham, 2021). After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I conducted this study in my 25th year of public education, through lens spanning from working as a classroom teacher, to building principal, and district administrator. At this juncture, it is my desire to understand the impact of financial incentives through the lived experiences of current teachers.

Wright (2019) asserted that phenomenology explores the consciousness of an individual(s) through a first-person perspective to capture the lived experiences of a group of people concerning the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, phenomenological researchers aim to provide interpretation of the lived experiences of people included in studies. As the research is being conducted, researchers using the phenomenological approach reflect upon their own reactions and experiences during the study. The personal experiences of the researcher and the group participating in the study are compiled to discover "(a) what happened, (b) what in the current circumstances and your way of knowing influenced your experience, and (c) what was most essential to your experience and any change you experienced?", according to Clare (p. 16, 2022). The latter questions allow the researcher to make sense of the data. Phenomenological research is a useful tool in educational research, and according to Wright (2019), is aligned with pedagogical underpinnings, leading to reflection from conversations, translating theory into practice. The researcher discovers the meaning behind individual or group experiences. For this study, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) design approach was utilized. Interpretative phenomenological research allows the researcher to delve deeper into those lived experiences of study participants (Smith & Osborn, 2014).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Alase (2017) suggested that interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) allows for the researcher to use interpersonal subjectivity in their research and posited that the researcher bonds with the participant and grows in the process. The IPA approach provides for the researcher to get closer to the participants, and the study participants can

freely respond and express their lived experiences without constraint. Additionally, with the use of the IPA design, the researcher can better understand and connect, in detail, with the lived experiences of the participants. It is important to note that with this type of analysis, the researcher integrates a priori knowledge, bias, and assumptions in the interpretation of the data (Pham, 2021).

The IPA approach is unique in that the approach allows for the researcher to make sense of the lived experiences of others. According to Smith and Osborn (2015), each experience is evaluated in depth by the researcher before any generalizations about the phenomenon being studied are made and these experiences can be understood by those having not lived the experiences as a result. Furthermore, it is imperative that the interviewer possess empathy and be readily able to probe the participants to delve deeply into the topic to achieve a saturation of data while utilizing open-ended interviews (Smith & Osborn). With this study, I engaged participants in open-ended interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences and tell their own stories. IPA allows for the researcher to draw on prior knowledge and own understanding and extend the knowledge base; additionally, Alase (2017) suggested that the IPA approach is more than just a tool for research but allows the researcher to add to the knowledge base in a unique way. With the IPA methodology, research participants with similar experiences are able to tell their own stories, "without distortion or prosecutions" (Alase, 2017, p.11). The researcher can explore the lived experiences of the participants in detail and make sense of the data collected (Alase, 2017).

Participants

Both purposeful sampling and snowball techniques were utilized to access educators who are homogenous in terms of lived experiences. According to Creswell and

Guetterman (2019), purposeful sampling is the intentional selection of research

participants to help the researcher understand the phenomenon being studied. This type of

sampling can occur either before or after data collection, and there are several types of

sampling, each with different intent. For this study, two sampling techniques,

homogenous and snowball, were utilized. Homogenous sampling technique is a technique

utilized by researchers when the participants have a commonality or belong to a certain

group (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The snowball technique, sampling by referral, is

utilized to recruit an adequate number of participants and maintain trustworthiness

(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

In a study on inquiry frameworks in qualitative research, Kegler et al. (2019)

found that out of 45 papers included in the study, the median sample size included around

35 participants. According to Alase (2017) qualitative researchers should seek to include

anywhere from 2 – 25 study participants, depending on the sample size required to obtain

enough data for a clear assessment on the phenomenon of interest. This study included 9

teachers within an urban school district in the Southwestern United States to obtain data

saturation.

Sampling Plan

Study participants were recruited from the Southwestern United States utilizing

purposeful and snowball sampling techniques. Both purposeful and snowball sampling

were utilized before and after the study. Purposeful sampling is utilized by researchers to

select participants who possess the attributes desired by the researcher for the completion

of the study; furthermore, this type of sampling helps alleviate participation of

individuals who do not possess the knowledge related to the phenomenon being studied

(de Sousa et al., 2020). Purposeful sampling affords the researcher the ability to select participants who meet the study guidelines and can provide insight on their lived experiences of working in a district where financial incentives are offered. With the utilization of snowball sampling, the researcher is able to interview participants who are referred by others to avoid any potential roadblocks related to sample size and trustworthiness (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Inclusion Criteria

Participants who agreed to participate in this study were required to: (1) hold a current teacher certificate or be in an alternative certification program, working toward certification, (2) be currently employed as a teacher and (3) currently receiving or previously received some type of financial incentive, outlined below, within the past 5 years and (4) complete the interest survey. Additionally, all participants (5) signed a confidentiality agreement and informed consent form (6) agreed to participate in a recorded interview and (7) member check process. For this study, financial incentives include additional monetary payment for the rendering of teaching service in critical shortage areas such as: bilingual, math, science, and special education instruction, adjustments to the teacher salary matrix, Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) funds, and recruitment and retention incentives.

Recruiting Participants

Recruitment Flyer. A digital recruitment flyer outlining the study description and inclusion criteria was distributed through social media and educator networking groups upon approval from the IRB (see Appendix B). Participants were informed that participation was wholly voluntary, would not have any bearing on employment, and that

their responses and identities would be kept confidential. Participant recruitment and qualification details were outlined on the recruitment flyer.

In addition to information on the purpose of the study and inclusion criteria, the flyer included a registration link to the interest survey. Interested potential participants utilized the registration link to register and answer preliminary questions related to demographics, inclusion criteria, willingness to participate and availability during the pre-determined interview window.

Interest Survey. The interest survey, linked on the recruitment flyer, was distributed via electronic platforms online as well as via email to recruit potential study participants, the first step in satisfying informed consent and the collection of information from interested participants (see Appendix C). The interest survey aided the researcher in determining that volunteers met the inclusion criteria. IP addresses were not retained or shared.

The interest survey included questions on whether the individual was fully certified or in an alternative program, grade level range, type(s) of financial incentives received and information on preferred interview method. This platform allowed me to query about the type of incentive received as well as capture demographic and contact information to set up the subsequent interviews (see Appendix C). The data capture instrument was designed to aid the researcher in capturing an initial picture of survey participants for planning purposes. A field test was conducted to determine whether a revision to the survey was necessary, prior to the actual study.

Email Calendar Invite. Calendar invites were sent to potential research participants who completed the interest form and wished to participate in the interview

(see Appendix D). The researcher scheduled the interviews based on the participant's

preference indicated on the interest survey.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality Agreement

Some issues related to interviewing include ethical issues and "unequal

relationship" of the interview (Jong & Jung, 2015, p. 32). According to Jong and Jung

(2015), when a researcher unwittingly applies pressure to participants during the research

process and informed consent is not secured, ethical issues can arise. Additionally, the

researcher has an unequal share of the knowledge, and thus has "power" over the

participant (Jong & Jung 2015, p. 32). To help combat the latter issues, participants were

reassured that the researcher did not have any influence over their employment status.

Trustworthiness and ethical issues were avoided because the researcher had no influence

on hiring or dismissal of employees. Employee relations are solely the responsibility of

the Chief of Human Capital and the Employee Relations department, separate from the

researcher.

To combat ethical issues related to interviews and data collection, securing

informed consent is necessary. Study participants should be assured that their identity

will be protected and that they will suffer no harm because of study participation

(Husband, 2020). Jong and Jung (2015) pointed out that informed consent is not simply

the confirmation of consent by study participants but ensuring that the participants fully

understand what giving consent means and understand what they are consenting to.

Additionally, Jong and Jung (2015) noted that ethical studies require a timely, and

up-front explanation of the study. Furthermore, informed consent solidifies full

permission from study participants and can be secured either verbally or in writing.

Additionally, according to Alase (2017), informed consent is necessary when involving

participants with similar experiences in a study. Information gleaned should corroborate

or dispel ideas surrounding the phenomenon of interest.

Upon receipt of the interest form completed by interested participants, the

researcher contacted 12 interested volunteers to schedule interviews using a calendar

invite based on responses from the interest survey, to take place in person or virtually,

using an online platform, for virtual video conferencing. Participants were emailed, using

the researcher's Nova student email account, and asked to return the signed consent and

confidentiality forms prior to participating in the interview, even if on the day of the

scheduled interview.

The consent form included the purpose and overview of the research study as well

as a reminder that the interview would be recorded. Study participants were asked to

return the signed consent form, along with a confidentiality agreement via email or in

person, prior to participating in the interview. The confidentiality agreement included

statements regarding confidentiality of the study details and an assurance that participant

identity and responses will be kept confidential.

Data Collection Instruments

Three data collection tools and instruments were developed to capture the

participant responses and enable the researcher to answer the research questions. They

included the interview protocol, reflective journal, and descriptive field notes. The

interview protocol was utilized to understand the participants' lived experiences. The

reflective journal was kept by the researcher during the study to record reflections and

observations about the study. The descriptive field notes were kept by the researcher to

record observations noted by the researcher related to participant's body language or other cues that may not come across on the recorded interview. These tools allowed the researcher to collect both the participant responses to a series of open-ended questions and to capture any thoughts and expressions conveyed during the interview.

Interview Protocol

The researcher-designed interview protocol (IP), influenced by the work of van de Wiel (2017) on interviews and verbal protocols, will be utilized clarifying and elaborating probing questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Questions formulated are directly related to current and newly implemented financial incentive offerings in the district included in the study and research covered in the literature review that focused on working conditions (Amerein-Beardsley, 2012; Camelo & Ponczek, 2021; Merrill, 2021; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Zahner et al., 2019).

Additionally, information gleaned from the Texas Teacher Workforce Report was instrumental in question formulation because much of the study focused on financial compensation and teacher retention for teachers in the state of Texas. Over the years, the teacher salaries have not increased with experience, and average new teacher salaries are greater than teachers with at least 10 years of experience (Raise Your Hand Texas, 2021).

The IP was designed to promote open communication, allowing participants to share their thoughts and reflections on financial incentives to address teacher retention, lived experiences, challenges, and rewards of working in public education (see Appendix F). The interview protocol was field tested by education professionals to test for validity and to refine the questions. Pilot testing was conducted after initial IRB approval. Participants who took part in the pilot study were not included in the research study.

Field Testing. Field testing allows the researcher to collect information from informed sources (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Field testing of the interview protocol with local experts in the field of education was conducted ahead of the study, to include an educational researcher, regional education service center contact, veteran educators specializing in business and finance, two human resources professionals and a veteran teacher to ensure question clarity and depth of study. The field test included a review of the email message containing the recruitment flyer, the interest Survey, and the interview protocol.

Participants who engaged in the field study were assured that their participation was voluntary and had no impact, whether positive or adverse, on their employment. Participants represented themselves and not the school district they are employed in. All responses were kept confidential. To conduct the field test, the researcher shared the documents discussed and requested feedback via email with an educational researcher, education service center contact, school business operations member, 2 human resource professionals in education and a veteran teacher who did not participate in the study but was invited to provide feedback.

Pilot Study. To ensure reliability and validity, a pilot study was conducted after preliminary IRB approval. The pilot study illuminated whether there were gaps in the research methodology and allowed the researcher the opportunity determine if there was ambiguity in the IP. (Jong & Jung, 2015). Information gleaned from the pilot study indicated that the methodology and quality of questions were satisfactory to continue with the study as designed.

The pilot testing involved 2 current classroom teachers who were certified and had received some type of financial incentive during their tenure. Participants who engaged in the pilot test were not included in the study. Volunteers for the pilot test were recruited by utilizing the snowball technique with campus principals and educational peers. The study flyer with the link to the interest survey was emailed to participants who agreed to take part in the pilot test. Those who agreed to participate in the pilot test were asked to complete the interest survey and participate in a recorded interview to test the process. Volunteers were reassured that their participation was part of pilot testing, wholly voluntary, that they could stop participation at any point and that their participation did not have any bearing on their employment. No new changes were required because of the pilot testing. At the conclusion of this step, the research study began.

Reflective Journal and Descriptive Field Notes

A reflective journal was utilized to record observations. Reflective journaling is an important activity for the qualitative researcher. This process allowed the researcher to record personal "reflections, insights and themes" that may arise. Field notes are an important component of verification and nullification of the data collected (Fields et al., 2019). Additionally, descriptive notes were recorded to capture any information relevant to the study site, the participants, and potential actions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 217). Reflective journal and field notes were recorded in a word document and can be found in Appendix G.

Procedures

This section is centered on data collection and data analysis. Data collection outlines the researcher's plan for implementing the research study upon securing interest and setting up interviews. The data analysis section outlines the plan for review and analysis of the data collected during the study. The summarized research plan and timeline is outlined below and followed by data collection and data analysis details.

Upon approval from the IRB, the study timeline outline below was implemented:

1) Month 1- The recruitment flyer was shared by the researcher, inviting participants, via email and social media outlets, targeting potential participants at the research site. The researcher engaged 12 participants; however, only 11 qualified to participate in the study. Once interested, qualified participants were identified, the researcher ensured that all participants met the inclusion criteria, based on the questions from the interest survey, and sent out the confidentiality agreement and informed consent form.

2) Month 1-2- The pilot study was conducted first. The researcher emailed interested participants the confidentiality agreement, consent form and a calendar invite to participate in an in person or videoconference interview, depending on the selection chose by the participant. All participants chose the Zoom interview option. The interviews were conducted using the IP designed by the researcher and recorded. Interviews continued until data saturation was reached. A total of 9 teachers were included in the main study.

3) Month 2-3 – The researcher transcribed the data collected during the interview and shared the transcripts via email to the participants to member check for validation and to ensure trustworthiness.

4) Month 3- The researcher analyzed the data.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected by the researcher, beginning with the field testing to test internal and external validity (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Pilot testing began upon initial IRB approval. Upon completion of the field and pilot testing and final IRB approval, the recruitment flyer, advertising the study and outlining the research design, inclusion criteria and link to the interest survey was shared via snowball technique using Nova email and on social media platforms to include LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram to recruit the 12 volunteers. Interested participants utilized the interest link that is printed on the recruitment flyer to register for the study. Upon review of the completed and returned interest form, the researcher reviewed participant qualifications to determine if the participant met the outlined inclusion criteria.

Upon identification of qualified participants from information gleaned from the completed interest surveys, each was reminded of the purpose and details of the study, reminded that the interview would be recorded, received a calendar invite including the date, time, Zoom link, and notification that the interview would take approximately 40 minutes to an hour and provided the confidentiality agreement (see Appendix E) and informed consent form via email. Participants were asked to confirm the appointment and return the consent form and signed confidentiality agreement prior to the scheduled interview, either electronically or in person. The confidentiality agreement assured the

participant that their identity and responses would be kept confidential, and the informed

consent form informed the participant that the interview would be recorded and that they

could choose to end the interview or choose not to participate in the study at any time.

Additionally, the researcher assured the volunteers that their participation was wholly

voluntary and that their participation would have no impact on their employment.

Finally, all interviews were conducted via Zoom. The researcher recorded the

emotions observed that the participant displayed during the interview in the field notes.

Since the interviews were all virtual it is possible that some emotions that the participant

harbored were not evident to the researcher, even though videos were reviewed in

preparation for transcription and coding of the data.

At the time of the scheduled interview, each participant was welcomed and

thanked for taking part in the study and reminded that they had the right to withdraw

from the study at any point and that the interview would be recorded. Furthermore,

participants were assured that the researcher understood that their participation was their

decision and that responses were theirs and that they were not speaking on behalf of their

employer.

The researcher began by starting the recording and then proceeded to remind

each participant of the purpose of the study and that the recorded interview would take

approximately 40 minutes to an hour. Participants were asked if they had any questions

before proceeding with the IP. Next, the researcher began by posing the research

questions and allowing for response time and asking probing questions to secure rich,

contextual data from each participant, facilitating the collection of substantial, quality

data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This process was repeated for the two research questions and 11 supporting sub questions with each study participant.

Additionally, the researcher took field notes during the interview to record reactions and noticeable enthusiasm of the research participants as well as any observations about the setting and research site that arose. The reflective journal was utilized by the researcher to record any personal thoughts and reflections, observations before, during and after the launch of the study to capture aspects of the study that were crucial for interpretation of the study context and participant input, adding to the overall interpretation of information gleaned (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

At the conclusion of each interview, participants were provided the opportunity to ask any questions or add additional input; furthermore, participants were advised that they would be provided a copy of the interview transcript via Nova email to review within 7 days of the interview. The member check process was explained, and participants were advised that they would have a week to return the transcript with any necessary changes to verify that their responses were accurately recorded and allow them to ask questions and make changes as part of the member check process. If participants did not submit any changes within 7 days after receipt, the data was recorded reviewed and included in the master file unchanged. Finally, participants were thanked for their time and for participating in the study.

Data Analysis

The audio and video files collected during the interviews were downloaded from the Zoom platform and saved as digital files. Each audio file was transcribed utilizing the transcription feature within the digital platform. The files were saved and securely

maintained as digitals file located on the researcher's computer that is password protected

and only accessible by the researcher.

To perform internal validity, the researcher reviewed and re-reviewed the

transcribed data from the recorded interviews to ensure the transcript included an

accurate wording of the recorded interview. The researcher ensured external validity of

the data by incorporating the data from the member check process in the data analysis.

No changes to the original data file resulted from from the member check process; the

unchanged data were incorporated into a master data file.

The researcher reviewed the transcribed notes and utilized In Vivo to identify

common themes. In vivo coding, manual analysis captures the spoken words and phrases

of the participants and subsequently utilizes those words and phrases to derive codes.

Codes were derived from information that appeared more than twice in the data. The In

Vivo process involved collating the data that was collected during the study, searching

for profound and meaningful quotes, developing codes based on emerging themes and

ultimately the identification of major themes resulting from the process (Jugessur, 2022).

This type of coding reflects the language and the terminology utilized by the study

participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Coding assists the researcher in breaking

down the data into categories that can be interpreted and are meaningful (Poggenpoel &

Myburgh, 2006). According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), the following steps are

utilized when analyzing and interpreting qualitative data: organization of the data the for

analysis by preparing transcriptions of the interviews and any field notes; (b)

determination of whether a software program will be utilized for the analysis or if a

manual analysis will be utilized; (c) review of the data to identify general themes of the

data and to code accordingly; (d) application of coding to build descriptions and uncover themes; (e) report the findings; (f) interpret the findings and (g) validate the findings through the process of "triangulation, member checking and auditing" (p. 264).

Phenomenological data was analyzed using IPA. The steps to conducting a thorough phenomenological analysis include: (a) reading the data multiple times (b) notetaking during the review of the data (c) coding of common themes in the data (d) reviewing of notes to process and verify themes and (e) identifying connections to the themes (Noon, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

When conducting research, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that participants are protected from adverse effects that could arise because of their participation in the research study and that ethical standards are adhered to before the study begins, during the study and at the conclusion of the study. According to Jong and Jung (2015), participants should be assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and their right to terminate participation at any point. Furthermore, informed consent should not only be given, but participants in the study should have the ability to give informed consent. Participants had the right to terminate their participation or inclusion of input in the study at any point in before, during or after the study since participants may have a change or shift in thinking as they develop a deeper understanding of concepts during the question probing (Husband, 2020).

For this study, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form and assurances were given regarding anonymity and confidentiality. The informed consent form assured participants that their personal information and responses would be kept

confidential and that they were free to cease participation in the study at any time. Study participants were assigned an alias and all data collected from interviews and communications were kept by the researcher in a locking drawer and in digital files. Only the researcher has access to documents that contain confidential information and participant responses to the demographic survey and interview protocol. All participant data will be stored until destruction after a period of three years, in accordance with the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) regulations and Institutional Review Board (IRB).

My position as an Assistant Superintendent of Human Capital had no bearing on participants' employment status, positive or negative. Hiring where the researcher is employed is the sole responsibility of each campus principal. Personnel matters are the sole responsibility of the Employee Relations team, made up of the Chief of Human Capital and Executive Director of Human Capital in consultation with district legal counsel.

Trustworthiness

Based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited in Korstjens and Moser (2018), trustworthiness in qualitative research involves: "credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity" (p. 121). Credibility in a research study is dependent upon engagement of participants. Engagement of participants over an adequate period of time is crucial to assist the researcher in building trust and clarifying concepts. Furthermore, trustworthiness was increased by comparing and contrasting, and the inclusion of participants' "thick, rich descriptions" of the phenomenon studied (Fields et al., 2019, p. 37). Dependability and confirmability will be secured by the researcher with

an audit trail, which will document the project from start to finish, enhancing internal validity, with the maintenance of a diary of field notes and a reflexive journal by the researcher. Additionally, the researcher ensured internal validity by reading and rereading transcribed data from the interviews.

Another critical strategy to ensure trustworthiness is member checking to ensure external validity. Member checking afforded participants to check for accuracy of their responses and was conducted after the interviews concluded. According to Kornbluh (2015), a crucial component of trustworthiness is member checking. Member checking affords participants the opportunity to confirm that the researcher has captured the responses of the participants with accuracy and to ensure clarity (Motulsky, 2015; Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2006). At the conclusion of the data collection period, the participants were asked to review the transcripts provided by the researcher, confirming their contribution, and provide feedback within 2 weeks after being provided with the transcript to review. No changes, additions, or deletions to the data were necessary, and the researcher added the data to the master file.

Potential Research Bias

The researcher is familiar with school finance, teacher recruitment and retention. The researcher started as a classroom teacher and is familiar with the day-to-day challenges of a professional educator as well as challenges associated with surviving on a teacher salary. Additionally, the researcher is equipped to view the issues through the lens of a former principal, and Human Capital administrator. As a principal, the researcher has witnessed first-hand the struggles of teachers in various settings, observing and being attentive and responsive to working conditions. Serving as a Human Capital

administrator has allowed the researcher to experience the ebb and flow of teacher

recruitment and retention in a large urban district. With this background, I posited that

financial incentives may have an impact on some teachers' professional decisions

regarding accepting a position or remaining in a position, but the extent of the impact was

unknown.

Post-Covid lockdowns presented new challenges for teachers and districts alike.

The challenges that existed pre-Covid persisted and seemed to intensify in some ways.

Bias related to restraints and convictions surrounding teacher working conditions in high

need schools, interventions applied by school and district administration, and teacher

compensation have helped form the researchers' conclusions on the possible impact of

financial incentives on teacher recruitment and retention prior to the study

implementation. Bias was managed by keeping a reflective journal to record thoughts and

observations and by incorporating bracketing to separate feelings, values and preexisting

views on topics separate from the research (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2006).

Finally, the researcher did not have any direct role in the hiring, evaluation, or

promotion of teachers within the district in which the researcher is employed. The only

role the researcher plays in the employment process is the supervision of the onboarding

process, after a potential employee has been recommended for hire by the hiring

principal. Therefore, participants from the district where the researcher is employed were

assured that their employment would not be impacted as a result of their choice to take

part in the research study that was open to educators in the Southwestern United States.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The findings from the research methodology outlined in chapter 3 are presented in this chapter. Using the phenomenological approach, the researcher collected data from 9 participants working in urban schools in the Southwestern United States. The study addressed two primary research: (RQ1) What are the circumstances that contribute to the attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district? (RQ2) To what extent, if any, are financial incentives linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages in an urban school district?

The researcher conducted individual in-depth interviews with participants for data collection. Data collected from the interviews added context to teachers' lived experiences, and revealed that among participants, there is a perception of limited teacher compensation and other challenges that contribute to teacher attrition and teacher shortages.

Participants

This phenomenological study included 9 participants from urban schools within the same region in the Southwestern United States. The participants met all of the inclusion criteria, to include: (1) hold a current teacher certificate or be in an alternative certification program, working toward certification, (2) be currently employed as a teacher and (3) currently receiving or previously received some type of financial incentive, outlined below, within the past 5 years and (4) complete the interest survey. Additionally, all participants (5) signed a confidentiality agreement and informed consent form (6) agreed to participate in a recorded interview and (7) member check process. The

findings shed light on teachers' lived experiences working in education in urban districts and their perceptions of the impact of financial incentives.

The participants worked for various years of service in the field of education and served Title I and non-Title I elementary, middle, and high school campuses. Participants were interviewed virtually via Zoom platform and hailed from schools with accountability ratings ranging from A to C under the Texas Education Agency rating system. Each participant presented a unique perspective of their lived experiences of working among colleagues in the urban school setting and their reflections on attrition and financial incentive offerings. Participant names have been changed to protect their identity. Each participant's background is detailed in the subsequent sections. All participant names are represented by an assigned number in the data table on emergent themes found in Appendix H.

Jordan

Jordan has been in education for 24 years and works as an English teacher in an urban middle school with a high minority population. Jordan previously received financial incentives in the forms of a retention bonus and an adjustment to the teacher salary matrix and was a Master Teacher under the TAP (The System for Teacher and Student Advancement). At some point Jordan left the current campus to work in another district in a leadership role, but returned to teach after only serving one year, citing corruption within the district. The campus where Jordan currently works is a Title I school and has been rated as C campus under the state accountability system.

Jaime

Jaime has worked as a teacher for less than 5 years, but previously served as a substitute teacher at the middle, elementary and high school level and a paraprofessional at the elementary level, searching for the best fit for her. Jaime received a retention bonus and works in a school that is not considered Title I and has an accountability rating of B.

Jackie

Jackie has been an educator for 10 years. The campus where Jackie is employed is a Title I early childhood center and is not rated by the state education agency. Prior to serving as a classroom teacher, Jackie served as a substitute teacher and instructional para. The roles of substitute teacher and instructional para inspired Jackie to pursue a teaching certificate. During her tenure, Jackie faced some critical health challenges, but continued to serve, with the support of her campus team and family. In terms of financial incentives, Jackie received a retention bonus and an adjustment to the teacher salary matrix to account for the cost of living.

Jade

Jade reported having been employed as an educator in the range of 6-11 years. During that time, Jade received a recruitment bonus, critical shortage stipend, TAP and TIA funds. The current campus where Jade works is a Title I elementary school and has a B rating under the state accountability system. Over time, Jade became a campus teacher leader, serving as an instructional coach and coteaching but is considering achieving TIA designation to reap the benefits of the TIA program.

Jay

Jay has worked in the field of education in secondary schools within the range of 0-5 years. During this time frame, Jay has received a retention bonus and a critical shortage stipend for teaching a STEM course. During the inquiry, Jay expressed interest in seeking a designation to qualify to receive TIA funds in the future. The school that Jay works in qualifies as a Title I school with a C rating within the accountability system.

Justice

Justice has worked as a teacher, working in elementary and middle school campuses, for 24 years, and over the years has received a retention bonus and adjustment to the teacher salary matrix for the cost of living. The campus where Justice currently serves is rated C on the accountability rating system and is a Title one campus.

Journey

Journey has worked as a teacher in the range of 12-17 years at a secondary campus. During this time, Journey has received a retention bonus, health insurance supplement, and adjustment to the teacher salary matrix. The campus where Journey works is not Title I and is rated C by the state accountability system. During the interview, Journey expressed an interest in seeking a designation to qualify to receive TIA funds in the future.

June

June is a teacher at a secondary campus, serving middle grades. June has worked in the field of education as a teacher for 12 years and has received financial supplemental pay in the form of the adjustment to the teacher salary matrix. The campus where June

serves is not a Title I school and has an A accountability rating. June has taught at the current campus for 11 years.

Jude

Jude has worked public education in the range of 6-11 years, serving as an elementary teacher. The current campus where Jude serves is rated a B with the state accountability system and is a Title I campus. Jude attested to having received an adjustment to the teacher salary matrix, retention bonus and supplemental pay for involvement in the TAP program. The TAP program earnings were not received within the last 5 years.

The participants in this study have years of experience ranging from 0-24 years, working in elementary, middle, and high school campuses. The teachers surveyed work in urban public schools, most of which are Title I campuses. These campuses the participants work in have accountability ratings ranging from A-C, except for one campus that was not rated under the state accountability system.

Data Collection

This section outlines the data collection process and includes the steps taken by the researcher to gather the data for the master file. The researcher began the data collection process by conducting individual interviews with study participants. During the study, the researcher took field notes and kept a reflective journal. Additionally, member checking was conducted with study participants. The procedures enlisted for the interviews and usage of the field notes and reflective journal are detailed in the following sections.

Interviews

  The interviews were all conducted via Zoom, in accordance with the participants'
preferred method of interview. The researcher provided each participant the interview
questions ahead of the interview so that they would have an opportunity to process the
questions and reflect. Before the interview, the researcher reminded the participants of
the purpose of the study and that the interview would be kept confidential, recorded and
that they could elect not to participate at any time during the interview. The researcher
read verbatim the questions from the interview protocol and allowed participants to
respond to each research question and supporting sub questions. Additionally, during the
interviews, the researcher recorded field notes, noting observations and descriptions of
relevance.

  The interviews lasted on average about 35 minutes, just shy of the predicted 40
minutes indicated on the research flyer. For each research question, participants were
allowed to reflect on their lived experiences and express their thoughts. If responses were
not clear to the researcher, probing questions were asked, without modifying intent of the
question or introducing new research questions or sub questions. Participants were
prompted with the following statements: (1) Explain what you mean by…, (2) elaborate,
(3) tell me more about…, (4) help me understand..., (4) and asked if they had anything
more to add, to gain more insight if responses seemed incomplete or unclear.

  At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked if they had anything to
add or any questions of the researcher. They were also reminded about the purpose of the
member check process and told that they would receive a copy of the transcript to review
via email. The interview process was repeated until data saturation was reached.

Data Saturation. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is contingent upon the interpretation of the data to represent the views of the research participant rather than the researcher. Saturation is reached when no new themes develop or help to further clarify existing themes (Creswell, 2019). During the interviews, the researcher took notes on each research question and sub question, recording reflections during each interview. The researcher sought to obtain thick and rich data to reach data saturation. To achieve data saturation, responses from the interview protocol, field notes and a reflective journal were coded, identifying basic themes which were combined to generate more complex and descriptive themes.

Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that the depth of the data with no new data, themes or coding indicates saturation. A review of the field notes, reflective journal and responses from each interview revealed common responses and themes, but no new data, indicating that data saturation had been achieved. With this study, the researcher achieved data saturation with 9 interviews.

Field Notes and Reflective Journal. Important tools for data collection during qualitative research include a reflective journal and field notes to record personal thoughts and observations during the interview (Creswell, 2019). Field notes were taken during the interviews and a reflective journal was kept by the researcher to record reflections and thoughts while carrying out the steps of the research study. Field notes included both broad and narrow observations about the data collected. These observations were integrated with the reflective journal and subsequently included in the data analysis to assist the researcher in making sense of the data. Notes from the reflective journal were also included in the data analysis. Both field notes and entries in the reflective journal

were utilized by the researcher to classify the data, based on broad ideas, recurring themes and mentions that were recorded at the time of the study.

Preparing the Master Data File

In preparation for creation of the master files the researcher converted the recorded audio file to a txt file within the Zoom application. These files were saved locally on the personal computer of the researcher and backed up on a flash drive. Dates and times the interviews were held and assigned participant numbers were recorded on the transcript.

The master data file included the authenticated transcripts after the member check process as well as data from field notes and reflective journaling. The field notes and journal notes were cleaned to eliminate fragmented data, and then typed up in a word document. These files were stored in a separate file on the researcher's flash drive and personal device. This method allowed the researcher to separate the participant data from the researcher's observations and reflections to avoid duplicity during future coding. Preparation of the maser file included internal and external validity checks.

Internal Validity

To increase internal validity, the researcher kept meticulous notes during the interviews and acknowledged that bias might exist due to the background experience of the educator. The researcher watched the recorded interviews once as well as reviewed the written transcripts. In total, the transcripts were reviewed by the researcher 5 times. The transcripts were printed out and reviewed 4 additional times after the initial analysis. Multiple reviews revealed repetition in the data, indicating saturation and resulting in layered themes.

External Validity

The researcher ensured external validity by including verbatim responses from the research participants. Additionally, participants were included in the member check process to authenticate the data. The researcher prepared each interview file at the conclusion of each interview. Cleanup of the interview files for readability and future analysis was necessary because some of the words were not recorded as stated simply due to dialects and pauses in the natural language of the participants. Furthermore, spacing of responses was necessary to declutter the document for ease of reading. Interviewee comments were clearly separated from the researcher's comments and interview questions were double spaced, separating the researcher's commentary from the participant responses in preparation for member checking.

Member Checking. The cleaned transcript was emailed, along with the video file to the participant for review as part of the member check process. Participants were provided 7 days to review the transcript and inform the researcher if any changes were needed. Participants acknowledged receipt and indicated that the file was accurate as presented. No changes to the file were requested from the participants. Therefore, these files were added to the master file once the participant confirmed the accuracy of the file.

Data Analysis

Upon preparation of the master data file, the transcripts were printed out and reviewed a total of 5 times by the researcher. The researcher manually coded the data using in vivo codes and annotation to ensure thorough analysis of the data. The coding process began with the review of the authenticated transcripts and the recording of notes, indicating patterns in the margins for research question and sub question. According to

van de Wiel (2017) coding is an "ongoing" process (p.123). Text segment codes are related to a specific portion of text, according to Creswell (2019). Text segment codes were assigned to each question response using the words of the study participant as well as the language of the researcher. As the researcher read through the transcripts, patterns and labels were noted in the margins, and were useful in identifying themes among participants, later utilized when identifying themes and subthemes.

Labels were applied to the concepts noted in the margins of the interview transcripts, with a mixture of single words and phrases, noting how many mentions related to certain topics. This process was repeated for each question and sub question again, which led to the development of ordinary themes, unexpected themes and major and minor themes as described by Creswell (2019). The researcher was then able to reduce the data from the layered themes, culminating in the development contextual findings and themes.

Field notes and reflective journaling were utilized to triangulate the data to increase internal validity. Triangulation allows the researcher to review "different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1411). The field notes and reflective journal notes were reviewed separately to eliminate the introduction of bias into the coding process. According to Poggenpoel & Myburgh (2006), bracketing is a useful tool utilized by researchers to separate the researcher's views from the research phenomenon being studied. With this practice, the ideas of the researcher are kept separate from the data. The researcher utilized bracketing with the field notes and reflective journal to separate personal understanding and ideas about the phenomenon studied, focusing solely on the project data.

Field notes and notes from the reflective journal were hand coded at the conclusion of the interview coding and labeling. In conjunction with the interview data, these notes solidified the findings of the participant interviews. The methodology for coding field notes and reflective journaling entailed the same process as outlined for the participant interviews. Summaries and take aways from the field notes and reflective journal are found in Appendix G.

Development of Emergent Themes

The development of themes in qualitative research involves the development of codes derived from words and phrases of participants (Chenail, 2012). According to Scharp and Sanders, thematic analysis helps the researcher to derive meaning from the data to answer the research question and successful analysis requires the researcher to: (1) familiarize themselves with the data, (2) develop codes and themes, (3) review those codes and themes, (4) and determine how the codes and themes identified apply to the data set.

From the review of the participant data in this study, codes were developed resulting in sub themes and then major themes. The researcher read through the data and codes were assigned based on broad ideas identified in excerpts and direct quotes in the interview data. To derive the sub-themes, codes were applied to data that appeared in the participant data set more than once. Similar categories were grouped together, ultimately leading to major themes. The data from the field notes and reflective journal were coded with the same methodology as the interview data. Appendix H details key words and phrases and the emergent themes with participant responses noted. Participant pseudo

names are represented with an alpha-numeric value in the table. A review of the data produced contextual findings and related themes, outlined below.

Contextual Findings and Themes

According to Phillipe and Lauderdale (2018), contextual findings from field notes allow the researcher to understand the background of research, making sense of real-world issues. This phenomenological study addressed two primary research questions aimed at uncovering the impact of financial incentives on teacher attrition and a reduction in teacher shortages in urban school districts. Along with data from individual in-depth interviews with participants, field notes and reflective journal notes were analyzed by the researcher to make sense of the data and construct meaning.

The first portion of this section outlines 2 contextual findings, resulting from the layering of sub themes, providing a foundation for understanding the background of the research surrounding the extent to which financial incentives influence teacher retention and attrition. The contextual themes provide the reader with an understanding of the themes that emerged from the research and the phenomena surrounding retention and attrition (Phillipe & Lauderdale, 2018). Contextual findings assist the researcher in connecting the data using broad themes (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Furthermore, 7 major, pointed themes emerged, from the triangulation of the data using the field notes, reflective journal and individual interview responses. This data assisted the researcher in developing an in-depth culmination of findings.

Data collected adds context to teachers' lived experiences, perception of limited teacher compensation and other challenges that contribute to teacher attrition and teacher shortages. The data analysis resulted in 7 major themes related to attrition and teacher

shortages: (1) Teachers no longer perceive teaching as a respected profession. (2) Teacher compensation is low and not competitive among districts. (3) Teachers are experiencing a lack of administrative and parental support. (4) Positive working conditions are valued over small financial incentives. (5) Teachers are experiencing the impact of the rising cost of living. (6) Financial incentives are not the primary reasons teachers remain. (7) Larger financial incentives sustained over time are a step in the right direction. Contextual findings and the major themes are covered in the following sections.

Contextual Finding 1- Teachers Choose to Remain in Their Positions and District When They Have a Positive View of Their Working Conditions

Teachers choose to remain in their positions when they perceive their working conditions as positive. Teachers in the study expressed that they prefer positive working conditions over financial incentives that are neither substantial nor lasting. Even though teachers in this study expressed that overall teacher compensation is low and that financial incentives are typically low and administered inconsistently, they choose to remain in the profession when they have a positive view of their working conditions. Overall, campus leadership, working conditions and the support available to study participants were most important when deciding to remain in the profession or with their campus or district. Teachers expressed that a positive culture, with encouragement contributes to teacher retention Jaime added,

> I feel like our working conditions are very positive. I feel like we have a good
>
> crew. As far as the team that I'm on, the pre-k and special education program, the

ESC (educational service center), we have a good team. We create our positive

environment. I feel like I love where I work. I love the team. I love kids.

Two other teachers, June and Jay illustrated the benefit of strong campus leadership and

working conditions.

The campus where June works has built a positive, competitive culture, leading to

a campus that has maintained an A accountability rating, indicating a high performing

school. June spoke about the importance of autonomy and described the working

conditions and how that environment leads to teacher retention. Jay also described a

positive campus culture. Jay stated,

It's enjoyable; we're all allowed to be individuals. We are allowed to be ourselves.

No one is expected to be a certain way. We are just expected to do our jobs, and if

you are doing your job, you're left alone and allowed to have fun. We're allowed

to be as creative as we want to be. So, yeah, it's a good situation.

As evidenced by the data, schools with strong, supportive school leadership are more

likely to retain teachers.

Contextual Finding 2- Teachers View Teacher Compensation as Low in Comparison to

Other Professions and are Interested in Incentive Programs That Offer Larger Payouts

Over Longer Terms

The second contextual finding revealed the participants' viewpoints on

compensation in urban schools. This contextual finding is related to how teachers view

the overall state of financial incentives and teacher compensation and the suggestion that

a desirable incentive program is the TIA program. This finding uncovered the notion that

some teachers choose to remain in education despite low compensation and inconsistent

and low financial incentive amounts. Each participant expressed how they felt about the current level of compensation in urban schools in the region. Overall, participants claimed that teacher compensation in the region is not adequate in the current economy and lags the private sector. Furthermore, it was reported that school districts in the region where the study was conducted offer a relatively similar compensation plan, with recruitment and retention bonuses only differing by a few hundred dollars.

Additionally, participants suggested that any financial incentive that is offered should be offered more consistently and be of more value to impact teacher retention, since many area school districts have a very similar base pay structure. A profound statement by one of the research participants resonated with the researcher.

Jordan offered "So, let's say if I was offered, you know, if I was seeking employment elsewhere in a different district and financial gain was a lot more, then I would leave where I am and go." Participants consistently noted that larger financial incentives were more attractive than smaller, inconsistent offerings. Justice offered this rhetorical question, "How much is a small incentive going to impact my financial situation?" The current program in the region where participants were surveyed consists of a substantial increase to the base salary is the Teacher Incentive Allotment program (TIA). TIA emerged as a promising financial incentive offering, appealing to teachers in the study.

The TIA enticement is significant, and high performing teachers have an opportunity to earn substantial payouts for five years from the year first designation is earned. Three study participants expressed interest in seeking designation with the TIA program. Journey, Jade, and Jay shared their excitement about the possibility of

qualifying for a designation and earning more sustainable and substantial incentive payouts. The district they currently serve in received full designation and continues to add eligible campuses each year. Journey explained,

> Our district is in the second year of the TIA allotment. It is only English and Algebra I teachers who are eligible to be paid next year when it comes to core content. The year after that it will be all teachers. So, that is absolutely a factor in me staying, knowing that next year, I can begin the process and that the year after that I will actually be receiving that money. So, it has 100% impacted my decision to stay.

Jay also expressed intent to seek designation because of the potential earning power under TIA. Jay shared,

> I am really interested in the Teacher Incentive Allotment program that is being rolled out. Is this actually attainable? Is this a fairy tale; or can we actually get this money? I am going to do my job and hope for the best. If I actually see that money, that would be a huge incentive to stay versus leaving to go to other districts where they have phased out TIA.

Finally, Jade also expressed that financial incentive programs that offer the opportunity for effective teachers to earn additional income are effective tools for teacher retention Jade, an experienced teacher, and teacher leader, stated,

> I want to get that TIA money. I see how much I could make. I think about the other teachers that are not performing, and they are like leaving. Some people are easily motivated by money to outperform. Some people are competitive, but I feel

like there is no competitive pay. Not everyone can get incentive pay. That is why

I feel like we are losing a lot of teachers.

Teachers desire to earn more and when they have the skills necessary, are willing to do

the work to earn money by participating in programs that have promise and offer

substantial, long-term benefits.

Theme 1-Teachers No Longer Perceive Teaching as a Respected Profession

Teachers in this study expressed that overall, education is not a respected

occupation as it was in previous years. Participants discussed having experienced

disrespect from students, parents, the community at large and policymakers. Since the

COVID pandemic, teachers reported having experienced a new level of disrespect

amongst students, including behavioral problems, as frequently reported on social media

outlets. With emotion, Jordan reported,

You know, you're the educator. You are supposed to be able to do your job type

thing, but teachers, newly fresh teachers, young teachers that may not have the

experience I have, that may not have the ability to deal with the discipline side of

things. They are struggling a lot…especially after COVID. I saw a lot of empathy

being given to kids. I honestly think that we let that empathy, that empathy can go

a little bit too far because some of these kids are just using to their advantage and

doing some things they should not be doing.

Reported discipline issues and students' lack of respect for authority from participants

seems to be a major factor impacting the work of teachers and working conditions on the

campuses they serve. Teachers in the study reported students as having less respect for

authority than in previous years. The perceived disrespect impedes teacher confidence in

their ability to perform their jobs effectively and expressed a strong desire for assistance from campus leadership as well as parents in handling misbehavior.

Jade reflected upon the perceived disrespect from students and stated, "In order to build a relationship, you have to know your students, know your demographic.", referring to how teachers should approach their students as a means of garnering the respect of students in an urban environment. Another participant reflected on how the campus administration plays an important role in assisting teachers in dealing with disrespectful student behaviors. Jay commented, when considering different campuses, educators likely ask, "Are the students held accountable when they act in a certain way?" Jude reported that teachers experience "burnout" due to behavior and discipline issues, resulting in defensive parent requests and concerns, putting pressure on the teacher when students fail to perform because of behavior issues.

Justice reported having very little support from the larger community and expressed a very strong opinion on the state of the field of education relative to perceived respect from the community. Justice shared that overall disrespect seems to permeate education, stating,

> Overall disrespect is present, not really from only students, but from parents as well, which I think extends to the larger community. You know, you see the disrespect when it comes to policy decisions and even lawmakers it seems like. Teachers are always at the bottom of the pole when they're trying to make these decisions. There is a huge lack of parental support.

June expressed a similar sentiment and with a great deal of seriousness and emotion, shared that the educational system is "… set up to take advantage of teachers", explaining

that teachers must purchase their own materials and expend extra hours without compensation, unlike other industries. June further lamented, "I just think the system (educational) is forever taken advantage of because teachers tend to be very passionate, caring people and go above and beyond, and I think the system institutionally has been taken advantage of that since the beginning of education." Furthermore, June went on to add that out of all educator types, teachers are the least "taken care of" in terms of compensation.

All in all, the notion of disrespect towards the profession by study participants resonated throughout the interviews. Ultimately, participants expressed that the compensation that they receive is insufficient in terms of the challenges they face, and that low compensation is a systemic issue throughout the profession. The next session delves more intimately into the thoughts of study participants concerning the topic of low compensation.

Theme 2-Teacher Compensation is Low and Not Competitive Among Districts

Participants in the study contend that overall compensation for teachers is lacking and that from what they witnessed, teachers who remain in education and are unhappy with their current position or district tend to shop around, looking for opportunities in districts that offer incentives that are attractive. Study participants consistently noted that most salaries are consistent within the region where they work; therefore, to witness the benefit of stipends and incentives impact on teacher retention and a reduction in teacher shortages, financial incentives must be sizeable and sustained over time.

Jordan stated that her overall base salary has changed very little over the years, from district to district, and she works extra jobs to help make ends meet. According to

Jordan, "My salary really has not changed much from district to district. The district that I left, I was in a leadership role, but when I came back, I went back to being a classroom teacher, and my salary pretty much stayed around the same." Jordan further explained that she desires to feel as though she is being "adequately compensated" for the work that she does, offering that teachers generally seek to find ways of earning extra compensation, such as after school activities and sponsorship opportunities.

Competitive pay among districts is not a reality when it comes to base salary amounts. Survey participants shared that pay among districts within the region are very similar. However, incentive amounts may differ, especially in districts that take part in the TIA program. Jade commented that some teachers may be motivated to perform by additional funding. Others may decide that they do not want to be competitive or put in extra effort, stating, "Not everybody can get incentive pay, but I feel like if there is no incentive pay, why should I work hard?", referring to the level of accountability and effort required of teachers to achieve TIA designation. Jade went on to comment that teachers may decide to leave a school or district if they are able to earn more, even if in another industry. Jade stated, "That is why I feel like we're losing a lot of teachers. The pay is more, and they don't even care about working summers there."

Another participant commented that low compensation is a contributing factor in teachers leaving the field. Jay offered that teaching requires a lot of skill and if a teacher is highly skilled, they are "more marketable for a higher value elsewhere". Jay also proposed that teachers who are not leaving for higher paying positions or different industries may lack valuable skills that may be coveted by industry, especially if they are experts in their content area. For example, Jay shared, "I've just noticed that we have lost

a lot of good teachers, for instance, if a teacher is really good at computer science and also good at teaching, they can make a lot more on the market as a computer scientist than they could teaching computer science."

Justice mentioned that overall compensation is not commensurate with experience when compared to jobs in the public sector. Justice reflected that teachers could have the same level of degree, such as a Master's or Bachelor's and be compensated much less than someone with the same accolades working in the business industry. Furthermore, Justice explained that even after working in the field for 25 years, the pay among incoming teachers and veteran teachers does not differ much in surrounding districts in the region where she is employed.

All in all, compensation ranks as a high priority among teachers. Some see financial incentives as a supplement to low base pay and welcome the opportunity to earn supplemental pay. Many teachers struggle to make ends meet with the current pay structure that does not vary much among competing districts. Furthermore, teachers pointed out that even with advanced degrees, teachers don't have access to impactful competitive pay unless they are able to take part in an incentive system like the TIA that offers sizeable financial incentives over a longer period.

Theme 3-Teachers are Experiencing a Lack of Administrative and Parental Support

This theme delves into teachers' perception of limited support when working on a campus. Participants cited poor administrative or parental support as reasons why teachers may decide to leave a campus or a district. Micromanagement by administrators and decreased autonomy and uncooperative parents were mentioned as challenges encountered while working in urban schools.

Participants contend that micromanagement by administrators causes teachers to leave campuses. June expressed that micromanagement can be viewed as unfair treatment among teachers. According to June, teachers with lesser developed skills may require more administrative oversight, resulting in less autonomy in the classroom and increased scrutiny, perceived as lack of administrative support. June added, "For me, I am allowed to be myself and I'm supported…the teachers that are high performers." June also shared that among friends who work in other schools within the district who have left positions seeking employment in other districts, they did not feel supported in their work when dealing with student behaviors nor experience the desired autonomy. Some teachers are opting to leave public education in exchange for positions where they can earn a living without the stressors of public education like student behavior issues.

As a result of increased disciplinary behaviors and perceived diminished parental and leadership support to handle disciplinary challenges, teachers are choosing to leave certain situations or the profession altogether. Justice also shared that, in her opinion, some parents do the best they can to nurture their child and support educators, whether dealing with discipline or academics, and others have been defensive, further explaining, "When you go to parents with issues, it seems like their defenses are up, even before you explain the situation." Teachers are looking for advocacy in campus leaders to help them deal with negative student behaviors and parents.

Furthermore, Jordan also shared that teachers may lack skill in dealing with behaviors as well as possess limited pedagogical skill, and struggle in the classroom. Some teachers who need extra support may perceive that they are being micromanaged, rather than supported. To that end, empathetic and supportive leadership is desired.

Jay, Jackie, and Jordan expressed that having a supportive leadership team is crucial to their success and willingness to remain on a campus. Jay illustrated that if a student had a discipline issue, the student would be appropriately disciplined and not just sent back to the classroom. Furthermore, Jay expressed that inconsistent leadership practices when dealing with school policy might impact whether a teacher leaves a school. Jay stated, "I think the principal makes a really big difference. Our principal is really, really good, really understanding, consistent and wants what's best for us." Jay suggested that inconsistent leadership is the biggest "pitfall" of campus leaders, resulting in increased attrition.

Jackie recounted how her principal supported her through her health challenge and expressed how she feels a part of a family at her current campus. Jackie stated,

I dealt with a very serious cancer diagnosis during the time that I have been here. Something sticks out in the back of my mind is the day I got the phone call, that is, of the doctor calling me and telling me, "You do have cancer". I told my principal, and she jumped up right away and took charge, and she was so supportive. I remember waking up from my surgery, and a friend who was there with me told me that I might want to put some pants on because my boss was on the way. She was one of the first people there besides friends and family that were there with me during the surgery to make sure I was okay.

The support Jackie received from the campus principal was a crucial factor in her decision to continue to remain in her position and at her current campus.

Jordan commented that the role of the teacher is multifaceted and support from administrators and parents is paramount because of the many hats that teachers must

wear. She shared that leaders micromanage teachers, rather than empower teachers and further develop teachers who may lack the skills to deal with the current challenges teachers face in urban schools. Additionally, without advocacy and support, teachers decide to leave campuses, change districts, and sometimes leave the profession. With frustration, Jordan shared, "There's so much that these teachers, including myself, are being called to do. You got to handle discipline, got to be a counselor, got to be a mom, got to be a daddy, and know the content!" Jordan continued, stating that parents lacked accountability for the behaviors or success of their children, making the work of a teacher difficult. Administrative and parental support contribute to overall working conditions. The following section will detail participants' lived experience concerning working conditions and their reflections on how working conditions impact teacher retention and attrition.

Theme 4-Positive Working Conditions are Valued Over Small Financial Incentives

Participants in this study shared that post-COVID, based on their lived experiences, working conditions have deteriorated. Negative working conditions were described as increased negative student behaviors, increased workload, higher stakes relative to accountability due to student regression. Teachers in this study shared their thoughts on why teachers decide to leave their campus or district and choose to remain in education seek work environments that they perceive as positive and less stressful, with administrative support. According to participants surveyed, negative work environments are adding to teacher burnout, leading to attrition, in some cases. Participants shared that a positive work environment supporting their well-being was of more value than financial incentives.

Positive Environment. Jaime, a newer teacher, described the working conditions where she currently works in a different light. She described how teams of teachers, along with campus leadership, help to create a positive working environment and that environment benefits the campus community. Jaime asserted that because she is in an environment that is positive, she can be successful as a new teacher. Jaime expressed how pleased she is with her current campus because of such positive working conditions and intends on remaining at the campus.

The current campus principal where June was described as a "great leader" who is supportive and respectful of teacher's time, supports anonymity and is consistent with implementation of campus policy. The leader has high standards for student expectations but has built such a culture on the campus whereby teachers push one another and themselves and have become invested in that campus. The campus functions as a team, as described by June.

Teachers covet working relationships with their peers and school leadership that fosters opportunity for growth and teamwork. Three participants shared how they chose to work in a particular district or campus because of their desire to work around good mentors and supportive leadership. Under these circumstances, teachers gain the capacity to grow within their profession to be better teachers and even pursue leadership roles.

Justice recounted a positive experience with parents, explaining that in one of the campuses served, the parent teacher organization (PTA) was quite strong, and a welcoming relief in comparison to a previous campus where she had worked. The parent group was described as extremely supportive, questioning teachers, "What can I help you with?" Justice further went on to describe how parents were supportive when it came to

handling issues relative to discipline concerning their own children and offered those

parents who belonged to the PTA stated, "If there are any problems, let me know. I want

to work with you; I am on your side". This type of positive experience is one that is

desired but may be less common across campuses that have limited parental support.

Negative Working Conditions Contribute to Attrition. Jordan left one district

to pursue a leadership role in another district only to return after one year. According to

Jordan, the working conditions were stressful, and she was uncomfortable in an

environment that she described as corrupt. Jordan shared, "I worked for a district where

there was a lot of corruption from the head down to the campus level, that I certainly was

not used to being around those types of things." Jordan went on to express that the

climate created by the campus leadership and campus team impacted a lot of the work

performed. She stated that she just wants to be able to teach, not stressing about test

scores. Jordan explained that administrators are being pressured to produce results and

pass the pressure along to the teachers to get results. Furthermore, Jordan explained that

she could not "work in a place that the climate is not conducive to stay", expressing that

she has seen teachers break down emotionally from the stress and pressures. She added,

"No amount of money would allow me to endure and have to deal with some of the stuff

I have seen."

Three other participants reported that teachers who leave may leave because of

the increased amount of stress due to pressures to perform, increased expectations and

workload and student behaviors. June and Justice suggested that some teachers decide

that compensation does not outweigh stressful working conditions and that teachers

sometimes decide to leave stressful working conditions for a district where the position may pay slightly less.

According to June,

> There's more and more work being put on teachers and the pay is not adequately represented. Parent support is not what it was a long time ago and the discipline is not in check as it once was. The workload, just a lot more, as you think about everything a teacher is responsible for as compared to before. This is the first time I have seen so many first-year teachers come and go in the last 5 years.

Another teacher shared how some teachers elect to search for an environment to work in with more favorable working conditions. Jay shared that teachers consider working conditions and treatment by campus leadership and weigh whether they should take their skills elsewhere if they are unhappy in their current situation. Jay expressed,

> I think a lot of teachers end up realizing that they're more marketable somewhere else if they have good skills. The treatment of the teacher is important. So, do you want to come in day after day with a bad work environment? For example, are the students held accountable when they act in a certain way? Are you asked to do reasonable things? The people who stay probably don't have the skills to be able to market themselves somewhere else.

Interestingly, both Justice and June asserted that those who are closer to retirement may stay in a situation that they are unhappy with simply because they have almost completed their journey and contend with the conditions, even if they are tough. June commented,

> Sometimes it gets to a point where the stress is not worth the money. Teachers like me, or those close to retirement, the district may hang on to, but the

conditions are really hard for them. Unless they start paying more or changing the system, you're not going to have new talent coming in.

Availability of Professional Learning Communities. Jade and Journey added that the availability of mentors and professional learning communities is important to teachers' success and satisfaction with their current campus or district. The resources available to teachers are shared within the professional learning community (PLC). Jade shared that the resources made available to her are paramount to her success and expressed that she was quite appreciative of the support provided by the bilingual department, the PLC and teacher mentors. Less experienced teachers struggle to keep up with the many tasks, along with meeting the expectations of student achievement. Teacher advocacy, through mentoring and support, plays a role in teacher retention, according to Justice.

Professional learning communities (PLC) meetings exist to assist teachers in breaking down the curriculum, constructing lessons and preparing for assessments. Much of the planning is shared with a team via a professional learning community (PLC), making way for teachers to spend more time focusing on other tasks.

Jackie reflected on a conversation with a student teacher who served on her campus as an intern and was subsequently hired as a teacher on the campus. She stated that the campus administration had an open-door policy, was supportive, welcoming, and personable to current staff as well as interns on the campus. The student teacher was so enamored that she sought to gain a position on the campus that she felt welcomed in and the culture and leadership support to which she had become accustomed. A similar situation occurred with another participant. Jaime spoke of her personal journey, having

started as a substitute where her children attended and subsequently being hired as a

teacher on the same campus. She described the leadership and campus culture as being

very positive, and conducive to her decision to remain at that campus to begin her

journey in education.

Journey pointed out that the PLC that she participates in contributes to her

success, but due to future scheduling, she will lose the team planning time the following

school year. The team meetings are of great benefit to teachers who are just starting out,

but sometimes not enough to keep them on the campus. Journey participated in a campus

interview panel, and recounted that during the previous school year, most of the teachers

who were hired at the campus were inexperienced, lacked full certification and had

difficulty dealing with the challenges of managing student behavior and teacher

responsibilities. Some teachers did not commit to teaching at the campus the following

year. Journey explained during her interview that a new group of new hires were brought

in for the upcoming school year, this time, with experience. On the other hand, Jordan

mentioned that when toxicity exists and teams do not work well together, teachers may

seek to find employment elsewhere.

Based on the study participants' views, working conditions can be both stressful

and positive. According to study participants, teachers' experiences vary, based on the

perceived level of administrative support and or parental support. The day-to-day

challenges place insurmountable stress on some teachers who may not be skilled to

balance the challenges and continue in the position. In those instances, teachers may

choose to leave a campus, district, or the field of education altogether. In other instances,

the challenges presented with negative working conditions, coupled with the cost of

living, deter those who chose to teach from continuing. Ultimately, participants shared that although financial incentives are of great importance, positive, less stressful working conditions are preferred over financial incentives, even though overall teacher compensation is lacking.

Theme 5-Teachers are Experiencing the Impact of the Rising Cost of Living

With the cost of living, teachers are having more and more difficulty making ends meet, with some electing to have second jobs or seek higher paying jobs in the field of education or outside teaching altogether. Participants in this study mentioned that careers in other industries offer much better compensation for the same level of educational attainment, whether it be bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree.

Cost of Living. Jordan, looking toward retirement, expressed concerns about financial stability in an uncertain economy. If offered a position in another district that offered more money, Jordan stated that she would leave her current position, especially if a leadership role is available. A leadership opportunity would garner a higher salary. Jordan stated, "The economy could be a major contributor to why teachers are leaving, what is happening, you know. People can't pay their rent." June also expressed concern about financial stability and the rising cost of living on a teacher salary.

June explained that in discussions with peers, concepts of sustainability and higher stipend amounts were important to the perceived effectiveness of financial incentives, especially for teachers who have been teaching for several years. Teachers are seeking opportunities to offset the rising cost of living and in some cases, teachers consider leaving the profession altogether if a favorable opportunity, offering financial stability and fewer challenges was presented. June stated,

Any intelligent person who's hard working and capable is going to go where the money is. If there was a district that offered $10,00 or more, I'm there. Yeah, I think it is the general cost of living that makes it hard. You've got to make smart decisions and be disciplined about spending. Housing is just ridiculous around here. There's lots of jobs that pay way more than what a teacher does that are less stressful. I had an Uber driver take me to the airport, and he used to be a teacher, and now he is making $88, 000 being an Uber driver. So, I think there's just a lot more options and again, you know, you can go work other places for 25 bucks an hour easily with less stress.

Regionally, where the study was conducted, many districts offer hiring bonuses, but have focused less on retaining teachers, in terms of compensation by increasing teacher base pay. Cost of living increases have typically been 1-2 percent raises that are consumed by healthcare premium costs that are passed on to the employees, making little difference in improving overall compensation for teachers.

Rising Healthcare Costs. When teachers receive a slight bump in pay afforded by districts to offset the cost of living, that increase never really makes it to their pockets for expendable funds. According to study participants, health insurance premiums often rise at the same rate as any increase to the salary matrix. In some instances, teachers rely on receiving at least a small increase to the teacher salary matrix to accommodate the cost of living. During Jackie's tenure, health concerns erupted. She received a cancer diagnosis and was able to continue to remain employed throughout treatment. Jackie commented that she was extremely grateful for the support she received while she battled the illness and her decision to remain was a great deal associated with the health benefits

she received and the slight raise that she received on a yearly basis that helped cover rising insurance costs. Jackie went on to share, with enthusiasm, that she that she loves her job, but that substantial compensation is important to her, "especially with this current economy". Jackie optimistically shared how she looks forward to receiving the cost-of-living increase that has been afforded to her in previous years. She appreciates the small increase, which helps to offset healthcare costs, associated with insurance benefits. Her district pays $400 toward her benefits, but the cost of her plan is above the amount that the district pays because she selects the plan that is optimal for cancer treatment.

Two other participants, Justice and Journey also expressed the need for increased financial compensation and incentives due to rising healthcare costs. Justice added that financial incentives need to be substantial. Additionally, both added that any increase to the salary matrix is beneficial but does not always balance out the increasing cost of healthcare. Journey talked about how her district was not the highest paying district, but that the district offered the highest amount of payment on the individual health insurance plan. According to Journey, 17 years prior in her current district, the whole amount of the insurance benefit was covered for employees. The increases to the salary matrix over time have not been enough to keep up with increased inflation. Now, her district is not the highest paying nor is it the district in the region that offers the most healthcare benefits.

All in all, although the cost of living is rising, and participants expressed dissatisfaction with compensation, other factors, such as leadership support, and work environment outweighed the desire to move districts for smaller incentive amounts and one-time offerings. Participants expressed that their desire to work in education as a

teacher was not based on financial desires, even though they appreciate an increase in salary or availability of incentives. Even in a struggling economy, teachers are invested in the work they are doing and, in many cases, are willing to continue to do the work they sought their degrees in. Working other jobs, taking on other duties such as club sponsorship has become a way of life for some just to make ends meet.

Theme 6-Financial Incentives are Not the Primary Reasons Teachers Remain

This section delves into the extent, if any, that financial incentives are linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages. Teachers desire supportive leadership, supportive parents, good working conditions and a supportive network of peers when choosing to work in a campus or district. Teachers in this study reported that their sense of purpose, when coupled with a good working environment was enough to make them decide to remain in their current position, especially since pay throughout the region did not differ much.

Journey discussed how she had different opportunities to teach on different campuses and in different districts but chose to remain in her current assignment and district because she feels a sense of belonging and connectedness. Journey shared,

I came here right out of college. I had a friend that I was in my education program with who did her student teaching in this district and in the actual school I am I, and she heard there would be a position available and told me about it. I've had different opportunities, people have suggested I transfer, but the reason I have stayed is really the culture, both with the faculty and the students. We are very proud of the history at my school, and there is a lot of pride and a lot of winning. It sounds cliché, but we're really a family. I lean on my planning team; so, the

thought of going to another campus without those people is really a deterrent for me.

The sentiment about campus culture as described by Journey was also expressed by Jaime.

Jaime shared that although financial incentives are important to her, money does not motivate her to do the work she does. She explained that she would not leave her current situation because of a small financial enticement. Jackie also shared that financial incentives are appreciated because of the effects of inflation, but she remains with her campus because of the culture and support she receives. She stated with confidence that as long as teachers receive the "little raises" they get each year, "things will be okay."

Jaime is invested in her current campus and stated that if she were not happy in her situation, she would seek to work elsewhere, even if the compensation was less. She described her campus atmosphere as very positive, and any financial incentive is a "bonus". She continued that financial incentives are "not a necessity for me" and "If it is given, you're gonna get excited about that."

Justice also expressed that she was not motivated by money to work. She explained that she is on a personal mission. She is intrinsically and spiritually motivated, stating, "God put me where I was supposed to be at the right time, and I can't move until the mission is complete."

In conclusion, although financial incentives are both welcomed and appreciated, teachers who are invested in teaching and happy with their work environment choose to remain on their campus and with their district. Teachers in this study expressed that the positive working conditions, leadership and parental support, feelings of connectedness

and intrinsic motivation keep them working on their current campuses with their current districts.

Theme 7-Larger Financial Incentives Sustained Over Time are a Step in the Right Direction

Districts utilize financial incentives to attract and retain teachers, but oftentimes the incentives, as described by study participants, are not substantial and are fleeting. Participants in the study shared that larger incentives should be offered to make a difference in whether a teacher stays with a district. If competing districts offered larger amounts that were sustained over time, perhaps a greater impact on recruitment and retention would be achieved.

Substantial Financial Incentives. Three teachers in this study agreed that accepting another position would be contingent on the amount of money received. Jordan spoke of her desire to move into a leadership role because of her skills and desire to earn more money, and if asked to teach remain in her current position, she would require more money, if the financial offering for other positions was substantially more than what she currently makes. Regarding remaining in her current position rather than accepting a position with more earning potential, Jordan stated "It would have to be a good amount of money, especially since I know I have the skills, and I have the experience and skills to do something else." June shared the same sentiment and stated that districts offering the most financial incentives would attract the "cream of the crop teachers." Jackie also expressed that if she were currently looking for a position, and the school was desirable, she would accept a position with the highest pay. She stated,

If I was not in the position I have now and I interviewed at a school and it was a good school and there were things I could deal with, and they offered me enough to pay what I need to pay, then I would take it.

Competition Among Districts. Similarly, Jade and Justice suggested that if they were considering another district, they would not just leave for a stipend. Jade and Justice shared the sentiment that they would be more enticed by a larger base pay amount, and teacher pay should be more competitive among districts.

Conversely, When Jay was searching for a position, she searched for the highest paying districts. Jay shared, " I was looking for a district that was going to pay me a little bit more for my teaching experience." She found a district that was appealing to her and has chosen to stay because of the retention bonuses that other districts do not offer. She added that she might have considered other districts with more "difficult" schools if the financial incentive offering had been enough to offset the challenges that come with working in tougher conditions.

Furthermore, since districts compete to attract teachers in a very competitive environment, teachers are paying attention to what the financial incentives are in neighboring districts. Jude explained that when teachers research districts and see incentive offering amounts, they may weigh the options of leaving their current position. Ultimately, teachers in this study suggested that urban districts that want to retain their staff should work to offer retention bonuses, at minimum.

Summary of Findings

The contextual findings and themes in this study reflect the current perceptions and opinions of teachers on retention and attrition relative to financial incentives in an

urban district. In reference to the 2 conceptual findings from the data, the summary findings of the researcher are that: (1) When working conditions are favorable and teachers feel supported and have a positive view of their working conditions, teachers tend to remain in their districts, even if other districts offer slightly higher incentives or slightly higher base compensation. (2) Overall, teacher compensation is not favorable and is not competitive among districts. Teachers are willing to work to earn stipends and are taking part in incentive programs to offset the rising cost of living; therefore, financial incentives that are sizeable and offered more consistently are favorable.

In reference to the 7 themes, the summary findings from the data indicates: (1) Teachers no longer perceive teaching as a respected profession; therefore, teacher compensation is insufficient relative to the challenges teachers face. (2) Teacher compensation is low and not competitive among districts and compensation amounts were similar around the region where the study was conducted. Teachers may decide to seek opportunities to earn more and are looking for sizeable incentives over a longer period. (3) Teachers are experiencing a lack of administrative and parental support when dealing with challenges, and this phenomenon contributes to teachers' level of satisfaction with working conditions. (4) Working conditions are valued over small financial incentives; therefore, teachers are seeking positive environments with leadership, parental and peer support. Ultimately, less stressful environments are preferred over small financial incentives. (5) Teachers are experiencing the impact of the rising costs of living, and as a result, teachers are seeking opportunities to supplement compensation. (6) Financial incentives are not the primary reasons teachers remain; instead, teachers are intrinsically motivated, choosing to remain in the field of education

and in their current positions when they are content and satisfied in a positive work environment. (7) Larger financial incentives sustained over time are a step in the right direction; therefore, districts should offer incentives that are both substantial and sustainable over time.

Conclusion

The teachers in this study shared their sentiments with conviction and passion. They all seemed to have a love for education and simply wish to be respected and well compensated for their efforts, like professions in other industries with similar degree requirements. All in all, the main reasons teachers who were involved in this study choose to remain with their current campus or district are more related to the leadership support and working conditions. As suggested by study participants, teachers prefer positive working conditions where they feel supported by campus leadership over small incentive offerings. Participants suggested that teachers whom they were in contact with who left or those who may decide to leave their campus or the field of education altogether, may have decided or decide to leave in the future due to perceived lack of leadership support and working conditions.

Finally, due to the rising cost of living, some participants sought opportunities to earn extra funds within their current position to offset costs. In these instances, they shared that teachers are not choosing to leave their campuses for small incentive offerings but instead focus on their happiness and job satisfaction, choosing positive working conditions. Furthermore, according to participants, financial incentive offerings are weighed when choosing a district, but do not necessarily entice teachers to leave their current positions if already working in a school, due to compensation among districts

being relatively similar. Finally, teachers welcome financial incentives that are lasting

and substantial and assert that incentives with these attributes will make an impact on

teacher retention and a reduction in attrition and shortages. The following chapter

involves a discussion of the data uncovered during the phenomenological study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter addresses the findings presented in Chapter 4 from the

phenomenological study on the factors that influence teacher retention and attrition and

the impact of financial incentives on teacher retention. In the subsequent sections, the

summary of findings, interpretations of the data, implications, limitations of the study and

recommendations for future research are discussed. The research study included 9

teachers, as outlined in the participant section in chapter 4, who work in urban schools in

the Southwest. Participants included elementary and secondary teachers from urban

schools with: (1)various years of service, ranging from 1- 25 years of service, and (2)

experience working in Title I and non-Title I campuses, with accountability ratings

ranging from A to C. Two contextual findings and 7 major themes evolved from the

study data.

The contextual findings represent the overarching ideas relative to the research

questions and include the notions that: (1) Teachers choose to remain in their positions

and district when they have a positive view of their working conditions (2) Teachers view

teacher compensation as low in comparison to other professions and are interested in

incentive programs that offer larger payouts over longer terms. The major themes

uncovered with the data are as follows: (1) Teachers no longer perceive teaching as a

respected profession. (2) Teacher compensation is low and not competitive among

districts. (3) Teachers are experiencing a lack of administrative and parental support. (4)

Positive working conditions are valued over small financial incentives. (5) Teachers are

experiencing the impact of the rising cost of living. (6) Financial incentives are not the

primary reasons teachers remain. (7) Larger financial incentives sustained over time are a step in the right direction.

The contextual findings shed light on the opinions of teachers, reflecting their lived experiences, regarding teacher compensation, retention, and attrition. The themes delve into shared views on the causes of attrition, perspectives on financial incentives and the implications associated with the use of financial incentives to attract and retain teachers. The interpretations of the contexts and themes allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Interpretation of Contexts and Themes

The aim of the research study was to answer two primary research questions to uncover the circumstances that contribute to the attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district and to understand to what extent, if any financial incentives are linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages in an urban school district. The discussion of findings illuminated the perspectives of teachers working in urban schools, relative to retention, attrition, and financial incentives. The interpretation of these findings is covered in the following sections, with a summary of interpretation of contexts and themes is found in Appendix I.

Context 1-Teachers Choosing to Remain in Their Positions When They Have a Positive View of Their Working Conditions

Teacher compensation in districts varies very little from district to district. In these instances, as demonstrated with commentary from participants, teachers may choose to remain in their positions for reasons other than financial incentive offerings. Leadership support and working conditions oftentimes outweigh financial incentives

when teachers are searching for teaching opportunities. The researcher found that teachers may decide to choose schools with palpable working conditions and perceived positive characteristics of the schools they considered, supporting the previous research from the Fulbeck and Richards (2015) study. Based on participant response, the researcher concluded that teachers appreciated and desired the opportunity to work with supportive leaders in positive environments. This finding correlates with previous research on teacher retention. For example, in high stress environments, with limited parental support, the support of fellow teachers and campus leadership are crucial factors in teachers' decision to remain (Sass et al., 2011; Toropova et al., 2021).

Jaime's perception of positive working conditions, described in Chapter 4, illustrates how important leadership and team support are in reducing attrition, resulting in the evolution of institutional knowledge over time as mentioned in the Fulbeck and Richards (2015) study. Additionally, participants June and Jay's examples, describing the benefits of working with a strong, supportive leader and positive working conditions supports the researcher's interpretation that a positive work environment with a support leader can lead to improved outcomes for students, and improved teacher retention, leading to high performing campuses and less attrition. These findings, consistent with the findings from the works of Fulbeck and Richards (2015), Tricario et al.(2015), and Urick (2016) who found that a positive work environment, with leaders who can galvanize a team reap student academic success as well as retain valuable institutional knowledge when teachers stay.

Context 2-Teachers View Teacher Compensation as Low in Comparison to Other Professions and are Interested in Incentive Programs That Offer Larger Payouts Over Longer Terms

Teachers weigh their options when making the decision to join a district, leave a district or remain. Financial incentives are sometimes not enough to entice teachers to leave their current positions, especially if they are experienced teachers. Dee and Wycoff (2017) reported that teachers who were less effective were less likely to remain in schools. As reported by Atterberry et al. (2020), when districts offered financial incentives, that included performance-based measures for students and teachers, experienced teachers chose to remain with campuses and districts when they had the opportunity to earn additional compensation as in the ProComp program. The researcher uncovered results like the findings of the Atterberry et al. (2020) study, with respondents reporting that they were more likely to remain with a campus or district because financial incentives offerings at districts around the region were not substantial enough to lure them from their current positions.

Upon review of the data, the researcher interpreted that in some instances, if teachers had the opportunity to earn more under the Teacher Incentive Allotment Program (TIA) in their current district, they were ready to work to achieve designation to earn substantial, sustainable income from incentives, on top of base salary. Teachers who are highly skilled have the opportunity to earn TIA funds and are more likely to work in settings where TIA funds are offered. This is consistent with the Springer et al. (2016) study findings. Springer et al. (2016) found that in struggling schools, incentive programs

assist districts in retaining more experienced and effective teachers (Springer et al., 2016).

From the review of the participant data and resulting themes, the researcher interpreted that the TIA incentive will evolve as a more enticing and substantial incentive for teachers over time as more districts obtain designation. This incentive is more substantial and sustainable over time, which meets the desired type of incentive expressed by study participants. The TIA incentive is renewable for 5 years after designation is achieved, and those funds travel with the teacher if the district a teacher chooses to participate in the program. In the region where participants in this study are employed, there are 25 fully approved local designation systems. Other districts are following suite, working to get systems in place (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). Seven out of the 9 study participants would be eligible for additional funding on top of their base salary if they achieve a designation of Recognized, Exemplary or Master, with payout ranging from $5, 558 to $20, 525, since they work in a district with full designation.

Ultimately, based on the data obtained, the researcher interpreted that inexperienced teachers are less likely to benefit from programs that offer financial incentives, especially those based on performance. The researcher discovered that, according to study participants, effective teachers are more likely to reap the benefits of such programs and remain in districts where they can participate in such programs. This finding was similar to the Dee and Wycoff (2017) study, which revealed that programs that offer the greatest amount of earning potential seem to be the most effective in terms of teacher retention and a reduction in attrition of experienced teachers and an

improvement in teacher quality over time. Programs such as TIA may assist districts in attracting and keeping the highest quality teachers, especially in a competitive market, where districts' base salary does not vary by much within the region, especially since teachers believe that financial incentive offerings should be more long lasting and larger monetarily.

Furthermore, struggling schools may reap the most benefit from TIA program implementation because the participant input from this study revealed that teachers are willing to work in schools whose teachers have higher earning potential, just as in the research findings on Tennessee Priority Schools program conducted by Springer et al. (2016). Ultimately, the researcher found that teachers seek to find financial incentive offerings that they qualify for that are substantial and more sustainable over time. The data indicated that teachers desire better compensation and that educators do not believe that they are adequately compensated for the jobs they perform. It was not clear from the data whether teachers believe that any change will occur to the overall compensation structure or that financial incentives will improve. Collectively, the interpretations of the themes following this section further illuminate the contextual findings.

Theme 1-Teachers No Longer Perceive Teaching as a Respected Profession

Teachers in the study viewed teaching as a profession that is no longer respected by the larger community and policymakers suggested that teachers have more responsibilities than before, with compensation that lags behind other sectors. Student behavior concerns have escalated since the onset of the COVID pandemic and teachers reported that student behaviors contribute to a stressful work environment. The findings from this study corroborate the findings of Sass et al. (2011), which indicated that

stressors within the position, especially when dealing with student discipline, can be a major source of job dissatisfaction.

The researcher interpreted that in a stressful work environment, where teachers feel disrespected, contributes to teacher burnout and teacher attrition. Some teachers may decide to leave the classroom or education altogether, especially when compensation remains low and financial incentives designed to recruit and retain teachers are limited and administered inconsistently. Teachers feel constant pressure to perform, but compensation has remained stagnant. This is consistent with Hughes (2012) who asserted that if districts want to retain teachers, stressors, like workload, should be reduced and salaries should be increased.

Theme 2- Teacher Compensation is Low and Not Competitive Among Districts

Teachers in this study mentioned that within the region studied, most incentives are relatively consistent among districts. Additionally, districts in the region studied offer a similar base compensation. As a result, teachers seek opportunities within districts to earn extra funds, rather than move districts if they are content with their work environment and working conditions. Teacher mobility between districts is likely the result of factors other than financial incentives. According to teachers surveyed, incentive offerings by districts must be sizeable and sustained to improve teacher retention.

The researcher uncovered findings consistent with the Fulbeck and Richards (2015) study. Fulbeck and Richards (2015) found that teacher mobility decreased when teacher salaries increased. However, teachers may choose to strategically move schools or districts, depending on the financial incentives that are available. Teachers are seeking

opportunities that appeal to them and districts that offer more may have the advantage in some cases.

Previous researchers have indicated that teachers were more likely to transfer to schools that had better incentive-based offerings than the schools they currently worked in, supporting this notion. Furthermore, those who received lesser payout amounts left schools at higher rates than those who received greater incentive amounts (Fulbeck & Richards, 2015; Rice 2015). The researcher interpreted from the study participant responses, this phenomenon could be attributed to teacher satisfaction or dissatisfaction with working conditions and the notion that those with greater skills being able to garner higher salaries through performance pay programs, such as TIA. Those who are unsatisfied with their working conditions who are less skilled may be more apt to leave their position, especially if they lack positive self-efficacy.

Theme 3-Teachers are Experiencing a Lack of Administrative and Parental Support

Working in a challenging school environment can be difficult, and teachers desire support from administrators and parents. When faced with the challenges of improving student performance and handling discipline concerns in a post-COVID pandemic era, teachers are feeling the pressures associated with teaching in high stress environments.

Participants expressed that environments where campus leadership was less supportive and were micromanagers, were less desirable. Furthermore, participants expressed the desire for more autonomy and support from leadership and parents when dealing with student behavioral issues and other challenges associated with the job. The researcher interpreted that participant expressions were consistent with the findings of Sass et al, (2011) who found that teachers who feel better supported by school leadership

and parents are more likely to be productive in a stressful environment and have greater job satisfaction, and those who possess a positive sense of self efficacy are less likely to experience burnout. According to Urick (2016), an environment where teachers feel supported creates a positive culture and teachers desire to remain with the campus increases. Findings from the participant data supports the Urick (2016) findings, and the researcher interpreted that leadership and parental support leads to greater teacher self-efficacy, resulting in the increased likelihood that a teacher would be inclined to remain with their campus, rather than seek employment elsewhere, especially in a non-competitive incentive market.

Theme 4-Positive Working Conditions are Valued Over Small Financial Incentives

Participants described how they experienced deteriorating working conditions in urban public schools. Increased negative student behaviors, increased workload, and higher stakes relative to accountability were all mentioned by study participants as factors that negatively impact working conditions. The researcher interpreted these findings to be consistent Merrill's (2021) research. Merrill (2021) suggested that understanding how teachers define working conditions is critical to understanding how working conditions impact teachers' work and decisions on where they work. Participants in this study described positive working conditions by the following attributes: positive leadership, supportive parents, positive peer relations and support and the availability of professional learning communities.

The researcher interpreted from the contributions of participants that positive, less stressful working conditions are valued over financial incentives when incentives are not substantial or sustained over time. The researcher found this to be consistent with

Fulbeck and Richards (2015) who found that when teachers decided to leave a campus, they searched for campuses that they perceived to have better working conditions. When teachers are comfortable in the environment, they work in they are more apt to stay, adding to institutional knowledge, rather than seek small enticements in other districts that make little difference in overall compensation.

Theme 5-Teachers are Experiencing the Impact of the Rising Cost of Living

With the rising cost of living, teachers in the study expressed that they struggled to make ends meet and to keep up with rising healthcare costs. As a result of the rising cost of living, teachers seek opportunities to earn more money by working second jobs or seeking opportunities within districts that provide teachers the opportunity to earn additional money in the form of stipends.

Teachers in the study expressed their appreciation and hopefulness for any increase in salary to offset costs in the current economy but did not express their desire to seek out higher salaries when they felt comfortable in their work environment. Therefore, the researcher interpreted that teachers who have the skills to be successful will benefit from financial incentives that target the retention of highly qualified teachers as noted by Camelo and Ponczek, (2019) with their study on teacher turnover and financial incentives. According to Camelo and Ponczek (2019) teachers "respond to monetary stimulus" (p.1) in terms of retention in low performing schools, and ultimately the best teachers may be more likely to switch schools or districts to earn more.

The researcher's findings were consistent with Amrein-Beardsley (2012), who found that teachers desire opportunities to earn more through adjustments to the teacher salary matrix, and "merit pay" programs (p. 15). Additionally, also consistent with the

findings of Amerein-Beardsley (2012), the researcher found that expert teachers considered the availability of financial incentives, potential for future salary increases and availability of health benefits when deciding whether to choose to work in a certain school. However, as reported by teachers interviewed for this study, and not mentioned in the Amerein-Beardsley (2012) study, adjustments to the teacher salary matrix are beneficial and appreciated by teachers but are often not enough to offset the rising cost of living, including healthcare costs.

Theme 6- Financial Incentives are Not the Primary Reasons Teachers Remain

The researcher uncovered findings similar to Amrein-Beardsley (2012) and Sass et al. (2010) in their research on teacher retention. The teachers in this study expressed that financial incentives are not the primary enticements when it comes to teacher retention. Instead, leadership support and working conditions were major factors in teachers' decision to remain. Amrein-Beardsley (2012) reported that teachers considered salary and school leadership as major factors impacting their decision-making in terms of deciding to take another position. Sass et al. (2010) found that teacher's intent to leave a position was directly related to "school leadership, climate, workload and communication" (p. 202). Therefore, the researcher interpreted from the findings that teachers value having the support of the campus leadership, and parents when grappling with current challenges and are less likely to leave for monetary enticements. Positive working conditions and a peer network are highly valued, increasing teachers' desire to remain in their position rather than shop around solely for financial incentives.

The culture of the campus, as reported by study participants, is a crucial component in ensuring teacher job satisfaction and willingness to remain in their campus

environment. The researcher interpreted that campus culture is an aspect of working conditions and sets the tone for recruitment and retention. This interpretation is aligned with the work of Hughes (2012), who found that teachers consider the support of leadership, availability of resources, workload, student characteristics and salary when considering whether to remain in a district. In some instances, campus leaders sell candidates on the characteristics of the campus during recruitment. The researcher interpreted that the improvement of recruitment practices by campus leaders can be useful in determining whether candidate characteristics align with the campus leadership characteristics and campus culture. This interpretation is consistent with the suggestion of Ellis et al. (2017) who found that the utilization of human resource practices, a skill that can be learned by campus leaders, provides the campus the opportunity to provide realistic job previews to candidates during the recruitment process. Ellis et al. (2017) stated that person-job and person-organization fit, along with the utilization of effective recruitment practices are strong predictors of future job satisfaction.

Theme 7-Larger Financial Incentives Sustained Over Time are a Step in the Right Direction

In an era of teacher shortages and struggling economy, districts have sought to attract and retain teachers by offering financial incentives. However, oftentimes, these incentives are fleeting. Districts within the study region offered recruitment and retention bonuses in 2022; however, in 2023, not all districts continued to offer the same type of incentives. Incentives such as critical shortage stipends remained while recruitment and retention bonuses were not offered in every district.

Participants in this study revealed that they desired more consistent and larger financial incentives and that districts in the region where the study was conducted often offered smaller incentives that were not consistently administered. As a result, teachers were less likely to leave a district to seek these incentives. The researcher interpreted this information to mean that if an incentive program is available and teachers qualify to participate in the program and can reap the benefits of the program, teachers who are highly skilled may be more likely to remain and participate. This finding is not consistent with the Shifrer et al. (2017) study on performance pay. Perhaps, this is because the teachers, at the time of the study, were already working in a district that rolled out a new performance pay program that they had access to and believed they had the skills necessary to take part in the program while in their position at the time.

Shifrer et al. (2017) found that teachers who received larger payouts left districts at a higher rate than those who received smaller financial incentives. This phenomenon occurred most likely because those who left were more apt to qualify for performance pay programs with bigger payouts. In these instances, institutional knowledge was lost.

Although base pay in most area districts only slightly differs, as mentioned, the TIA program, offered in the region studied, sets districts that have full designation apart from districts that do not offer the program and may attract highly qualified teachers, resulting in the loss of institutional knowledge. TIA designations are portable; therefore, teachers who qualify for the payout are able to transfer and work in other districts that have the designation. This has implications for at risk campuses, which typically struggle to retain highly qualified teachers. Fulbeck and Richards (2015) reported that teachers who took part in the ProComp program, aimed at struggling schools, were more likely to

transfer from schools with low incentive offerings to campuses with higher incentive offerings. This finding is consistent with the findings of the researcher based on participant responses about the TIA program. TIA program participants have the option of moving to any participating district, which may not assist districts in dealing with the shortages they are experiencing.

All in all, teachers are looking for opportunities to earn more money. Since base salary differs very little among districts, to recruit and retain teachers, districts must offer financial incentives that are sizeable and lasting. Ultimately, teacher compensation should be increased in all districts to support the work that teachers do. At this juncture, teachers are willing to seek opportunities that will improve their financial situation, possibly leaving their current positions behind if the conditions are what they desire.

Implications

The results from this study shine a light on the need for policymakers to seek ways to improve leadership support, working conditions, and teacher retention and actively solution-find to resolve the issues. Since funding for compensation is lacking overall, progress should be made to increase funding at the national, and state level, that will trickle down to local level to begin to address the issues of teacher mobility and teacher shortages. The issues of undesirable working conditions, unsupportive campus leadership and low compensation have plagued the field of education for several years, worsening over time. The data supports the notion that starting at the campus level leaders should: (1) work to improve working conditions, (2) foster a supportive environment, ultimately retaining skilled talent reducing teacher shortages. Districts should: (1) equip campus leaders with the training and tools necessary to foster a

supportive culture, (2) improve working conditions and (3) seek opportunities to garner

additional funding through grant programs to support teacher development and retention.

The section below details how some of the same issues that confront educational systems

and teachers today have been an issue that has gone unresolved.

Unresolved Issues

Teacher shortages continue to soar, and fewer teachers are entering teacher

preparation programs (Sutcher et al., 2019). Until the issues revealed in the study are

addressed, the trend will likely continue. For example, seminal research on teacher

retention and attrition supports the conclusion that teacher retention and attrition has long

been an issue plaguing public education. For example, Kelly et al. (2008) reported that

teachers were leaving the profession due to low compensation, difficult working

conditions, and increased accountability, linked to testing. Additionally, in that study,

conducted 15 years ago, the researchers found that school superintendents suggested that

teacher compensation was severely lacking and should be increased to attract and retain

teachers, especially in challenging environments.

Today, teachers continue to express concern about low compensation and

undesirable working conditions, suggesting that these issues continue to go unresolved.

In a 2022 report, Nguyen et al. reported that the Learning Policy Institute estimated that

by 2016, there would be a deficit of 64,000 teachers by 2018, that number was estimated

to increase to 118,000 (p. 6). Nguyen et al. (2022) suggested that districts counteract the

trend by finding creative ways to attract teachers to the field of education with the

creation of programs to develop teachers while offering financial support. Additionally, it

is imperative that campus leaders recognize the impact that they have on teacher retention

and implement strategies to foster collaboration, autonomy, and a supportive culture, increasing desirable working conditions as suggested by data from the study. Shifrer et al. (2017) pointed out that not all teachers are motivated by financial incentives but instead have a strong desire to work in a collaborative environment and make a difference.

Additionally, teacher compensation is lacking and should be improved to begin to address the issues of teacher mobility and teacher shortages. Although this is not the primary reason participants reported that teachers who have been in the profession remain, it could be a major impasse as to why fewer college students are choosing to go into the field of education. The image of the teaching profession has diminished for various reasons, as expressed by study participants, and those who are currently in the field suggested that the lure of compensation is just not present. Professionals with the same level degree attainment can enter other careers with much more lucrative compensation without the challenges faced by current teachers. Until the issues of working conditions and competitive compensation can be addressed, campuses and districts must take the steps necessary to retain talent.

Relation of Findings to the Theoretical Perspective

This study is grounded in organizational theory as proposed by Chris Argyris (1978), who explained how individuals fit within an organization and how disfunction can occur within organizations, creating stifling environments. Person environment fit (p-e), an aspect of organization theory, provides a basis for understanding and interpreting the interrelationships between the needs of the employee and the demands required to do the job (French et al., 1974). Furthermore, person-organization theory can be utilized as a lens to understand employee engagement, job satisfaction, workplace phenomena and

employee intent to stay. According to Miller and Youngs (2021), Person-organization fit (p-o) is the most used form of organization theory utilized in the study of organizational phenomenon in education.

The researcher reflected upon the results of the study upon utilizing p-o fit. Person-organization fit helps to put into context the views of the study participants, along with the implications of the study. According to Youngs et al. (2015) Person-organization fit refers to "the degree of alignment between an individual teacher's goals, values, and expectations and those of the organization" (p. 40). The lens of p-o helps to explain study participants' experiences and the factors that influence their decisions. Person-organization (p-o) fit helps to explain how teachers might value working conditions over financial compensation.

The working conditions and the alignment of teachers' agreement with those conditions proves to be an important factor in teacher retention, as revealed in the data. Teachers expressed how they deemed leadership and parental support, peer support, positive working conditions, the minimization of micromanagement and autonomy all factored into their decision to remain in their current positions. They also reflected upon why other teachers may be leaving through the same lens. Ultimately, the p-o fit is a critical factor in the success of the individual teacher as well as the success of the campus. Teachers' desire for their needs to be met and the environment in which they work greatly impacts their work and ultimately job satisfaction. Therefore, to improve retention when additional funding is not available or competitive, campuses and districts must strive to provide realistic job previews and consistently work to improve the working environment (Ellis et al., 2017; Tran et al., 2020).

Relation of Findings to the Research Questions

This study centered on 2 primary research questions: (RQ 1). What are the circumstances that contribute to the attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district? (RQ 2). To what extent, if any are financial incentives linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages in an urban school district? Eleven sub questions were utilized to prompt the participant to think about and elaborate on their perspectives surrounding the phenomenon studied, with questions focused on the following concepts: (1) the extent if any, that leadership practices contribute to retention and attrition, (2) working conditions, (3) importance of financial incentives (4) level of job satisfaction (5) and factors that influence teachers' decision to accept a position, or remain in a position.

The two contextual findings and 7 themes evolved from the data analysis, directly correlated to the research questions in that teachers provided their perspectives and reflections on the two major research questions and supporting sub questions. Furthermore, upon prompting with the research questions, teachers discussed the factors that may influence teacher job satisfaction and retention as well as their insight on financial incentives and their importance relative to retention and attrition in comparison to working conditions. The resulting themes can be reflected upon and used in practical problem solving when considered by policymakers. The responses to the questions illuminate the challenges, lived experiences and desired improvement of the educational system by teachers who are working in this post-COVID era.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on this topic should be directed towards how campuses and districts can work to improve working conditions, delving into what works, evidenced by successful recruitment and retention practices in urban districts, especially in the most challenging environments. A study on teacher mobility in turnaround schools, reconstituted for improvement, focused on likelihood of retention over time would provide insight into how effective improvement programs focused on the improvement of working conditions within schools influence teachers' decisions to remain in difficult campuses. Turnaround improvement efforts are typically supported by grant funds. Teachers and school administrators have an opportunity to earn stipends when objectives of the grant are met.

I suggest a review of the teacher demographics of the turnaround schools, surveying the years of service and level of experience of teachers working in schools deemed to be turnaround schools. Turnaround schools are suggested as study sites due to the richness of data that is to be collected when surveying environments where working conditions can be difficult because those schools have not been successful with student achievement, and these schools typically are reconstituted, using federal dollars to implement improvement strategies. In these instances, teachers are provided with opportunities to earn additional funds by meeting requirements outlined in the grant.

Additionally, a longitudinal study of the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) program is suggested to determine how many teachers who obtain initial designation go on to participate in the program after the first designation term of 5 years. Furthermore,

an inquiry into the mobility of those teachers between TIA districts is warranted to assess the impact of such a program on retention of institutional knowledge within challenging urban environments. A study specific to this program is of interest because this funding source provides more long-term and sustainable incentive amounts desired by teachers in the study.

Recommendations for Future Practice

To address the issues brought to light in this study, a proactive approach must be taken. Not only must districts effectively recruit but must also focus on retention. New literature obtained after the completion of Chapter 2 supports this suggestion and is included in the recommendations below. Recommendations for the practice include action items for both campuses and districts.

Recommendations for future practice include: (1) seeking ways to improve teacher retention at the campus level, (2) working to improve working conditions, (3) seeking alternate means of funding, (4) equipping leaders with the tools necessary to foster a supportive culture and (5) supporting teacher development, which is paramount for the success of students. Action steps are outlined below.

New research uncovered since the writing of Chapter 2 includes a report from The New Teacher Project (TNTP) addressing teacher shortages, which provides practical solutions for navigating the current staffing challenges districts are facing in the post-pandemic era. Some suggestions related to recruitment and retention include: (a) determining what staffing challenges exist and why (b) a review of recruitment and retention methodologies to assess what deficiencies exist related to recruitment of diverse populations, and recruitment of highly qualified teachers and applicant support (3) a

review of how the district is addressing retention of the most effective teachers to determine next steps in recruitment and retention (TNTP, February 2022.)

For campuses and districts to retain teachers, the focus must be placed on improving working conditions until funding is improved through national and state revenue sources. As shared by the study participants, positive working conditions include: (2) supportive leadership, (b) peer support, (c) autonomy, and the (d) availability of professional learning communities. It is critical for campuses and districts to retain new teachers as well as veteran teachers. Whether a new or veteran teacher, all teachers have a need to feel supported, respected, appreciated, adequately compensated and comfortable with their work environment.

I recently came across a study by Bjorn et al. (2019), which was not included in the literature review, that illustrates the latter statement. Bjorn et al. (2019) found that teachers have a different view of their work experience when they first start their careers. They are more apt to have a positive outlook of their working conditions when they first begin their careers. However, newer teachers may feel overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted when juggling the act of teaching with other teacher responsibilities, like grading papers and other duties outside of the normal workday. Veteran teachers may be more skilled in juggling responsibilities and handling other challenges, but the compensation that they receive typically levels off in the middle of their career, with only small increments of increase for each year of service. This may lead to a level of dissatisfaction because teachers may feel less appreciated or recognized for the jobs that they do. Furthermore, Bjorn et al., (2019) added that both new and veteran teachers must

be provided with support and resources that help to balance the demands of the job, resulting in a work environment that is more conducive to job satisfaction.

The researcher suggests that working conditions can be improved by: (1) providing support and training for new and veteran teachers (2) balancing the workload to assist teachers in dealing with other assignments of the job outside of teaching (3) providing acknowledgement of teachers for their efforts with consistent constructive feedback and (5) provide a supportive environment with resources to support the work being done as well as emotional support. Additionally, (6) leaders should create environments in which teacher candidates have an opportunity to find the best possible environment that is supportive of their own skill set.

Campus leaders must be supported by districts in cultivating a campus culture where teachers feel supported and are intrinsically motivated, like the campus participant June described and works. Support for campus leaders should consist of administrative mentorship opportunities for training or visits to model campuses, campuses that have effective retention practices as demonstrated by longitudinal data. Additionally, leaders should be afforded the opportunity to shadow effective leaders who have proven to recruit and retain talent while leading a campus and creating positive culture. Model campuses should be selected based on employee satisfaction surveys, distributed quarterly by district officials.

Finally, when financial incentives are devised, districts should seek to offer incentives that are sizeable and sustainable over time, as suggested by study participants. Seeking grants and taking advantage of funding from federal programs is a must for most districts to be able to support sustainable incentives, since local funding relies on the tax

base and student enrollment. Districts should also seek to obtain grant funding that will benefit teachers of all skill levels as a means of engaging all teachers, whether they are veteran or just beginning their journey in education. Performance based incentives may not be of benefit for teachers who have yet to gain the skill level to obtain levels of distinction as required with TIA. However, this type of incentive may motivate teachers to work toward qualification, but all will be nought of the teacher experiences burnout along the way.

Researcher's Reflections

This study has been a personal journey that resonates with me as an educator after 25 years of service. I can appreciate the journey and struggles that study participants have endured, as the education landscape evolved over the years. The notion, as suggested by participants, that teaching is not perceived as a respected profession in comparison to other professions with similar degree requirements is greatly understood, given that teacher salaries have not increased much over the years. I have witnessed the rollout of incentive programs, but none have been lasting and some have been reactions to the offerings of competing districts. For instance, a district may offer slightly more than a neighboring district in hopes of enticing teachers to choose their district over the competition.

Teachers must combat the challenges of working in environments where the very students they serve come with a host of issues that can impede their educational attainment and make teaching less desirable for teachers who chose the profession to make a difference. The support of leaders and parents is paramount to the success of the students and of the teachers. In some cases, teachers do not feel as though they should

have to deal with the negative behavioral challenges that they currently endure. Many would simply appreciate the opportunity to work on their chosen career, their passion, which is instructional delivery. The minutia of everyday challenges beyond classroom teaching can become overwhelming and get in the way of teacher job satisfaction, which can result in burnout and emotional trauma, resulting in teachers seeking to find ways to improve their experience, whether that is by leaving their positions in search of another position or leaving the profession altogether.

I do believe that there is hope if there is a focus and concerted effort, focused on the recommendations I mentioned in this chapter, to include improving working conditions, developing leaders, utilizing effective recruitment and retention practices, and improving financial compensation. Ultimately, the field of education must be heralded as sacred, critical to the success of an entire nation. Without teachers, where would any of us be? Therefore, to begin to take a bite out of a growing problem, we must acknowledge the deficiencies that exist within the system and listen to the voices of teachers who are living these experiences every day. Sure, teachers chose the profession that they are in, but they deserve to be in an environment that cultivates success for all and adequately compensated, consistent with what they bring to the table, reflective of their value and worth.

Limitations

Study limitations shed light on implications for future research and assist readers in determining how to apply the results across similar phenomena (Creswell, 2019). The limitations identified by the researcher are as follows.

The participants in this study only included teachers who are currently employed, and not any who left their campus or district. At the time of the interview, none of the participants were searching for a new position. Teachers responded to the questions based on what they might consider when choosing a school or campus to work in. None of the participants recently vacated an assignment to move to a position or district that offered more financial incentives than they had already received. Perhaps more themes may have emerged had the study included participants who were actively seeking new positions. Another study limitation is that all respondents hailed from one metropolitan area in the Southwest. Although data saturation was reached at 9 participants, if other regions throughout the state had been included, it is possible that data saturation would include more participants, yielding different results.

Conclusion

The contextual findings and themes in this study define the current perceptions and opinions of teachers on retention and attrition relative to financial incentives in an urban district. When working conditions are favorable and teachers feel supported, teachers tend to remain in their districts. Overall, teacher compensation is not favorable and is not competitive among districts. Teachers are willing to work to earn extra funds with stipends are taking part in incentive programs to offset the rising cost of living; therefore, financial incentives that are sizeable and offered more consistently are favorable.

It is paramount that policymakers work to improve the state of teacher working conditions as well as find innovative ways to improve teacher compensation, by securing programs that offer financial incentives to teachers over the long term, such as the TIA

program. This program has great potential to improve the quality of teachers as well as assist districts in retaining those highly skilled professionals, resulting in improved student performance and successful urban schools, despite the many challenges that exist in today's post-pandemic era.

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Appendix A
Dimensions of Financial Incentives

Appendix A provides a summary of the studies presented in the review of the literature in chapter 2 that are specific to financial incentives. The appendix includes a review of the focus and major findings of studies focused on financial incentives to improve teacher retention, the impact of financial incentives in challenging schools, grant funded financial incentives, the ProComp plan and teacher mobility, scholarship, and tuition reimbursement programs, and finally, the use of financial incentives for the purpose of recruitment and retention of national board-certified teachers.

Financial Incentives to Improve Teacher Retention in Urban and Rural Schools					
Author	Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Major Findings	Comments	Notes
Shifrer et al. (2017)	1.Financial Incentives 2. Student Achievement	1.Teacher Retention 2. Whether teachers who made achievement gains were retained.	Mixed results 1.Teachers with larger awards no more likely to be retained. 2.Incentives did not necessarily improve student achievement.	Financial incentives were not consistently correlated with student achievement or teacher retention.	Teachers with larger awards were less likely to remain in the district.
Solomonson et al. (2018)	1.Financial incentives and attrition in rural schools	1.Teacher retention in rural schools	Factors other than salary important to teachers; financial incentives did not impact retention	Salary and financial incentives were not leading cause of attrition.	Teachers also cited personal reason, working conditions, and professional development as other factors related to attrition.

Impact of Financial Incentives on Recruitment and Retention and School Improvement in Challenging, Hard to Staff Schools					
Author	**Primary Focus**	**Secondary Focus**	**Major Findings**	**Comments**	**Notes**
Camelo & Ponczek (2021)	1.Wage compensation in high poverty schools in Brazil	1.Teacher retention in high poverty schools in Brazil.	Researchers could not determine that wage compensation improved retention	Student achievement improved.	1.Teacher retention created a stable environment. 2.Turnover rates higher in developing countries
Rice et al. (2015)	1.School Improvement funds to entice teachers to work in challenging environments	1.Pay for performance 2. Financial Incentives; nonmonetary factors	Teachers who received less incentive funds for performance left at a higher rate than their better performing colleagues with greater payouts.		The source of funds was TIF funds, associated with school improvement.
Gunther (2019)	1.Ranked factors relevant to why teachers choose to work in certain schools		1.Teachers rated salary as the most important factor in their decision making. 2.Experienced teachers ranked salary as most important factor in comparison to their inexperienced peers.	Professional development and leader support were important factors for new teachers.	Teachers were willing to exchange salary for other supports.
See et al. (2020 b)	1.Effects of financial incentives on teacher recruitment	1.Teacher recruitment in hard to staff schools	1.Teacher recruitment was positively impacted in hard to staff areas. 2.Financial incentives were considered a tool for recruitment but was less effective for retention.		Data from various types of financial incentives were reviewed for this study.

Grant Funded Programs to Impact Student Achievement and Teacher Retention					
Author	**Primary Focus**	**Secondary Focus**	**Major Findings**	**Comments**	**Notes**
Springer et al. (2016)	1.Highly Qualified teacher recruitment in TN Priority Schools	1. Retention of Highly-Qualified teachers in struggling schools	1. Highly Qualified teachers were less likely to teach in struggling schools. 2. Higher earners were 20% more likely to remain in Priority schools.	1. Teachers provided a one year signing bonus ranging from $5,000 to $7,000	Suggested that policymakers give consideration to non-monetary incentives when evaluating teacher retention strategies
Dee & Wycoff (2017)	1.Recruitment of Highly-Qualified teachers in struggling schools 2.Retention of effective teachers	1. Teacher quality and student achievement	1. Incentives were effective for retaining highly effective teachers. 2.Less effective teachers were more likely to leave, and schools were not negatively impacted by teacher attrition.	The IMPACT program linked teacher pay and incentives to performance. Ineffective teachers threatened with dismissal. Teacher quality improved over time. DCPS retained the most effective teachers.	Highly effective teachers could earn up to $25k a year in District of Columbia Public Schools
Atteberry et al. (2020)	1.Analyis of retention of highly effective teachers under ProComp	1.Teacher performance	1.Teachers who were highly effective were more likely to be retained. 2.Improved teacher performance was not observed. 3.The attrition rate declined during the implementation period of ProComp.	1.The attrition rate was not observed to be drastically different from other districts in the state at the time.	
Grant Funded Programs to Impact Student Achievement and Teacher Retention					

Author	Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Major Findings	Comments	Notes
Henry et al. (2020)	1.Examined factors critical to school improvement with the dissemination of financial incentives.	2.Financial incentives to retain effective teachers	1.Teacher and principal retention was critical to school reform. 2.Effective teachers were retained as a result of financial incentives.	1.Schools in the state of TN were reviewed. 2.Funds were issued as part of school improvement efforts.	
Kaimal & Jordan (2016)	1.Reviewed impact of funding for teacher recruitment and retention in urban charter school	1.Student performance	1.Financial incentives were not enough to entice teachers to stay in a position. 2.Performance was not impacted by financial incentives.	1.Funding was utilized for teacher and leader development and recruitment.	1.Teachers were intrinsically motivated to teach and appreciated extra funds.
Springer et al. (2016)	1.Impact of Governor's Education Excellence Grant (GEEG) on teachers' productivity and retention		1.Financial incentives were not significantly correlated with a significant change in productivity. Improved effectiveness was not observed. 2.Financial incentives were correlated with teacher retention.		1.The reward program was relatively weak and designed by teachers. 2.Teachers were enticed by the reward program.

Teacher Mobility Under Procomp					
Author	**Primary Focus**	**Secondary Focus**	**Major Findings**	**Comments**	**Notes**
Fulbeck (2014)	1.Measured effects of teacher compensation on teacher mobility	2. Teachers incentivization work in high need schools	1.Teachers opted to participate in the ProComp program, and over the course of the study, program enrollment grew to 77%. 2.Fewer veterans left their positions over time.	ProComp was designed to increase teacher effectiveness and retention.	1.ProComp plan in Denver Public Schools 2.Working conditions, leader characteristics and student characteristics were associated with turnover.
Fulbeck & Richards (2015)	1.Expanded analysis of ProComp plan of Denver Public Schools	2.Mobility of teachers	1.Increase in teacher salary led to decrease in teacher mobility 2.Teachers transferred to schools with school-based incentives. 3.Teachers who chose to leave chose to do so strategically.		1. Working conditions were cited by teachers as reasons why they chose to leave.

Scholarship Program, Tuition Reimbursement and Bonus Pay to Support Critical Shortage Areas in Struggling Schools					
Author	**Primary Focus**	**Secondary Focus**	**Major Findings**	**Comments**	**Notes**
Whitfield et al. (2021)	1.Impact of financial incentives on retention of STEM teachers	2.Highlighted the Robert Noyce Scholarship Program	1.Scholarship recipients were influenced to seek employment in high needs schools, but not to remain in those schools. 2.Scholarship recipients were already seeking to serve in high need schools.	1.Campus leadership and working conditions were factors teachers considered when deciding to remain.	
Zahner et al. (2019)	1.Reviewed impact of scholarship award and teacher prep program on recruitment and retention (NOYCE scholarship, Teach for America program)	2. Compare initial career trajectories of participants	1.NOYCE recipients were more likely to choose to work in struggling schools. 2.TFA program recipients were more likely to work in struggling schools to fulfill a commitment.	1.Working conditions were an important factor for consideration. 2.Both programs offered financial support.	
Smith (2021)	1.Financial incentives as enticement to teach in North Carolina struggling schools with high minority, low-income populations		1.Financial incentives could have enticed students to enter STEM programs. 2.Financial incentives could have enticed teachers to teach in struggling schools.	1.Involved the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program	1.Recipients received over $8,000 to teach in a low performing school. 2.Not all program participants met the terms of the agreement

Scholarship Program, Tuition Reimbursement and Bonus Pay to Support Critical Shortage Areas in Struggling Schools					
Author	**Primary Focus**	**Secondary Focus**	**Major Findings**	**Comments**	**Notes**
Feng&Sass (2015)	1.Financial incentives to entice teachers to get certified in critical shortage areas of science, math, and special education (loan forgiveness to increase qualified applicants; FCTSP program)	2.Financial incentives provided for teacher retention (Teacher Recruitment and Retention Funds)	1.FCTSP recipients were less qualified than those who did not participate in the program. 2. Program participants changed schools at a higher rate. 3. Program participants remained in the profession longer than non-recipients of financial funds.	1.FCTSP consisted of tuition reimbursement to entice teachers to get certified in critical shortage areas. 2.TRRF targeted teacher recruitment and retention.	1.Enticement under FCTSP did not necessarily lead to better quality teachers.

The Use of Financial Incentives for the Purpose of Recruitment and Retention of National Board-Certified Teachers					
Author	**Primary Focus**	**Secondary Focus**	**Major Findings**	**Comments**	**Notes**
Amrein-Beardsley (2012)	1.Recruitment and retention of NBCT into schools	2.Student achievement	1. Students who were taught by NBCT outperformed their peers who were not taught by NBCT. 2. NBCT were more concerned with salary rather than other factors.	1.Teachers cited other factors that might influence their decision to remain in schools.	1. Teachers who left were often replaced by inexperienced teachers. 2.Districts should focus on compensation to recruit and retain expert teachers.
Cowan & Goldhaber (2018)	1.Financial incentive bonus to improve teacher quality (National Board-Certified Teachers; NBCT)	2.Recruitment and retention of NBCTs.	1. Highly credentialed (NBC) teachers remained over time 2. Number of NBC teachers increased over time	1.Financial incentives used to recruit and retain NBC teachers into struggling campuses was impactful.	
Liang et al. (2015)	1.To determine whether districts offered awards for NBCT for recruitment purposes	2.Union influence on incentive pay	1.Districts with low-income students offered more incentives. 2.Unions often offered more incentives to retain teachers. 3.Wealthy districts were more likely to attract and retain NBCT.		

Appendix B
Recruitment Flyer

The recruitment flyer was shared to solicit research participants. Both purposeful and snowball techniques was utilized to recruit participants.

Seeking Research Participants in the Southwestern United States!

My name is Shelley White, and I am seeking research participants to take part in an important research study entitled **Understanding the Circumstances that Contribute to Teacher Retention and Attrition in an Uban School District and the Impacts of Financial Incentives on Teacher Retention** to fulfill the requirements for completion of a doctoral degree program at Nova Southeastern University. The purpose of the study is to discover the factors that contribute to the retention and attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district and to understand how financial incentives such as critical shortage stipends, retention bonuses, adjustments to the teacher salary matrix and Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) funds may be linked to highly qualified teacher retention and a reduction in teacher shortages.

To qualify to participate in the study, you must be:
(1) a certified teacher or currently in a teacher preparation program
(2) currently employed as a teacher
(3) currently receiving or have received within the past 5 years at least one financial incentive such as critical shortage stipend, recruitment or retention stipend, TIA fund recipient or a beneficiary of any adjustment to the teacher salary matrix by as school district
(4) complete the interest survey
(5) sign a confidentiality agreement and informed consent form
(6) participate in an interview and agree to be recorded during the interview.
(7) participate in the member check process to ensure that your responses have been accurately recorded.

Participants will take part in a recorded interview, either virtually or in person in a public venue conducive to private conversation. The interview will take approximately 40 minutes to an hour complete. The entire commitment, to include the completion of the interest survey, confidentiality and informed consent agreement, interview and member check process will take approximately 1.5 to 2.5 hours, spread out over time. Participation is wholly voluntary and confidential. If you choose to participate in this study, you may opt out at any time. Your identity and responses will be kept confidential and only accessible to the researcher.
.

If you are interested in participating, please click on or copy and paste the link below into your browser and respond to the interest survey. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at **mw2077@mynsu.nova.edu**. Thank you for your consideration!

https://forms.gle/EwpiR3bNUB7Lgfes6

Appendix C
Interest Survey

The interest survey was created using a Google form to collect demographic information to assist the researcher in planning and scheduling the interview. The link to this interest survey is linked on the recruitment flyer.

Dear research participant,

Thank you for agreeing to take the time to participate in this important research study. The purpose of this interest survey is to collect demographic information for interview planning and scheduling. Your response will also help the researcher understand the type of financial incentive you have received and your work setting, setting the stage for the interview.

To qualify to participate in the study, you must be (1) a certified teacher or currently in a teacher preparation program and (2) currently employed as a teacher (3)currently receiving or have received within the past 5 years at least one financial incentive such as critical shortage stipend, recruitment or retention stipend, TIA fund recipient or a beneficiary of any adjustment to the teacher salary matrix by the district as well as (4) complete the interest survey (5) sign a confidentiality agreement and signed consent form and (6) participate in an interview and agree to be recorded during the interview. Additionally, you will be asked to (7) participate in the member check process to ensure that your responses have been accurately recorded. Participation is wholly voluntary and confidential. If you choose to participate in this study, you may opt out at any time. Your identity and responses will be kept confidential and only accessible to the researcher.

Please note that all interviews will be recorded for subsequent transcription for the purpose of data analysis. Your responses and identity will be kept confidential throughout the study and beyond the study. You will be assigned an alias, and no personal references will be used in the data analysis.

Participation in this study will have no impact on your employment status. Additionally, for the purpose of this study, you serve as a representative of yourself and not the district. You may choose to cease participation at any point during the study. Thank you for taking the time to complete this interest survey and your willingness to participate.

The interview will take approximately 40 minutes to an hour to complete. The entire commitment, to include the completion of the interest survey, confidentiality and informed consent agreement, interview and member check process will take approximately 1.5 to 2.5 hours, spread out over time.
Please click the link below to access and complete the brief interest survey.

https://forms.gle/aB2M4TMUiVhsvgKM8

Details of the form are listed below.

Name:

Email Address (for future contact):

Which descriptor describes your place of work?
1. Elementary Campus
2. Secondary Campus
3. Blended Campus
4. Alternative Campus

What type(s) of financial incentives have you received? Check all that apply.

1. Critical Shortage Stipend(s)
2. Recruitment Bonus
3. Retention Bonus
4. Teacher Incentive Allotment Funds
5. Adjustment to teacher salary matrix
6. Other

What is your interview modality preference?
1. In-person
2. Virtual

Please select an interview time frame preference.
1. Morning
2. Evening
3. Weekend

Thank you for your responses. You will receive an email calendar invite to secure an interview date and time and the interview protocol to review ahead of time.

Appendix D
Email Calendar Invite Message

This email with calendar invite was sent to individuals who expressed interest in participating in the study by filling out the interest survey. The email informed the participant of the purpose of the study and was utilized to calendar the interview and provide the participant with a preview of the research questions.

Dear Research Participant,

Thank you for your interest in taking part in an important research study to help the researcher better understand the factors that contribute to teacher retention and attrition in an urban school district and the impacts of financial incentives on teacher retention. Your participation in this study is wholly voluntary, and you can choose to cease participation at any time. As a participant in this research study, you represent yourself with your responses, and not the school district. Additionally, your participation has no bearing on your employment.

I look forward to our meeting to go over the interview protocol. I have attached a copy of the interview protocol to this invite for your review prior to the interview. Please recall that the interview will be recorded. After your responses have been collected and transcribed, I will send the transcribed notes back to you within 7 days for you to review and return within a week. The purpose of this member check is to verify that your responses were transcribed accurately and represent what you wanted to convey during the interview. Any revisions will be accepted and noted in the study data if received within two weeks.

Thank you for your time.

Shelley White
mw2077@mynsu.nova.edu

Appendix E
Confidentiality Agreement

The confidentiality agreement was sent to research participants after they completed the interest survey and ahead of the scheduled interview. Participants were asked to return the signed agreement prior to the interview.

Confidentiality Agreement

For the purposes of this research study, all identifiable information will be kept confidential and secured by the researcher. Pseudonyms will be utilized for data collection and data analysis purposes. Additionally, your participation or non-participation will have no bearing on your employment. The researcher is not directly responsible for hiring or dismissal of employees. Hiring is the sole responsibility of the recommending principal and personnel matters related to dismissal are handled solely by Employee Relations. By participating in this study and signing off on this confidentiality agreement you are granted all assurances and you agree to keep the details of the interview protocol confidential as well as your responses. Please submit this signed agreement prior to your scheduled interview.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix F
Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was designed by the researcher. Additional demographic information was collected at the time of the interview to gain a greater understanding of the perspectives of participants. The protocol consists of 2 main research questions and 11 sub questions.

Interview Protocol

Date of Interview: _____
Time of Interview: _____
Participant #:   _____

The purpose of this study is to better understand how financial incentives may impact your decision to work in a particular school or remain in the profession. Your responses are anonymous and confidential. Respondents' names and locations will not be identified and are only accessible to the researcher. Your responses will help policymakers better understand how the impact of financial incentive offerings may impact teacher recruitment and retention. Participation is voluntary and you can choose not to participate at any time during the interview.

Demographic Information:

1. Which descriptor best describes your place of work
   a. Elementary Campus
   b. Secondary Campus
   c. Blended Campus
   d. Alternative Campus

2. Please select the number of years of teaching service
   a. 0-5 years
   b. 6-11 years
   c. 12-17 years
   d. 18-23 years
   e. 24-29 years
   f. 30 or more years

3. What type(s) of financial incentives have you received? Check all that apply.

   1. Critical Shortage Stipend(s)
   2. Recruitment Bonus
   3. Retention Bonus
   4. Teacher Incentive Allotment Funds
   5. Adjustment to teacher salary matrix
   6. Other

4. Please indicate the accountability rating of your campus
   a. A
   b. B
   c. C
   d. D

    e. F

5. Is your campus a Title I campus?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Primary Research Questions:

RQ 1. What are the circumstances that contribute to the attrition of highly qualified teachers in an urban school district?

RQ 2. To what extent, if any are financial incentives linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages in an urban school district?

Sub questions:

1. What factors contributed to your decision to work in your current district?

2. What factors contributed to your decision to work in your current/campus assignment?

3. What administrative or leadership factors influence your decision to stay with or leave a campus or district?

4. Describe leadership practices that you believe contribute to teacher attrition.

5. Describe the working conditions that impact your work.

6. What factors did you consider when choosing to work on your campus or in your district?

7. How do the factors that you mentioned compare to financial incentives in terms of importance?

8. How important are financial incentives to you when it comes to choosing a school or district to work in?

9. To what extent is the availability of financial incentives important to your decision to accept a position?

10. To what extent is the availability of financial incentives important to your decision to remain in a position?

11. To what extent do financial incentives impact your level of satisfaction with your job?

Appendix G
Reflective Journal and Field Notes

The notes in this section were taken during the interviews, noting reactions from participants and thoughts of the researcher. Each interview was conducted via Zoom and no interruptions or distractions occurred during the interviews.

March 12, 2023 – The research participant was relaxed and prepared to interview via Zoom. Jordan responded to the interview questions with a lot of emotion, specifically related to how the school environment changed since COVID.

During the interview, Jordan shared details about corruption in a district that she worked in prior to returning to the district where she is currently employed. The researcher observed some nervousness during this portion of the interview, but Jordan was able to express her thoughts about the situation.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1) Teachers may not have the skills to handle student behaviors. (2) Some teachers have been inadequately prepared for the field. (3) Micromanagement of teachers by administrators was a perceived issue for experienced educators. (4) Teachers have increased workload responsibilities. (5) Salary has remained static.

March 15, 2023 - Jaime was very exuberant and confident during the interview. She seemed excited to share how she felt about her campus leadership and the culture of the campus where she works. She felt empowered by her leadership team to carry out the duties of a teacher with a certain amount of anonymity.

Jaime expressed that she felt that her team of teachers added to the positive culture of the campus. She repeatedly stated how much she loved her job, but also expressed that maybe she was feeling that way because she is relatively new to the profession.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1)Jaime transitioned from a substitute to a paraprofessional before becoming a teacher. (2) Participant believes the campus leadership is confident in the abilities of teachers on the campus and does not micromanage teams. (3) Jaime mentioned that teachers who may need assistance may feel as though they are being micromanaged. (4) Jaime expressed that she was grateful for the encouragement that she received from peers, leadership, and mentors. (5) Jaime felt confident that she had found her fit on the campus.

April 2, 2023 – June was very anxious to interview and appreciative of the opportunity to be heard. The responses came across as very passionate and straightforward. June was very comfortable in sharing thoughts and conversations that had previously been had with peers who work in education.

June spoke with conviction and certainty and self-identified as a high performing teacher on an A rated campus. June's perspective was enlightening, especially with the level of experience and coming from a very high performing urban school.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1) Appreciates anonymity and not being micromanaged (2) Believes that education is not a respected field. (3) Stated that teachers spend a lot of their own money. (4) Believes that the cost of living is a major factor in teachers leaving. They are searching for other means to fund their lifestyle. (4) Believes that districts offering competitive salaries, over $10k increases, and or those offering 4-day work weeks will draw the largest number of teachers.

April 4th, 2023 – Jackie expressed a lot of emotion when she spoke about her campus leadership. When she experienced health problems, she had the support of her campus principal and was able to continue in her role as she healed. Jackie was very emotional when sharing her story of a cancer diagnosis and seemed very supportive of her team and grateful for the leaders she has had as supervisors while in the district.

Jackie expressed how appreciative she was to have been able to receive a slight increase to the salary matrix to be able to afford health care. Jackie also shared how she is confident that she will remain with her campus and district as long as slight increases are available.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1) Jackie shared that working well with her leadership team is %60 of the reason she remains on her current campus. (2) Supportive leadership was important during her cancer diagnosis and recovery. (3) Believes that she is in education for "all the right reasons".

April 5, 2023- Jade evolved into a teacher leader on her campus and expressed the desire to move from a tough campus in a very large urban district, seeking a work environment where she felt "safe" and where the culture was positive. Jade was very passionate in her interview, sharing her thoughts on how small acts of kindness go a long way in motivating teachers to remain on a campus.

Even though small tokens go a long way, Jade adamantly stated that teacher pay should be competitive. Jade is interested in pursuing TIA designation to reap the benefits. She previously held the designation in the district she left to work in the district where she currently works, which just received full TIA designation as a district.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1) Jade expressed the appreciation leadership supports such as affirmations to staff and visibility. (2) Jade appreciates autonomy as a teacher. (3) Jade pointed out that many teachers lack the necessary certification or skills to be successful and are not prepared to deal with students. (4) Jade suggested that districts should offer bountiful resources and make teacher pay competitive to improve retention.

April 13, 2023 – Jay seemed very comfortable and confident during the interview. Jay is self-assured and stated that if financial incentives were substantial enough, she would consider working in another district. Jay expressed how when considering districts to work in, besides financial incentives, campuses that seemed to offer leadership and team support stood out. This made me think of teachers finding and organization that "fit" their needs, which was also expressed by a few other participants. Organizational fit, often described by supportive culture and leadership in the interviews, seems to be an important factor in teacher decision making relative to attrition and retention. Jay seems content with what she chose as a profession and indicated that she "loves" the content that she teaches.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1) Working environment/conditions and administrative support are the most important factors, separate from financial incentives. (2) This participant would not take a pay cut to work in an "ideal" situation. (teaching desired course in desired campus environment)

April 16, 2023- Justice has been in the field of education for a while. With this in mind, Justice shared that financial incentives that are currently being offered by other districts are not enough to lure her from her current position. Proximity to home was pivotal in Justice's decision to work in her district. Justice was very adamant about the need for financial incentives to be substantial to attract teachers or entice teachers to remain in their current campus/district.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1) Justice reported that education is no longer a respected field. Disrespect comes from parents, teachers, and policymakers. (2) Teachers are looking for empathetic and supportive leadership. (3) Veteran teachers are less likely to leave a district for financial incentives that are not substantial. (4) Financial incentives have targeted recruitment of new teachers, with larger increases to the starting salary than increases applied to the salary matrix.

April 17, 2023 (1)– Jude shared how she was previously working in an inner-city district with tough working conditions. She shared that she felt unsafe in her surroundings and decided to move her residence and change districts. Jude shared how it was difficult working with the students who had dealt with and were living through traumatic situations. She felt less equipped to handle students coming from those situations and yearned for a different, more positive school culture to work in.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1) Personal safety is of great concern. (2) Teachers are often unequipped to handle challenging environments and situations. (3) Micromanagement leads to attrition. (4) Unfair treatment leads to attrition. (4) Supplemental pay and bonuses are appreciated by teachers, but still lagging in terms of amount required to make a difference.

April 17, 2023 (2)- Journey seemed comfortable and self-assured during the interview. She expressed that her campus leadership and culture make for a positive working environment. She described her colleagues as "family". Her connection with the campus leadership and colleagues is her reason for remaining in her current campus/district.

Points made by the participant that stood out to the researcher during the interview include: (1) The administrative presence on the campus is felt and described as supportive. (2) Initially, health contribution was significant, but due to inflation, the contribution has not kept up with the changing cost of living. (3) New teachers have left the campus at a higher rate than veteran teachers. (4) Connections with friends factored in Journey's decision to join the campus.

Appendix H
Emergent Themes

Themes	Participant Response Summary Notes	Key Words	Key Phrases	Participant
1. Teachers no longer perceive teaching as a respected profession.	Participants expressed perceived aspects of respectable career.	1. Disrespect 2. Defensive 3. Parents 4. Policymakers 5. "larger community" 6. Low salary 7. Lack skills 8. Teacher shortage	1. Disrespect from parents, policymakers 2. Not a respected profession 3. Overall disrespect of profession 4. Poor treatment of teachers 5. Other professions offered more in terms of salary 6. Deterioration - of support last 7-10 years 7. Lack of passion for teaching 8. Would not have teacher shortage if compensation was better 9. System takes advantage of teachers	(P1),(P3) (P5), (P8), (P9)
2. Teacher compensation is low and not competitive among districts.	Participants addressed their sentiments about teacher compensation. Participants described compensation as inadequate.	1. Salary 2. Compensation/Benefits 3. Increase 4. Competition 5. Highest pay 6. Competitive pay	1. Good skills bring higher market value elsewhere. 2. Teachers are leaving to pursue higher paying positions. 3. Unrewarding system 4. Lacking compensation 5. Unrewarding system 6. Benefits and compensation are not sufficient. 7. Districts should be competitive.	(P1), (P2), (P3), (P5), (P6), (P8), (P9)

			8. Seek opportunities to earn more	
3. Teachers are experiencing a lack of administrative and parental support.	Participants addressed negative leadership and parental behaviors and expressed desired supportive leadership attributes.	1. Parental 2. Defensive 3. Unsupportive 4. Micromanagement 5. Growth 6. Effective leadership 7. Lack of accountability 8. Approachable 9. Leadership 10. Lack skills 11. Empowering 12. Visible 13. Approachable 14. Unapproachable	1. Less parental support 2. Deterioration of support 3. Less micromanagement 4. Leadership under pressure 5. Opportunity for growth 6. Lack of anonymity 7. Desire supportive leadership 8. Parental support desired 9. Looking for a supportive network to grow in 10. Lack of support when dealing with student behaviors 11. Leadership that is empathetic and wants what is best for teachers 12. Sets tone for campus 13. Need effective leaders 14. Parental support makes a difference	(P1), (P2), (P3),(P4), (P6)
4. Positive working conditions are valued over small financial incentives.	Participants described ideal and undesirable working conditions and the value placed on those conditions.	1. Work environment 2. Burnout 3. Workload 4. Culture 5. Connectedness 6. Supportive 7. PLC 8. Peer support 9. Stress level 10. Punitive environment 11. Extended hours/Time 12. Positive environment	1. Poor work environment 2. More difficult post- COVID 3. Searching for positive work environment 4. Unrealistic expectations 5. Dealing with parents and students 6. Challenging workplace	(P1), (P2), (P3), (P4), (P5), (P6),(P7), (P9)

		13. Negative work environment 14. Resources 15. Leadership (Effective) 16. Approachable 17. Open door policy 18. Unmotivated 19. High stakes student performance 20. Accountability 21. Location 22. Proximity	7. Sense of purpose 8. Looking for supportive leadership 9. Supportive team important 10. Access to resources is desired 11. Attitudes and support of peers and availability of PLC support is important 12. Vision does not align with administration. 13. Increased demands on teachers 14. Close to home 15. Good culture, support, leadership 16. Positive environment impacts work.	
5. Teachers are experiencing the impact of the rising cost of living.	Participants addressed teacher salary in the current economy.	1. Cost of living 2. Economy 3. Healthcare 4. Raise	1. Cost of living has risen 2. Incentives important due to economy 3. Rising healthcare costs 4. Extra boost in compensation desired	(P1), (P3), (P4), (P7), (P8), (P9)
6. Financial incentives are not the primary reasons teachers remain.	Participants shared what factors, other than financial incentives, that influence their decisions to remain in their positions.	1. Leadership 2. Compatibility 3. Working conditions 4. Work environment 5. Big pay increase 6. Personal reward/altruism 7. Supportive environment 8. Desired content 9. Committed	1. Money not main motivator 2. Personal reward important 3. Choosing campus based 4. on environment, relationship with peers 5. Conditions outweigh financial incentives	(P1), (P2), (P3), (P4), (P5), (P6), (P7), (P8), (P9)

			6. Teachers may leave if financial incentives are not attractive enough 7. Teachers choosing happiness over incentives 8. Pay is not why people stay 9. Ability to teach desired content 10. Personal mission	
7. Larger financial incentives, sustained over time, are a step in the right direction.	Participants described the desired incentive type and distribution.	1. Consistent 2. Competitive Pay 3. Highest paying 4. Well thought out 5. Long term impact 6. TIA 7. Sustainable 8. Retention bonus	1. Higher paying incentives attract teachers, 2. Competing districts should offer more 3. Most districts do not differ in incentive pay 4. Interested in TIA districts 5. Long term solutions desired 6. Teachers may leave if financial incentives are attractive enough. 7. More incentives, less attrition 8. Larger incentives attractive	(P1), (P3), (P5), (P6), (P8)

			9. Well thought out incentives	

Appendix I
Summary of Interpretation

The table below outlines a summary of the interpretation of findings.

RQ1. What are the circumstances that contribute to the attrition of highly qualified teacher in an urban school district?	
Contextual Findings	**Notes**
Finding 1-Teachers choose to remain in their positions when they have a positive view of their working conditions.	Financial incentives offered by districts in the region that are not substantial or sustainable are not as attractive to teachers who prefer a comfortable, positive work environment.
Finding 2- Teachers view teacher compensation as insufficient and suggest more substantial and long-term financial incentives.	TIA is a promising financial incentive that experienced educators are optimistic about.
Major Themes	
Theme 1-Teachers no longer perceive teaching as a respected profession.	Participants discussed perceived disrespect from students, parents, and the larger community, including policymakers.
Theme 2-Teacher compensation is low and not competitive among districts.	Overall compensation is lacking. Teachers who remain in education and are unhappy in their current position/district are shopping around for districts that offer incentives. It is important to note that teachers mentioned that most salaries are consistent within the region; therefore, stipends and additional incentives must be sizeable to entice teachers to leave their current position. For financial incentives to make a difference in teacher sentiment toward retention, they must be sizeable and sustained.
Theme 3-Teachers are experiencing a lack of administrative and parental support. • Administrative support • Parental Support	Participants indicated that either they left a campus due to perceived lack of parental and administrative support when facing challenges. Micromanagement by administration and decreased autonomy was mentioned as a
Theme 4-Positive working conditions are valued over small financial incentives. • Stressful environment • Positive environment	Post-COVID, working conditions have deteriorated. Increasing negative student behaviors, increased workload, higher stakes relative to accountability were factors mentioned that have a negative impact on working conditions. Teachers

• Availability of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)	who leave their campuses and districts who remain in education are seeking work environments that they perceive as positive and less stressful. Teachers are experiencing burnout due to working conditions and feelings of being unsupported.
Theme 5-Teachers are experiencing the impact of the rising cost of living. • Rising healthcare costs	Some teachers experience difficulty making ends meet, with some electing to have second jobs or seek higher paying jobs in the field of education, and outside teaching. Participants mentioned that other careers offer much better compensation without the headaches of education, with no additional education requirement.

RQ2. To what extent, if any are financial incentives linked to the retention of highly qualified teachers and a reduction in teacher shortages in an urban school district?	
Theme 6-Financial incentives are not the primary reasons teachers remain.	Teachers are looking for supportive leaders and parents, positive working conditions, and supportive network (peers). Teachers reported having a sense of purpose, increasing their desire to remain in their positions and the profession.
Theme 7-Larger financial incentives sustained over time, are a step in the right direction.	Larger incentive amounts are desired. If competing districts offered larger amounts that were sustainable, this would be a game changer relative to recruitment and retention. Small amounts amount to very little impact on retention and a reduction in teacher shortages.