

START: SUPPORTING, TRAINING, AND RETAINING TEACHERS

by

James Victor Davis II

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of  
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
Curriculum and Instruction

Charlotte

2010

Approved by:

---

Dr. Jeanneine Jones

---

Dr. Warren DiBiase

---

Dr. David Pugalee

---

Dr. Marvin Croy



## ABSTRACT

JAMES VICTOR DAVIS II. *Start: Supporting, training, and retaining teachers.* (Under the direction of JEANNEINE JONES)

The literature on teacher retention is abundant, yet the focus on new teachers themselves is limited. This research study provides a detailed description of what beginning teachers reported made them want to stay at one middle school with a 100% teacher retention rate over four consecutive years. This study employed qualitative methodology. Participants in this case study were all public school teachers who worked at a middle school in the southeastern United States.

A case study research design was used to solicit feedback from beginning teachers about administrative efforts which made them want to stay at this school, during a time when many new teachers chose to leave the profession. The study employed semi-structured interviews with novice teachers, semi-structured interviews with mentor teachers, and journaling for new teachers.

The results of this case study showed the administrative efforts at one middle school which led to a 100% teacher retention rate, as reported by beginning teachers themselves. The main findings of this study were: 1) beginning teachers reported that having an administrator who cares for you did impact their decision to stay at this school in particular; 2) new teachers reported feeling as though they had a voice that is heard by administration which had a positive impact on their retention; 3) novice teachers reported that being treated like a professional by administrators impacted their choosing to stay at this school. Implications and recommendations are provided in regard to the successful retention of beginning classroom teachers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A supportive doctoral committee is crucial to any candidate completing a dissertation. It is difficult to teach, encourage, model, and assist all at the same time. I would like to extend my deepest thanks to Dr. Jeanneine Jones, my chair, and Drs. Warren DiBiase, David Pugalee, and Marvin Croy who served on my committee. I would like to thank them for all of their time, talent, expertise, and encouragement throughout this most difficult process.

Through everything, my family and my closest friends have been my guiding force and support system. The degree must be dedicated to my mom, who taught me the importance of education; my wife, for whom I am eternally grateful, who kept me attentive and encouraged; to my daughters Hannah, Callie, and Addison, who kept me energized and focused on the most important things along the way; and to numerous friends and mentors who pushed me, kept me optimistic, and helped me with any task that I requested.

Acknowledgement also goes to Beth Duncan, both friend and colleague. Thank you for helping me with this process. With editing, reading, and making suggestions, you were instrumental in helping me with this dissertation. I am forever grateful. Heartfelt thanks are also extended to Dr. Molly Fisher for her help with editing and APA assistance.

An extra special thanks goes to Vickie Honeycutt, who fostered my desire to help new teachers. As a mentor, a supervisor and a friend, Vickie Honeycutt was one of the most beautiful educators I have ever had the privilege to work with. Her battle with

cancer ended in the spring of 2010. Heaven truly gained an angel as we lost one of the greatest people I know.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Significance of Study	1
Purpose	5
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
Introduction	7
Teacher Retention	8
Mentoring	9
Staff Development	15
Teacher Induction Programs	20
Potential Void in the Literature	26
Contributions	27
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	28
Introduction	28
Role of the Researcher	28
Research Design	33
Case Study Approach	33
Credibility	37
Site Specifications	38
Gaining Entrance into School	40
Historical Significance of Site Selection	41

Selection of Teacher Participants	42
Karen, Teacher	44
Hannah, Teacher	44
Paul, Teacher	45
Rick, Teacher	45
Christina, Teacher	46
Phyllis, Teacher	46
Selection of Mentor Participants	47
Mentor One, Tina	48
Mentor Two, Callie	48
Mentor Three, Susan	48
Forms of Data	49
Interviews	50
Journaling	51
Mentor Input	53
Data Collection Activities	54
Data Analysis Activities	58
Circular Perspective	60
Confidentiality	64
Risks and Benefits	64
Limitations	65
Consultation	66
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	67

Introduction	67
Description of Participants	68
Research Findings	69
Emergent Themes	71
Research Question #1	72
Staff Development	72
Summary, Staff Development	91
Mentoring	92
Summary, Mentoring	101
Personal Relationships and Individualization	102
Instructional Leadership	103
The Personal Side of Teachers	109
Summary, Personal Relationships and Individualization	114
Research Question #2	114
Summary	116
<b>CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>117</b>
Primary Goals	118
Conclusions	118
Staff Development	119
Mentoring	124
Teacher Induction Programs	125
Leadership Roles	128

Other Factors	130
Study Benefits	131
Recommendations for Professional Practice	134
Professional Practice Recommendation #1	134
Professional Practice Recommendation #2	135
Professional Practice Recommendation #3	136
Professional Practice Recommendation #4	137
Professional Practice Recommendation #5	138
Recommendations for Further Research	138
Recommendation #1	138
Recommendation #2	139
Recommendation #3	139
Recommendation #4	140
Summary	140
REFERENCES	142
APPENDICES	147
A Telephone Script	147
B Individual Interview Protocol	148
C Consent Letter	149

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### *Significance of Study*

Approximately fifty percent of beginning teachers leave the profession during their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). During the 2004-2005 school year, slightly more than twenty percent of the entire population of first year teachers left the profession completely (Cox, et al., 2007). Miner (2009) reported that beginning teachers leave the profession at an alarming rate; there is no easy solution for this crisis and no single reason for failed retention, but instead, multiple reasons.

Retaining teachers in general is a difficult task. Such a large number of beginning teachers leaving the profession during their initial four years of classroom teaching creates an overwhelming problem for educators. Furthermore, little support from administrators and a lack of professionalism for new teachers increases the odds that a beginning teacher will leave the profession (Spinella, 2008). Even in situations where beginning teachers are successful and have a multitude of resources, they leave because they report that they feel unfulfilled and often isolated (Miner, 2009).

Meier (2009) recognized the need for additional efforts to retain beginning classroom teachers. She called for a reinventing of schools that can keep teachers in teaching, as opposed to current schools where teachers are leaving the profession regularly. Meier noted the crisis associated with beginning teachers leaving the profession and encouraged others to take action in regard to finding out what will keep

teachers in the classroom and working effectively with students. She stressed that administrators examine ways to create schools that are themselves centers for lifelong learning. Meier spoke of an unlearning associated with how things have been done in the past and a new learning where beginning classroom teachers are educated, connected to their peers, and working in an environment that is friendly, respectful, and professional.

It is important that school administrators continue to find ways to retain effective beginning classroom teachers in order to successfully educate children and meet all of their diverse learning needs as students move forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Grady and Brock (2005) reported that with the right teacher retention program, highly qualified beginning teachers can make many valuable contributions to their schools, and they can teach students well, preparing them for tomorrow's world. In addition to the educational value and level of preparedness experienced teachers provide, failure to retain teachers is very costly for school systems and can often take funds from more important areas such as instruction, exceptional students, and staff development.

Ingersoll (2002) reported that in 1999 America's schools hired approximately 232,000 new teachers. In that same year, America's schools failed to retain more than 287,000 teachers (Ingersoll, 2002). Additional factors made the statistics even higher in certain locations. Urban areas, rural communities, schools without adequate administrative support, and financially poor schools in general had a much bleaker outlook when it came to hiring and losing teachers (Cox, et al., 2007). As reported by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007), in North Carolina, with each teacher that the state failed to retain, schools lost approximately \$10,000 per teacher. This rate suggested that in 1999 more than \$2,870,000,000 designated for students was

lost on the problems surrounding teacher retention. Not only is this a huge financial loss, but Olson (2007) reported that it may also be a major educational loss for students. Based upon Olson's work at a new teacher preparation center in California where she focused on supporting and retaining effective beginning teachers, the district saw a rise not only in retention rates, but also with student test scores. Schools experienced gains with standardized testing and the number of students failing decreased significantly. This pattern of growth and gain was true for both reading and math.

There are many challenges facing beginning teachers that increase the likelihood that they will leave the profession during their first three years of teaching. Beginning teachers bring to the classroom varying backgrounds, different motivations, vast experiences, and dissimilar levels of preparation based on their educational training. When combined with the task of effectively teaching students, these things can often become overwhelming for new teachers and at times, may end with the teacher leaving the profession entirely (Bartell, 2005).

Bartell (2005) further explained the challenges which new teachers face. When summarizing Bartell's work, those challenges included but are not limited to the following:

- Beginning classroom teachers enter their classrooms today with extremely high and often unrealistic expectations for themselves and the students that they teach.
- New teachers often feel as though they are isolated and left to perform on their own without assistance from staff members and school administrators.

- Beginning teachers are traditionally assigned the most difficult student populations and the most challenging classes to teach.
- Teachers can struggle and may need assistance when applying what they have learned in college to situations that arise in the classroom with students.

There are many things that can positively or negatively impact the teacher retention rate for any given school. Teacher pay is one reason that can often be linked to teacher retention. Although it is a reason suggested by some teachers for leaving the classroom, it is not a major reason for the vast majority of classroom teachers (Cox, et al., 2007). Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2001) showed that an increase in salary would only marginally reduce the attrition rate of teachers. Similarly, Imazeki (2005) verified this by showing a “fairly large salary increase” is needed in order to adequately increase teacher retention; therefore a small increase makes little impact on teacher retention (p. 431).

According to Spinella (2008) the administrator’s role and their support play a key part in retaining teachers for the classroom. Beginning teachers struggle when they enter the classroom even when they have participated in and completed educational programs from various colleges and universities (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007). Principals and other school administrators struggle regularly with how they can effectively retain beginning teachers (Ingersoll, 2002). Some of the most current research indicates that “teachers with positive perceptions about their working conditions are much more likely to stay at their current school than educators who are more negative about their conditions of work, particularly in the areas of leadership and empowerment” (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007, p. 14). In addition, Brown (2003) reported that

a working teacher retention program when planned and implemented correctly can greatly and positively impact a teacher's perception while serving as the primary key to teacher retention. The Teacher Follow-up Survey is used each year to determine how many teachers remain at the same school, move to another school, or leave the profession. In the most recent Teacher Follow-up Survey, in nearly forty percent of the documented cases, the lack of teacher support from administrators was stated as a reason that significantly influenced whether a teacher left their particular school (Cox, et al., 2007).

There are numerous strategies that have been identified to address the teacher retention problem. These strategies range from larger issues such as administrative and district improvements to more manageable suggestions, such as implementing a first year teacher's handbook (Quinn & Andrews, 2004). As is obvious, teacher retention is a major problem that can impact the quality of education for students of all ages in various communities.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this research study was to examine one school site that implemented a retention program for new teachers that resulted in 100% retention for four consecutive years. Historically this school had low teacher retention rates, barely about 50% (Barkameyer, 2010). The study examined efforts that were made by the school to positively impact teacher retention. This study has the potential to impact schools as the success within this school context may provide other schools with possible strategies and techniques which could assist in the retention of beginning teachers. The following research questions guided this examination:

1. Within a successful school which retains 100% of their beginning teachers, what did the teachers report that the administrative team did to support them and make them want to stay at their respective site?
2. Other than administrative efforts, what other factors influenced teachers to stay at this particular school site?

While exploring the two previously stated research questions, my role as the researcher was possibly one of the greatest limitations associated with the study. Prior to my role as researcher, I was the assistant principal of instruction at the site. Some of the participants were teachers who worked with me in this capacity. However I no longer work at this school and therefore felt comfortable engaging with the teachers about retention efforts made by the administrative team. Limitations are explained in greater detail in Chapter Three. Also included in Chapter Three are the ways that I accounted for these limitations including messages that were delivered at multiple meetings and a call for teachers to share both the positive and the negative information.

The goal of this study was to document what a particular group of beginning teachers reported as contributing to their staying. As stated previously, new teachers leave the profession at an alarming rate. There appears to be no single reason why teachers leave and there appears to be no easy solutions (Miner, 2009).

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### *Introduction*

As noted in the opening pages of Chapter One, approximately fifty percent of beginning teachers leave the profession during their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Throughout the 2004-2005 school year, more than twenty percent of the entire population of first year teachers left the profession completely (Cox, et al., 2007). Miner (2009) reported that beginning teachers leave the profession at an alarming rate; there is no easy solution for this crisis and no single reason for failed retention, but instead, multiple reasons. Retaining teachers in general is a difficult task, with approximately fifty percent of beginning teachers leaving the classroom before they reach their fifth year of employment (Miner, 2009). Current research shows that after a teacher has been in the profession for more than five years, their probability of leaving the profession decreases dramatically (Cox, et al., 2007). It is imperative that we acknowledge the urgency associated with new teachers leaving the profession and offer various forms of effective support.

The purpose of this study was to explore and investigate the specific details associated with a teacher retention program that was successful in retaining 100% of its beginning teachers over four consecutive years. This chapter reviews the literature related to teacher retention with specific regard to mentoring, staff development, and teacher induction programs. Each of these areas is explored on the following pages.

### *Teacher Retention*

Retaining new teachers is a national problem which needs a great deal of attention (Ingersoll, 2002). With alarming statistics and dismal headlines, it is no secret that students and public schools holistically are losing out when it comes to the costs that everyone pays, both monetarily and in other forms as well (Texas Center for Education Research, 2000). As money is spent on recruiting and training new teachers, less and less is spent on students. Even with that taken into consideration, the price of beginning teachers leaving the classroom encompasses far more than dollars alone. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2002) identifies the most serious problem associated with the failure to retain effective teachers as a loss of teacher quality, which causes decreases in student achievement.

According to Johnson and Birkeland (2003), when schools lose teachers, there is far more lost than one individual person. Authors reported that the impact can be strong, long-lasting, and at times, devastating. Johnson and Birkeland stressed that with each teacher who is not retained, schools also lose that teacher's familiarity with the school and campus; the teacher's relationships with students, colleagues, and community members; and the teacher's connections with school-related organizations and clubs. There is a relational loss with each beginning teacher who leaves the profession which exceeds any dollar amount. This relational loss coupled with a financial loss and a negative impact on a student's academic growth only reinforces the need for school stakeholders to act and plan accordingly so that new teachers can be effectively retained. Mentoring, staff development opportunities, and teacher induction programs are three primary ways identified in the literature to positively impact the retention of new teachers

in their beginning years of service (Breux & Wong, 2003; Futernick, 2007; Haar, 2007; Lawson, 1992; Nguyen, 2000; Olson, 2007; Parsons, 2003; Sweeny, 1994).

### *Mentoring*

The purpose of mentoring with beginning teachers can often be both complex and highly difficult at times. Common mentor programs have similar purposes and those include helping someone inexperienced learn a new job, improving instructional performance via modeling by an experienced teacher, attracting the best candidates by using mentoring as a recruitment tool, and responding to local or state mandates (Sweeney, 1994).

There are several key things that can make an individual a stronger, more effective mentor for beginning teachers. It has been encouraged that individual mentors not forget the importance of serving as a nurturer. Often, when work loads become heavier and deadlines quickly approach, the nurturing component can be mistakenly abandoned. Through nurturing and teaching beginning educators, mentors have the ability to increase a new teacher's level of job satisfaction and self-confidence. A boost in both of these areas can positively impact teacher retention (Lee, et al., 2006).

It is also suggested that relationships remain a primary focus for the mentor and the mentee. While mentors focus on content, processes, management, and standardized tests, the condition of a relationship between mentor and mentee cannot be forgotten. Mentors are encouraged to think about how they communicate with their mentees. Communication should be positive, specific, useful, and delivered in a non-threatening manner. Communicating in a healthy way can help strengthen the relationship a mentor has with new teachers and also provide the mentor with a way to better reach the

beginning teacher. As relationships are fostered and beginning teachers see that mentors care about them both professionally and personally, results will be greater. New teachers will open up, be more likely to receive constructive criticism, and share more about the things they need assistance with (Lee, et al., 2006).

The California New Teacher Project (CNTP) is a national organization that is dedicated to working with teachers and mentors so that improvements can be made in student achievement (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1992). The CNTP uses school communities, professional development programs, online learning opportunities and research to serve as catalysts for change with beginning classroom teachers. The CNTP recognizes that new teachers are typically placed in some of the most difficult classrooms with the most difficult students. They also note that many teaching careers will not survive this trial-by-fire experience. CNTP has a promising record of assisting beginning teachers and helping schools achieve a teacher retention rate of more than 95%.

This project was started in 1988 and it is still active today. More specifically, the CNTP examines the phases of beginning teachers. The California New Teacher Project was started by stakeholders who recognized a lack of retention with new teachers, especially those in urban and rural areas. One of the principle components of CNTP is individualized mentoring. CNTP provides all mentors with staff development to help them identify ways that they can support new teachers, including a diversity sensitivity training. CNTP pays for their program through various grants and reports a positive impact on beginning teacher retention. Nguyen's (2000) research supports each of the mentoring components identified by CNTP and stresses that as mentors are chosen for

training purposes, the process needs to be very selective and purposeful. In addition, new teachers need to be strategically placed with mentors who have a proven track record of success with students, parents, test scores, and the day-to-day tasks required of a classroom teacher.

Hicks, Glasgow, and McNary (2005) explained that mentoring is a multifaceted role for any veteran teacher. Mentoring someone well takes a great deal of time as you think, plan, and meet the various needs which can arise with a beginning classroom teacher. The authors stressed that if schools are to retain effective, beginning teachers there has to be a mentor who can assist new teachers with the different people that novice teachers must interact with, while navigating different challenges that can arise. New teachers have to be aware of the people they will deal with. Not only will a beginning teacher be dealing with students, but they will also be dealing with parents, other professionals in the school building, and other individuals from the community. An effective mentor must teach new teachers how to positively and effectively communicate with each of these parties.

In addition to a strong mentor being aware of the various stakeholders within a school, the mentor also knows that the biggest, most critical population being served is the students. An effective mentor needs to help new teachers with students; more specifically, new teachers need to know how they can effectively teach and then collaborate with students who make up a very diverse classroom. Beginning teachers not only need assistance with the content they teach, but they also need assistance with understanding the social, emotional, and physical needs of the children they teach (Breux & Wong, 2003).

Instruction is another main focus for mentors and their beginning teachers. All teachers need to know how to question students on a higher level and also how to focus on complex skills and problem-solving activities. New teachers are often assigned a mentor to help with instructional rubrics, engaging activities, and addressing various learning styles (Breux & Wong, 2003; Hicks, 2005). Hicks also recommended that mentors take the time to support new teachers as they create classroom management plans and disciplinary policies that will address both classroom management issues and student behavior as well.

Effective mentors take beginning teachers far beyond classroom rules, although the creation of these rules is vitally important and helps them learn about youth culture and building relationships in general. Hicks (2005) stressed that mentors teach beginning teachers how to use various instructional strategies to engage students with their own learning processes. It is not simply about teaching new educators what to do; rather, it is about empowering them with the level of confidence and the tools needed to maximize their success with students in the classroom.

Serving as a mentor can be rewarding, yet it is also extremely stressful and burdensome at times. Bartell (2005) describes the characteristics of an effective mentor, stressing that they:

- Understand how a beginning teacher's skills will develop over a period of time and recognize that dealing with a beginning teacher at one particular point in time may be very different to how you would deal with them at a point later in their career.

- Communicate with school administrators regularly and effectively so that expectations are always clear between mentees, mentors, and principals. This communication will help principals support and encourage beginning teachers individually as they progress toward being a master teacher.
- Assess beginning teachers and the effectiveness of the mentors that they are assigned. Bartell suggested that mentors assess all roles and programs within a school that deal with beginning teacher retention and preparation. Bartell encouraged informal assessments and formal assessments for beginning teachers. She also outlined types of formative assessments and summative assessments that can be utilized.

Many of the points made by Bartell (2005) were echoed by Nguyen (2000).

Nguyen stated that once a new teacher has a mentor identified and in place for the school year, the feedback which comes from the mentor needs to be extremely specific, occur regularly, and happen many weeks before any administrator evaluation occurs. Nguyen also suggested that a mentor offer feedback to the new teacher both verbally and in written format.

As mentioned previously, mentoring is not only about the relationship between a mentor and the new teacher, but also about the relationship between mentor, new teachers, and the administration. Jean Haar (2007) explored teacher retention and looked specifically at the mentor role as it was linked to the principal's role in retaining a qualified, beginning classroom teacher. She stressed that administrators should maximize their effective teacher mentors and use them as a valuable resource for those that are new to the field. She stressed that the effective teachers should be used for formal

observations, informal observations, and different forms of staff development. Other authors and researchers support these points about the frequent and effective use of teacher mentors for beginning teachers (Bartell, 2005; Brown, 2003; Grady & Brock, 2005; Haar, 2007; Spinella, 2008; Sweeny, 1994).

In addition, Haar examined and outlined other key factors that were reported as positively impacting teacher retention. Feedback from a new teacher in Haar's research reported that the environment in which new teachers work needs to be more conducive to learning. It was suggested that in order to achieve a more conducive learning environment, mentors should be given additional time to work with their beginning teachers. The additional work time with a mentor could be used for lesson preparation, professional dialogue, assistance with paperwork, or any other classroom associated task. This same beginning teacher also suggested that planning periods not only be used, but that the time be protected by administration so that mentors and new teachers would have the time they deem as necessary to build a strong support system.

Mentoring can be an effective component of a teacher retention program and can address a wide range of topics (Jonson, 2008). With everything from training, yearlong support, fears, anxieties, and trust, matching a mentor with a beginning teacher is a serious responsibility that should be completed with caution. While mentors may in some cases offer a great deal to beginning teachers, passing the torch from one generation to the next cannot solely be left to mentors. Another way to reach and retain new teachers can be found in a school's staff development opportunities.

### *Staff Development*

Professional development is an effective tool when it comes to teacher retention. It is something that all teachers encounter on a regular basis either in a voluntary or mandated manner. Professional development may include after-school meetings, local and state conferences, online opportunities, and other forms as well. Effectively planned and implemented staff development can equip beginning teachers with greater power, knowledge, resources, and a newfound level of excitement for education in general (Parsons, 2003).

The opportunity to learn from colleagues in a professional staff development setting can be a key way to retain beginning teachers. Haar (2007) reported that teachers become depleted, exhausted, and weary from having to balance so many different things within the school setting. It was stressed that beginning teachers need to be replenished professionally, and meaningful staff development is a vital tool for achieving this goal. Staff development opportunities for new teachers should focus on and build upon the following areas: curriculum, effective classroom instruction, the opportunity to stretch one's self as an educator, working with diverse students, and effectively communicating with parents. In addition, those responsible should incorporate strategies such as teacher journaling and peer collaboration to promote true reflection and growth in novice classroom teachers (Futernick, 2007; Haar, 2007; Knight, 2006; Lawson, 1992, Meier, 2009).

The New Teacher Center has decided to take another route to successfully retain their effective beginning teachers (Olson, 2007). Their goal was to step away from the traditional forms of school staff development and create a plan which was more

individualized. The New Teacher Center is taking a teacher-by-teacher, school-by-school approach to staff development. Staff development opportunities for beginning teachers in certain areas are being completely reestablished. While some school districts focus on recruiting teachers to the profession, especially in hard to staff areas, other districts are stating that the system needs to offer greater signing bonuses and other financial incentives. The New Teacher Center focuses less on recruitment and offers a signing bonus comparable to surrounding counties. Again, their greatest focus is individualized staff development.

The professional development committee for the New Teacher Center reported great success in beginning teacher retention. The team reported that more beginning teachers are being effectively retained and as a result, both teachers and students are happier and producing better results (Olson, 2007). When viewed holistically, the New Teacher Center contributes their high levels of growth and success relative to the following areas:

- Addressing teachers' concerns about the lack of school time allocated for new teachers to plan and collaborate with their peers
- Having a committee to address the needs of beginning teachers that is created with various teachers, school administrators, and professional development consultants
- Creating a school environment for professionals where they are taught to analyze student data, plan lessons based upon the data, and implement the lessons in a way that is engaging for students

The initial data collected showed that the New Teacher Center's staff development efforts associated with beginning teacher retention yielded a highly significant and positive effect on standardized math test scores and reading comprehension test scores (Olson, 2007).

Traditional staff development is typically held in a large group format with the principal or the district determining what topics will be covered and how the information will be disseminated (Knight, 2006). In addition, traditional staff development often models ineffective practices for teachers. It is typical to see an individual lecturing to the group, failing to use visual aids, and typically speaking to a group of adults who are uninterested and unengaged. When working with large groups of participants like these, it can also be highly difficult for presenters to ensure that all learning styles are being addressed with each professional opportunity that is offered.

Knight encouraged school districts and all levels of school administrators to take a more individualized look at the professional development offered to beginning teachers as a means of retention (Knight, 2006; Olson, 2007). It was suggested that administrators examine everything from the number of participants and the location to participant interest and the time in which the staff development is offered. There are many areas that need to be accounted for before delivering a professional development opportunity.

By linking professional development to teacher interests and offering staff development that is highly individualized and collaborative, effective beginning teachers can be retained (Knight, 2006). Knight suggested that beginning teachers attend staff development that is geared toward the natural obstacles and struggles that a novice teacher may experience during those first few years in the classroom. Such staff

development opportunities may include lesson planning, student conferencing, parent communication, effective instructional technology, and engaging classroom activities that address multiple learning styles.

The greatest difference in Knight's approach to staff development is that what one teacher may be doing as the result of staff development can be very different from what another teacher does with staff development. Instead of a "one size fits all" mentality, professional development can be tailored to the specific strengths and weaknesses of the individual teachers. Just like a good teacher with students, instruction has to be differentiated based upon need and the level of work that each person is capable of completing. Staff development, regardless of the focus, should be collaborative, linked to student achievement, and developed around trust and healthy relationships (Knight, 2006; Quinn & Andrews, 2004; Wong, 2003; Wong, 2005).

While at times a traditional approach with staff development can be painted as ineffective and outdated, others do call for and encourage a more traditional approach to staff development with beginning teachers (Greiner & Smith, 2006; Kutcy & Schulz, 2006). Greiner and Smith (2006) also encouraged mentor teachers to participate with and plan professional growth opportunities for new teachers. Plans for professional growth outline that all staff development be delivered in a collaborative manner. The authors also suggested that partnerships be developed with local colleges and universities which produce teacher graduates. Kutcy and Schulz's research (2006) echoed the work of Greiner and stressed the importance of partnerships. In order to support the growth and development of beginning classroom teachers, faculties in education departments at various institutions should extend their presence beyond the current pre-service program

activities by providing in-service activities to new teachers and mentors, planning and implementing meaningful staff development opportunities based upon curriculum and instruction, and serving as an ongoing resource and consultant to schools with beginning teachers. Other ways for educators to help beginning teachers include observing lessons, providing informal feedback, and modeling practices as needed.

Effective staff development can look different from one campus to the next and can offer teachers the chance to assume many different roles. Wong (2003) summarized staff development efforts by stating that “the best professional development programs allow teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of groups in which teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect one another’s work” (p. 47). Beginning teachers with effective staff development will learn from master teachers and also share what they themselves know as well. Wong also suggested that new teachers not only be the recipient when it comes to staff development, but instead be part of true collaboration where brainstorming, professional discussions, and questioning occur regularly.

Furthermore, Wong (2003) explained that staff development for beginning teachers is multi-faceted. He encouraged new teachers who are taking part in staff development to assume different roles, actively explore different topics, and participate in different settings when offered the opportunity. Teachers are encouraged to take an active role in their staff development, as opposed to simply waiting for a fellow teacher or administrator to provide them with the right kinds of opportunities. Beginning teachers need to work toward a higher level of self-awareness so that they can plan for

and seek staff development opportunities which are tailored to their specific needs, interests, and areas of weakness.

Staff development can be an effective tool for administrators to use when focusing on higher teacher retention rates with beginning classroom teachers (Zepeda, 1992). In addition, when staff development is planned in a thorough manner and yields a quality opportunity for new teachers to learn, the results can be positive. Staff development opportunities can help new teachers grow professionally, promote a common vision, increase levels of motivation, and serve as a catalyst for change within the school building.

#### *Teacher Induction Programs*

Teacher induction programs can help beginning teachers reach their full potential, remain in the teaching profession, positively impact student learning, and save money for school, districts, and states (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2006). In addition, high-quality, well-designed teacher induction programs which focus on classroom instruction, effective planning, collaboration, evaluations, and ongoing assistance for beginning teachers can positively impact teacher retention rates at all levels of education ranging from elementary school to high school (Grady & Brock, 2005).

An effective teacher induction program entails more than simply assigning a mentor to a beginning teacher at an informational orientation session. When planning and implementing a teacher induction program, “strong induction programs introduce new teachers to the responsibilities, missions, and philosophies of their schools, and treat teachers as lifelong learners from their very first day of teaching” (p. 43). A meaningful teacher induction program has to have a major staff development component, it has to

support lifelong learning for teachers, and it has to be grounded in a school's mission statement (Wong, 2003). According to Wong (2005), a popular practitioner, these things can strengthen any teacher induction program and can in turn, yield higher teacher retention rates with beginning classroom teachers.

Beginning teacher induction programs should have continuous goals and benchmarks to determine progress, as opposed to induction activities that are planned at the beginning of a school year and then quickly lose their stamina and focus as the year progresses. In addition, a teacher induction program must offer sustained training and yearlong support for beginning classroom teachers (Wong, 2003). When planning how to help new teachers from the start of school to the close, school administrators need to first know why new teachers fail before they can appropriately come up with remedies and solutions to impact the problem (Wong, 2005). When summarizing the work of Wong, beginning teachers fail for various reasons, yet some of the primary reasons include:

- Beginning teachers fail because they are hired after the school year has already started. They feel overwhelmed initially and struggle finding their place with a faculty already in place when school begins.
- New teachers fail because they have no extra assistance available to them once they enter the classroom. They are often treated in the exact same manner as veteran teachers.
- Wong stated that while 87 percent of teachers report that they have a mentor, only 17 percent said their mentors ever observed them teach a

lesson or offered constructive feedback about things to improve upon in the future.

School systems need to plan and work diligently to create multi-year teacher induction programs for beginning educators which focus on lifelong learning, quality professional development opportunities, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement (Wong, 2005).

Breaux (2003), founder of the FIRST program (Framework for Inducting, Retaining, and Supporting Teachers) claimed that the only true way to achieve higher student learning is to retain the best beginning teachers possible. Breaux also recommended that systems create a well-structured teacher induction program. She stressed that an induction program can help prepare new teachers, support them, and in the end, retain quality new teachers. She noted that many first-year experiences are not positive for beginning classroom teachers. She further explained that new teachers are typically given a teaching assignment, provided with a mentor, and then placed into some form of a teacher induction program, either high quality or low quality. The induction program should be teacher-centered, learner-oriented, and meaningful.

Although programs may include different cultures and different components, overall there are several primary recommendations for any successful teacher induction program (Breaux and Wong, 2003). These recommendations include the following things:

- Start the year with an initial four or five days of induction before school begins.
- Offer a continuum of professional development through systematic training over a period of two or three years.

- Provide study groups where new teachers can network and build their own support system, foster a sense of commitment, and develop leadership skills in a learning community.
- Incorporate a strong sense of administrative support.
- Integrate a mentoring component into the induction process.
- Present a structure for modeling effective teaching during in-services and mentoring.
- Provide numerous opportunities for inductees to visit demonstration classrooms and ask follow-up questions.

Breaux and Wong (2003) shared very similar thoughts as to what should and should not be a part of new teacher induction programs. Their goals, practices, and guiding principles were highly similar.

Futernick (2007) also identified the need for an effective teacher induction program which goes far beyond the initial meeting that most schools have with new teachers at the beginning of each school year. He researched student achievement in California and explained that the schools rank near the bottom among all states in terms of student performance. He linked student achievement to teacher retention and stressed that states continue to lack well-prepared teachers, therefore making the retention of effective, beginning classroom teachers more and more important. Futernick, like other researchers (Olson, 2007) claimed that California currently experiences a huge financial loss and beginning teachers leave the profession, yet the greater loss is that which is experienced by the school in terms of instructional issues and student achievement.

Those teachers who choose to stay in the profession report that they are effectively retained by teacher induction programs and other systems of support which are established to help teachers (Futernick, 2007). These teacher induction programs not only build support systems for new teachers, but they also ensure that a plan has been created so that beginning classroom teachers have the adequate resources they need, an adequate amount of time for planning, and adequate support from the district office.

Lastly, Futernick (2007) supported the utilization of teacher induction programs and made note of how important the quality of relationships can be for a beginning teacher who is in one of these programs. He explained that books, physical resources, and classroom materials are not enough. Instead, there is a very important humanistic quality and connection which has to be fostered between veteran staff members and new teachers. It is his belief that a well-planned, teacher centered induction program that is grounded in good practices, and when combined with healthy, meaningful relationships amongst staff members, can yield a productive group of new teachers who stay in the profession and can be retained, in turn, doing what is best for student achievement.

Not all components of teacher induction programs are positive and completely advantageous for beginning teachers. There are potential down sides and negative implications regarding teacher induction programs (Doerger, 2003). Doerger explained that teacher induction programs should be unique and tailored to each school site, not outlined with a “one size fits all” approach. He also stressed that some teacher induction programs focus too much on work responsibilities and duties, not true induction. There are several things that can make a teacher induction program less than desirable and possibly negative for beginning classroom teachers (Doerger, 2003). When summarizing

the work of Doerger, negative implications associated with teacher induction programs can include the following:

- Most teacher induction programs try to accomplish too many things with new teachers. This can leave beginning teachers feeling additionally stressed and overwhelmed, as opposed to the goal of trying to make the job easier and more manageable.
- Some teacher induction programs can unintentionally foster competition and rivalry amongst teachers instead of healthy, collaborative, professional relationships.
- Programs are often designed in a way that neglects the humanistic, relational needs of beginning teachers and instead focuses on other items such as handbooks, directories, resources, and other tangible items.
- Teacher induction programs can look solely at the professional needs of beginning teachers and often neglect the personal developmental needs of classroom teachers.

There is research associated with the advantages of new teacher induction programs (Breux & Wong, 2003) as well as items that outline some very serious, negative issues associated with the development of teacher induction programs, such as those listed above (Doerger, 2003). Strong components for new teacher induction programs can include everything from meaningful staff development to the fostering of lifelong learning, while the negative aspects of new teacher induction programs range from peer rivalry to additional stress placed on new teachers (Bartell, 2005; Breux & Wong, 2003; Doerger, 2003; Haar, 2007).

*Potential Void in the Literature*

While reviewing both literature and research, there appears to be a potential void in the literature. New teachers themselves, holistically, have not been researched to see what administrative efforts have caused them to stay at one particular school over another. However, there is adequate research available about the effective retention of certain groups within the beginning teacher category such as minority teachers, special education teachers, and even music education teachers (Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education, 2003; Educational Alliance at Brown University, 2004; Madsen & Hancock, 2002). Although there is research available about beginning teachers in urban and rural areas as well, the participants offering advice about new teacher retention does not come solely from beginning teachers and their mentors, but instead comes from teachers ranging from five years of teaching experience to thirty-three years of teaching experience (Blanson, 2005; Malloy & Allen, 2007).

In other recent studies, beginning teachers who have left the teaching profession have been interviewed (AARP's Educator Community and Farmers Insurance, 2003) while in some cases, new teachers were interviewed, yet only one or two participants composed the entire sample (Brown, 2005). The literature outlines that while special populations, teachers in certain school settings, and even those beginning teachers that were not effectively retained have been interviewed about what can be done to positively impact the retention of new teachers, groups of new teachers themselves, in a school where 100% of the beginning teachers have been retained, are underrepresented. My study counteracts this in that it researches a specific group of six effectively retained

teachers who work at a middle school where 100% of the new teacher population has been retained.

### *Contributions*

Although a great deal of information has been written about teacher retention, this study will contribute to the field by eliciting the voices of teachers who have stayed. It will provide a better understanding of this school's specific strengths along with any weaknesses that are associated with their teacher retention program where 100% of the new teachers have been successfully retained. The study will offer additional insight into the elements of a successful teacher induction program.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### *Introduction*

The first chapter documented the rationale associated with this study and also identified the primary research questions. Chapter Two reviewed the literature surrounding the topic of teacher retention with beginning classroom teachers, while establishing a foundation for the study. In doing so it also revealed a void in the research surrounding feedback from beginning teachers themselves and focusing on what school administrators did to effectively and positively impact teacher retention with educators in their first four years of teaching. Chapter Three describes the research design and the research methods employed in the qualitative study to determine what beginning teachers reported support them in their decisions to stay at this middle school in particular, a middle school with a 100% teacher retention rate for beginning classroom teachers.

### *Role of the Researcher*

As a researcher, so much of what you report and what you do is guided by your own personal history. In qualitative research, the vehicle for gathering information and making sense of it all is the researcher. As I shared results and examined the data, I also needed to share my personal journey in regard to the research topic. I served as the Assistant Principal of Instruction at the site where the study is being conducted. The people that you come in contact with, the experiences that you have, and everything that you learn along the way can present itself in each step of the research. The life experiences that you carry along with you, be it good or bad, can significantly impact

your role as a researcher. It can affect the topic that you choose, how you collect your data, the analysis, patterns that you look for in the data, and how you represent all participants that are involved with the study. Each person's personal journey can explain a researcher's passion and dedication to their given topic and also clarify why certain things are presented in one way or another.

My role as a beginning teacher and other life circumstances that deal with beginning teachers are most certainly influential when it comes to the topic of new teacher retention. Both professionally and personally, certain experiences have caused me to think specific things about teacher retention. Those thoughts and feelings have definitely impacted my research and the approaches that I have taken to gather, collect, and analyze the various forms of data.

The previously mentioned journey has most definitely impacted my areas of interest as a researcher and also played a part in how I explore different topics. Initially, and most obviously, I was a beginning teacher myself. I remember the struggles that came along with my first year of teaching and the years that followed. It is easy for me to recall those endless days and long nights where I questioned everything that I did. I can still remember how hard it was to create lesson plans that appealed to all different types of learners, manage students in the classroom, assess kids regularly, and balance it with a personal life. On top of it all, I can also recall having these issues and not necessarily knowing how to get answers. There were a great deal of human resources available to me, yet at times I was often overwhelmed and had no clue where to begin. I had a mentor and multiple administrators and I also had teammates and departmental colleagues. In addition, the school had a curriculum coach and an instructional specialist.

Even with all of these people, I still experienced a sense of “drowning” for those first few years.

There was also a multitude of physical resources available to me as a beginning teacher. The textbooks were there, the arts supplies were present, and I had more teacher manuals than I could ever hope to read. I had two computers, a projector, and access to a full computer lab. Here again even with those resources I often struggled with a starting point. As I look back into my journal during those first few years as a beginning teacher I found myself trying to answer the following questions.

- How do I know if my students are learning?
- Why can't I find a sense of balance?
- Am I meeting the numerous needs of high kids, low kids, and my regular kids?
- Am I making a difference?
- What is the best way to present material?
- Do I fit in? Do I belong here? Who do I go to when I need help? Will I look inadequate?
- How can I add to my instructional strategies? How can I become a master teacher?
- How can I strengthen my time management skills when it comes to the various content areas?
- Am I making each child feel loved, successful, and respected?

It was rewarding yet very difficult to be a beginning teacher. As I grew and reflected I could see that I was part of a new teacher population that was not served very well and

often at times neglected. Once I completed my four years of initial teaching, a second role within my personal journey contributed to what I now see as a passion and a calling to help new teachers.

At the beginning of my fourth year I was asked by my principal to serve as a mentor for a beginning classroom teacher. With only four years of teaching experience myself, I was both excited and nervous about this new leadership role within the school. Over the course of several years I had the privilege to mentor new teachers and lateral entry teachers. Here again I began to see that new teachers are often assigned a mentor, pushed through a teacher induction program, and mandated to attend staff development opportunities which are often disconnected from their real needs. As a mentor, I remembered my own experiences as a new teacher and tried my best to form healthy relationships with all new teachers, while providing them with the heartfelt, realistic assistance that they needed.

In 2004 my chapter as a classroom teacher came to somewhat of a close. I entered into the Principal Fellows Program and completed an internship assignment at an elementary school. Before the yearlong internship could draw to an end, I was offered a position as the Assistant Principal of Instruction at this particular middle school where the research was conducted. I was excited to hear that along with this new administrative position I would be in charge of beginning teachers and overall teacher retention.

This position gave me the chance to work specifically with teachers who were new to the profession and had less than five years of teaching experience. Fortunately, I was given the opportunity and the time to sit down with new teachers and ask them about their needs and what they thought would make them more successful. I was able to teach

and share with beginning teachers, learn from them and their experiences, and at the same time help them with various needs. As I transitioned from beginning teacher myself to beginning teacher mentor, and then from teacher mentor to Assistant Principal of Instruction, I was able to enhance my own awareness of who beginning teachers really are and what it is they truly need in order to teach effectively and be successful overall in the profession.

Lastly, there is another experience in my life that contributes to why I am so passionate about teacher retention with teachers in their first, second, third, and fourth year of teaching. In 2006, I married a first-year teacher. Not only did I spend eight to ten hours a day working with new teachers and hearing about their positive and negative experiences, but I also went home and heard first-hand information from my wife. There were no barriers, expectations, or limitations on the discussions that we had with one another. She was able to educate me about things that made her job easier and inform me about real barriers that kept her from teaching effectively and at times made her want to leave the profession. She and I would discuss regularly district factors and school-based factors that kept her in the profession. There were also endless times when we discussed certain educational issues that seemed to drive teachers away from the profession altogether.

With all of these things taken into consideration it is evident to me why the successful retention of beginning classroom teachers was an obvious choice for my research. So much of who I am is centered on beginning teachers and what it takes to make them successful in the classroom. Each chapter of my career and in some cases my personal life, has impacted who I am as a researcher. The topic of teacher retention with

beginning classroom teachers drives me and motivates me to ask questions, search for answers, and be a voice for those beginning teachers who may not have one.

### *Research Design*

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argued that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: “This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). The focus of this study is based upon the experiences of teachers in regard to retention efforts that were designed to support them in staying in the profession. Qualitative research was chosen because it is the views and feelings of the teachers that are the primary focus of this study, with the goal of allowing the participants a chance to provide their own answers and thoughts on multiple topics surrounding teacher retention. Accurate representation of the participants was key and I wanted to share information that would be meaningful to other school districts. I had a major interest in the reflections of this group of educators and how they described the reasons which contributed to them staying at this particular school. Therefore, the study required a qualitative methodology. This research study is filled with rich descriptions and details about what the new teachers experienced and what influenced them to remain at one particular school during several years.

### *Case Study Approach*

Case study is a type of methodology which lends itself to gaining information and insight while understanding how experiences can gain meaning to all those involved (Tellis, 1997). The specific purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher

retention and describe efforts that were successful in retaining effective, beginning classroom teachers.

Yin (1989) stated that a case study methodology is applicable when the researcher looks to satisfy the three tenets of the qualitative method. Those three tenets include describing, understanding, and then explaining the study. By using the case study approach, data was collected that was associated with a successful teacher retention program and effective beginning classroom teachers. The teachers were part of a collective unit. Because it is a bounded unit of a particular program in a particular school, the case study approach fit nicely. The teacher interviews, the mentor interviews, and the journaling are tools used for producing a descriptive case study (Yin, 1989).

A researcher may use the case study approach to advance knowledge and understanding of any given topic (Yin, 1989). Zonabend (1992) stated that a case study should be done when a researcher incorporates the views of the participants in the case being studied. An atypical group was chosen because extreme cases, such as a school with a 100% teacher retention rate, will reveal more information than a school which is more typical (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The case study approach was selected in order to better understand from the participant teachers' perspectives what administrative efforts contributed to their retention.

The case study approach is the method of choice for researchers when the phenomenon being studied is not readily distinguishable from its context (Yin, 2002). This is the case with the highly unusual retention rate of 100% for beginning teachers at a public middle school. My study examined the factors reported by new teachers and their

mentors that positively impacted teacher retention. More specifically, this study explored the following questions:

1. Within a successful school which retains 100% of their beginning teachers, what did the teachers report that the administrative team did to support them and make them want to stay at their respective site?
2. Other than administrative efforts, what other factors influenced teachers to stay at this particular school site?

Researchers should focus on description as their main objective in a case study, yet not simply collect information about everything (Yin, 2002). It is for this reason that I focused on the two research questions previously mentioned.

Yin (2002) stressed that case studies should be used to document and analyze everything from interventions to programs and explained that the case study approach is appropriate and useful when a researcher's desire is to do one of the following things:

- To define research topics broadly and narrowly
- To cover contextual or complex multivariate conditions and not just isolated variables
- To rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence

Case studies provide a systematic way of looking at events, collecting multiple forms of data, analyzing the information, and then sharing the results with impacted parties (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

According to Huntly (2008), beginning teachers reported that they feel as though they have no voice when it comes to fellow teachers, administration, teaching assignments, or student assignments. Yin (2002) explained that the case study approach

can provide a voice to those that based upon circumstance can feel powerless and voiceless. With this study, beginning teachers have the chance to share their stories, speak their voices, and send messages to others interested in positively impacting teacher retention with new teachers.

While identifying the research purpose, explaining the conceptual context, searching for information connected to the research questions, and collecting data, there were many other factors that could have affected the research. Items such as personal agendas, school goals, participant concerns, skills as a researcher, and roles associated with the study participants could certainly have had an impact on the results (Mehra, 2002). With all of these factors both identified and then taken into consideration, I planned to utilize case study as the specific methodology for this research.

I focused solely on this one particular middle school with a 100% teacher retention rate amongst all of their beginning teachers in their first, second, third, or fourth year of teaching. The school had obtained a 100% beginning teacher retention rate for the last four consecutive years and reported that all beginning teachers were not only retained, but retained because they were effective with students, teaching, and classroom management (Farrar, 2009). Their level of effectiveness was measured by administrative feedback and data collected by the principal during formal and informal observations. The major characteristics of this design included developing a thorough analysis of a specific case, utilizing multiple sources for data collection, and analyzing material in a way that produced rich descriptions and identified common themes across the participants.

I observed and analyzed the case as I interviewed beginning teachers and mentors. I illustrated and described what was happening at the designated study site and examined how it directly related to retaining effective beginning teachers.

### *Credibility*

Merriam (1998) stressed the importance of being able to trust the results which come from the researcher. She further explained that a researcher has to have confidence in how they conducted the research if they hope others will attain that same confidence. Merriam emphasized how necessary it is to convince readers that procedures have been followed faithfully. To produce something that is trustworthy, Merriam suggested that the researcher make an attempt to anticipate and respond to the concerns of those that will read the case study.

Credibility within the field of research deals with how believable the research and the findings are. It deals with a question of trustworthiness in that the findings match reality. My goal was to create a feeling of trust and then build credibility by gathering information from teacher participants, the teacher mentors assisting beginning teachers, and the principal as needed. To foster trust and credibility as the researcher, I shared my personal history with the participants so that they knew I had been in their role and understood many of the things that they were sharing. I also offered participants the opportunity to skip questions or return to certain questions later if needed. Lastly, I listened intently to the things that they shared, remained very aware of my body language and facial expressions, and offered no time limits on questions that were being answered. As beginning teachers reported information that was also reported by mentors, there was

a higher level of trust associated with the research. The same message coming from two different parties strengthened the findings.

Triangulation refers to using many different sources as you gather information. A major strength of the case study approach deals with the chance to use many different sources as you collect data and evidence (Yin, 2002). If teacher interviews, mentor interviews, and journal entries from new teachers all yielded similar findings in regard to how administrators could better retain beginning teachers, the information would be more meaningful and of a higher interest to various school stakeholders.

Lastly, in addition to practicing a reflective nature myself, I performed repeated member checks by asking teachers and mentor participants to read what I had written. After the interviews ended, there were three times when I called and emailed participants to clarify information and ensure that I had conveyed the message that they had wished to convey. Regardless if the results were positive, negative, easy to share, or difficult to share, I asked teachers and mentors for additional information regularly and then had members verify the information to ensure the message I received was exactly what they wanted to convey to others.

### *Site Specifications*

CCH Middle School (pseudonym) was chosen because the school had a 100% teacher retention rate among their beginning teacher population for the past four years. CCH Middle School is a public school that, at the time of the study, had approximately 950 students in grades sixth through eighth. The campus is located in a suburban community, yet extends into multiple areas of low-income housing. The school also serves students from both group homes and area orphanages.

At that time, the student body was comprised of Caucasian students (64%), African-American students (21%), Hispanic students (11%), and Asian students (4%). Approximately forty-five percent of the school population qualified for a free or reduced lunch. The current Principal at CCH Middle School has been at the school as their administrator for five consecutive years, which includes the data collection period.

To build a visual image, CCH Middle School is painted throughout with its three school colors. While the school was built in 1975, the school looks older than that on the inside and seems to have a much older “feel” to it. The campus is made up of four separate buildings. There is a main campus and then three other buildings that have been built at different times in order to meet the needs of a rising student population throughout the years. Upon entering the main building, you can take one of three pathways. One pathway leads you to the main office, one pathway leads to a gymnasium, and the pathway directly in front of you leads to a cafeteria.

Less than 10% of the classrooms at CCH Middle School currently had a Smart Board, and overhead projectors were actively used in the classrooms at this time. Each classroom had at least one computer while some classrooms had two. The school had two computer labs which served up to 32 students each.

According to the principal of CCH Middle School, the school had many strengths. He noted that the school has a high level of parent involvement. He also mentioned that student test scores were on the rise, and lastly spoke of the teachers having a willingness to complete the numerous tasks that were assigned to them from the school and the county. The principal stated that the teachers have an outstanding work ethic. As far as struggles and challenges, the principal noted that the school’s lower socioeconomic

population continues to grow and he also shared that some teachers are still reluctant or uncertain as to how they can best serve students who come from a poor background (Farrar, 2009).

Lastly, during this retention program's success, I was present during two of the years and the program has continued for the two years that I have been gone as well. With this taken into consideration, I not only interviewed new and beginning classroom teachers who were involved in the program while I was present, but I also included several beginning classroom teachers who were new to the school and the program. While I had worked with and supervised most of the teacher participants, that was not the case with Hannah and Phyllis. In addition, as I solicited feedback from veteran mentors, I interviewed mentors who had worked with me and mentors who were not working with me during my time as an assistant principal at this particular school.

#### *Gaining Entrance to the School*

Initially, I had to meet the requirements of the Institutional Review Board. In addition, I first met with the Superintendent of the school system where CCH Middle School is located. I shared an oral presentation with the Superintendent and offered him a chance to ask questions. The only request he had at that time was that I share the information with him once the study was completed so that he could strengthen retention efforts within the system. I was then directed to the school's Principal. While I have not worked directly for this superintendent, as he was new to the system, I had worked with the principal to whom I was directed.

I presented a written proposal to the principal and then again, offered to answer any questions which he had. No questions were asked, yet the principal reserved the

right to ask questions along the way. The principal was given a tentative timeline, a copy of the questions that I planned to use, a copy of the journal prompts I planned to employ, and documentation of how I thought the study could benefit other educators. I received approval from both the Superintendent and the Principal on the same day which I met with them.

### *Historical Significance of Site Selection*

CCH Middle School had historically been described as an affluent school where students and teachers performed well on a daily basis and with state testing. The school typically had high scores on standardized tests and was regularly reporting more than 80% of their student body as proficient. The former principal at CCH Middle School, Sarah Holmes, described the school as effective and progressive, one which was supported by the community.

In 2003, a new middle school was built within the county and CCH experienced a major change. The first shift dealt with teachers. When the new school opened and the principal at CCH was asked to open the newly created school, he did so and took with him a reported 60% of the staff members (Barkameyer, 2010), which caused a change with instruction. The second shift for CCH Middle School focused on students. The once affluent, all-white school was transformed into a highly diverse school. The school gained diversity in numerous ways, including an increased number of students with different levels of academic ability and a higher number of students who came from a lower socioeconomic status. Lastly, the primarily all-white population changed into a population where Caucasian (64%), African-American (21%), Hispanic (11%), and Asian (4%) students were represented.

CCH had a new principal beginning in 2003 and this principal stayed until 2005. She reported a teacher retention rate of approximately 60%-70% for the school during this two-year period. She also stated that more than half of the new or beginning teachers for CCH Middle School left the school or the profession at the end of year two or three (Barkameyer, 2010).

#### *Selection of Teacher Participants*

My participant target was beginning classroom teachers in their first, second, third, or fourth year of teaching at this particular school. The school site had ten teachers that fell into the category of a beginning classroom teacher. I invited all ten teachers to participate in the case study. All of the participants eligible for this study were public school teachers from CCH Middle School who were in their first, second, third, or fourth year of teaching.

The selected research questions focused on teachers in their first four years of teaching and the dilemma of being able to retain these teachers. The teachers for this study were employed full-time with the school system. Lateral entry teachers, those individuals with a four-year, non-education degree and 24 hours of credit within the content area, were allowed to participate in the research study although they were not fully certified teachers when they began their teaching career. Lateral entry teachers do qualify as beginning teachers in that they did not have more than four years of teaching experience and they were responsible for the students assigned to their classrooms. Beginning teachers in their fifth year of teaching and beyond were not included in this study because the probability that they will leave the profession after this point is greatly diminished (Cox, et al., 2007).

CCH Middle School had approximately 60 classroom teachers. Ten of those teachers had less than five years of teaching experience and they were all invited to participate in the study. In the end, there were four of the ten teachers who did not participate in the study, yet met the criteria. This yielded a participant group of six beginning teachers. Three of the beginning teachers were not willing to participate because of time constraints while the fourth teacher failed to contact me after several attempts via phone and email.

All members were offered a paired interview with me and two other participants at the same time if they were uncomfortable with my one-on-one format for interviewing. None of the teachers or the mentors accepted this offer and all teachers reported a high level of comfort with the one-on-one format used for interviewing. In addition, at the initial information session all teachers were made aware of an opportunity to interview with me and their mentor, a female, should they feel more comfortable in an environment where a male and a female were present. None of the participants accepted this offer. Interviewing took place in the school's Media Center and at a local coffee shop.

Participants were asked to sign a consent waiver prior to participation (see Appendix C). This waiver was hand-delivered to all potential participants at the initial introductory meeting. The waiver explained the research project, the interview process, and the associated goals. In addition, it explained that participation was completely voluntary and no consequences were associated with a failure to participate in the research study.

The specific descriptions of each teacher participant are important in that it demonstrates the complexity of this group as a whole. Each description makes the study

real and makes the teacher's voices more realistic as well. The descriptions below include demographic information, the varying levels of work experience for each teacher, and adjectives used by each to describe him or herself in terms of a beginning classroom teacher. Each of the participants was given the chance to select their own pseudonym or have one created for them. All of the beginning teachers created their own name to be used for identification purposes throughout the study. One mentor created her pseudonym while two other mentors asked that I assign them one.

### *Karen*

Karen was a twenty-six year old white female. She was currently in her fourth year of teaching and described herself as being outspoken and kid centered. Holistically, she reported that she is a go getter, defining that as someone who does whatever it takes to make children successful both inside and outside of the classroom. Karen reported that while she loves teaching and she loves being around adolescents, some of the hardships associated with being a classroom teacher can often play a negative part on her spirit and how she feels about her profession in general. She selected the name Karen because one of her goals is to always keep smiling, no matter what happens.

### *Hannah*

Hannah was a twenty-four year old white female and this was her second year of teaching. Hannah described herself as being energetic and personable. As a classroom teacher, she stated that she values integration, structure and a hands-on approach to learning. She also stated that she loves kids and she loves teaching. While at times she reported feeling overwhelmed and under appreciated, she stated that she enjoys being at work each day and feels she is making a real difference in the lives of middle school

students. Her pseudonym, Hannah, was selected based upon a seventh-grade teacher that positively impacted her life during a time in middle school when death was impacting her world.

*Paul*

Paul was a forty-one year old white male. He was currently in his third year of teaching and used adjectives such as mild mannered, quiet, calm, and conservative when asked to describe himself. Paul chose teaching as a second career after reporting job dissatisfaction as the primary reason which caused him to leave his previous place of employment. Paul stated that while he enjoys talking to, listening to, and teaching middle school children, he often feels that his age makes his job a tougher. He reported that being older in conjunction with the numerous tasks that are assigned to him, can often be taxing and at times too much to bear. Paul chose this name because it is simple and straightforward. Simple is how he chooses to operate with life and inside the classroom, while straightforward is something that he appreciates both personally and professionally.

*Rick*

Rick was in his fourth year of teaching and he was a thirty year old white male. He described both his personality and his teaching style as enthusiastic. Rick described himself as a team player who enjoys working with at risk students. He also explained that he has a great rapport with students and feels as though he is an instructional leader among his peers regardless of his relatively few years of experience. While he acknowledged that the role of a beginning teacher can be a tough one, he was quick to report that most parts of his job are completed with great ease and stride. His name,

Rick, was selected based upon one of his favorite movies, *Lean on Me*. The main character in the movie, Rick, is someone that this teacher looks up to and respects as a person, a teacher, and an educational leader.

### *Christina*

Christina described herself as soft spoken and student centered. Although soft spoken, Christina stated that she has a high level of comfort when it comes to being in her classroom, shutting the door, and being accountable for thirty different students. She was a twenty-five year old white female in her third year of teaching. While she stated that she feels competent with classroom instruction and student management, she also stated that she feels incompetent when it comes to speaking her mind with peers, veteran teachers, parents, and at times administrators. She selected her name, Christina, because she describes herself as a Southern Christina.

### *Phyllis*

Phyllis was a twenty-three old African American female. She was currently in her second year of teaching and described herself as humorous and light hearted. Phyllis stated that in most situations including both students and adults, she typically remains laid back and highly flexible. Phyllis stated that her students would probably describe her as a fun teacher who makes learning meaningful. Phyllis stressed the importance of a beginning classroom teacher building healthy relationships with students, fellow teachers, staff members, and parents. She explained that while she has no desire to be anything other than a teacher, the deadlines, the pressures, and the never ending workload often cause her to struggle as she pursues a state of balance. The pseudonym, Phyllis, was

selected because this teacher feels as though the mind is a dangerously terrible thing to waste.

The table below summarizes information associated with the teacher participants. The name, age, race, sex, and years of teaching experience have been included.

Table 3.1: Teacher Participants

Name	Age	Race	Sex	Experience
Karen	26	White	Female	4 years
Hannah	24	White	Female	2 years
Paul	41	White	Male	3 years
Rick	31	White	Male	4 years
Christina	25	White	Female	3 years
Phyllis	23	African-American	Female	2 years

#### *Selection of Mentor Participants*

Once teachers have at least four years of successful classroom teaching, as defined by the principal during an interview, they are eligible to serve as a mentor to a beginning classroom teacher. Current mentor teachers of the participating beginning teachers were included in the study and interviewed based upon their role as a mentor. The three mentor participants who did engage in the study were all female and all Caucasian. Collectively, their average years of working experience was twenty-one years.

Each mentor is described below. Their race, years of experience, and self-descriptions are included. Out of the six participants that agreed to participate, three of

their mentors also agreed to participate. Two mentors said they could not participate for fear of time constraints and the final mentor turned down the invitation because of what she described as family obligations.

*Mentor One: Tina*

Tina is a Caucasian female. She worked in the private educational sector for five years and in the public education realm for twenty years. Tina identified her major strengths as being a hard worker, working with at-risk populations, building relationships with new teachers, and classroom management. Tina reported that her weaknesses included speaking in front of a group and confronting others when they have done something wrong. Tina also stated that she loves working with students and she can see herself doing nothing outside of education.

*Mentor Two: Callie*

Callie is also a Caucasian female. She has worked in two school districts. She remained in the first county for three years and has been in her current county for twelve years. When asked about her strengths, Callie reported that she is enthusiastic, has a sense of humor, is kid-centered, hard-working, and detail-oriented. When asked about any struggles and weaknesses, after jokingly stating that she had none, Callie reported that she struggles with bureaucracy, ignorant parents, and power-hungry administrators. Callie also shared that while she has entertained the thought of becoming an administrator, she has simply not committed to “taking the plunge” as of now.

*Mentor Three: Susan*

Susan is a Caucasian female. She has worked in two counties as a middle school teacher for the past twenty-five years. The last fifteen years have been spent at CCH

Middle School. Susan said that she is strongest with classroom management, student discipline, overall instruction, and creativity in the classroom. She identified no weaknesses during our conversation. Susan stated that she enjoyed teaching but she is also looking forward to retirement. She stated that while she enjoys being a mentor, “it is almost time to pass that torch onto someone else too.”

The teachers who participated in the research study were contacted via telephone or email in order to confirm their participation. Again, six beginning teachers agreed to participate in the study. Their years of professional experience and their levels of confidence within the middle school classroom varied greatly. There were six beginning teacher participants in this case study between the ages of twenty-three and forty-one. The beginning teacher participants consisted of four females and two males. Five of the new teacher participants were Caucasian and one of the teacher participants was African-American.

### *Forms of Data*

Teacher interviews, journal entries, and mentor interviews were collected in order to generate the data that I needed to explore the research questions. Having three sources for data collection provided triangulation and helped me increase the validity of the results. It also allowed me the chance to find and identify trends and commonalities throughout the various forms of data.

Throughout the study, I interviewed teachers and asked them specific questions about administrative efforts and other reasons which caused them to stay at this particular school. I wanted to hear firsthand from the teachers about retention efforts for beginning teachers. I also interviewed mentor teachers and asked them questions about why they

think beginning classroom teachers stay at CCH Middle School. I wanted to form a connection with all of the participants and look for patterns between the information the mentors provided and that which was provided by the beginning classroom teachers. Lastly, I sent prompts to each beginning teacher and asked them to respond to the prompts via email. While I heard from teachers orally, I also wanted to provide them with several prompts and the time to reflect on their answers before responding.

### *Interviews*

I used interviews with the teacher participants to understand their experiences with this teacher retention program. The interviews lasted approximately 25-35 minutes each. Tellis (1997) suggested that interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information and explained that they can be open-ended, structured, or non-structured. An interview can yield rich descriptions of the program being studied and it can also be used to corroborate evidence obtained from other sources. The purpose of the interviews was to give participants the opportunity to share information and offer insight about how administrators successfully retained beginning classroom teachers. The following questions were used during the interviews.

- I am interested in why teachers stay at this school. Why do you stay at this particular middle school?
- I am specifically interested in how to better understand the role that administrators play in retaining effective beginning teachers. Is there anything particular that the administration did that impacted you staying?
- What contributed to you staying here to teach?
- Were there times when you thought about leaving this school? Can you explain?

- What are the specific things that the administration did to support you?
- What could the administration have done to assist you more during your beginning years of classroom teaching?
- Do you think you would have been as successful at another school?
- What are the favorable working conditions at this school which make you want to stay?
- What kind of advice would you give administration about how to positively impact teacher retention?

During each of the teacher interviews, I was constantly looking for the reasons that teachers chose to stay at this specific school. Questions and follow-up questions were asked as needed and based upon specific responses from the teachers and mentors.

The interviews were utilized in a way so that the voices and professional experiences of each teacher participant could be illuminated and shared with others. All interviews were semi-structured and probing took place on an as-needed basis. Although no malfunctioning occurred with the recordings, while each interview was recorded, detailed notes were also taken.

### *Journaling*

In addition to interviews, I utilized journal entries to collect data from the teacher participants included in this study. I wanted to give the participants another avenue for sharing their experiences in regard to the teacher retention program and their feelings about why they stayed at this particular school site. In addition, I wanted them to share their experiences about the role of administration and how this impacted them staying.

Hiemstra (2002) identifies many different uses and benefits that are linked to journaling and can be associated with data collection. When reviewing the work of Hiemstra, possible benefits linked to journaling can include the following:

- Journaling can increase the writer's level of reflection, therefore yielding a richer, more detailed response to various questions and writing prompts.
- Journaling can be applied in order to clarify information and process different kinds of information.
- Journaling can offer new perspectives to the writer and show relationships between various topics.
- Journaling can help you find the missing pieces and the unspoken truths about a person's thoughts, feelings, and reactions.

Participants in this study responded three separate times to journal prompts which I sent via email. All participants had access to email. Each participant read the journal prompts and was then given the chance to respond anonymously via one general email account. None of the teacher participants wanted to respond anonymously and all six participants responded to all three prompts. The length of journal entries varied; however, the average length of each individual entry was approximately two pages. After the initial interviews took place, journal prompts were sent electronically by me to each participant at the beginning of the week for three consecutive weeks. With each submission I asked the writers about additional details and greater descriptions of what they included in their journal. The following prompts were used with the teacher participants:

- While being at this school, what are the specific things that the administration has done to support you as beginning classroom teacher?
- Do you think you would have been as successful at another middle school? Why or why not?
- What kind of advice would you give to an administrator about how to positively impact teacher retention amongst beginning classroom teachers?

The journals were used to collect individual feedback about what the school had done to positively impact teacher retention. The journals were also used to help determine if the administrator's efforts worked or failed, according to the new teachers themselves.

#### *Mentor Input*

Finally, I used information from mentors assigned to the school during the time in which a 100% teacher retention rate was achieved. Mentors are assigned to support and assist all beginning teachers and mentors are typically the first contact for beginning teachers when they have a question or seek guidance with any issue they experience. Mentors were interviewed and were given the chance to share information that had been gathered at monthly meetings with the new beginning classroom teachers. In an effort to build credibility, my initial goal was to combine and compare the data that I gathered from teachers to that which had been shared by mentors. Questions for the mentor interviews included the following:

- I am interested in why beginning teachers stay at CCH. Why do you think beginning teachers stay at this school?
- I am specifically interested in how to better understand the role that administrators play in retaining effective beginning teachers. As a mentor, is there anything

particular that the administration did that impacted new teachers staying at this school?

- What are the specific things that the administration has done to support beginning teachers (past or present administrators)?
- What could the administration have done to assist new teachers more during their beginning years of classroom teaching?
- Do you think beginning teachers would be just as successful at another middle school?
- What are the favorable working conditions at this school which make beginning teachers want to stay?

#### *Data Collection Activities*

This data collection was conducted over two months. Initially, beginning in January, 2010, the principal offered me the chance to meet with all of the potential participants and share introductory comments about the research prior to my individual contact with each teacher participant. I covered issues of logistics, voluntary participation, and the overall purpose behind this research study. I then held an informational session for all potential candidates in order to share my professional history, specific research details, and how the research could benefit other beginning classroom teachers. I also took the time to answer any questions that were on the minds of those who would potentially be participating in the research study. There were three primary questions that were asked and they are identified below:

- Is there any financial compensation involved?
- Is there any “comp time” offered for participating?

- Will every piece of data be used without our real names?

I informed those present that there was no financial compensation involved and I also explained that no compensatory time would be offered to participants. Lastly, I confirmed that pseudonyms would be used. I assured the group that I would keep all information secure and I also let the group know that once transcribing had occurred, all taped conversations would be destroyed.

Prior to interviewing participants, I developed interview questions. In order to feel more comfortable with the quality of questions asked, these interview questions were given to a local panel of educators. The experts were asked to read the questions and provide any feedback that they could in regard to how the questions were worded, if the questions were leading in any way, and if any modification needed to take place with the questions before they were used with actual teacher participants. The panel's purpose was to provide additional clarity to the questions used during the interviews. The panel reviewing these interview questions included the following individuals: a middle school Principal, a Director of Middle Grades Education, two middle school Assistant Principals who work with beginning teachers, an Assistant Director of Human Resources, and a Site Support Leader for beginning classroom teachers.

Once I had initially spoken with the group of beginning classroom teachers, invitations to the ten teachers were offered via a telephone conversation (See Appendix A). Teachers who agreed to participate in the research study were sent an email with several pre-interview questions to answer prior to our first meeting. These questions were specifically created to get teachers thinking about the research topic at hand. The

pre-interview questions were similar to the questions that I asked during the interview and they are listed below:

- I am interested in why teachers stay at this school. Why do you stay at this school in particular and in what ways have your administrators supported you?
- Have you ever thought about leaving this middle school? Why or why not?
- What could the administration have done to assist you more during your beginning years of classroom teaching?

The pre-interview questions offered the participants an opportunity to reflect on their professional life as educators prior to the actual interview. I interviewed each participant individually and followed a semi-structured interview protocol which had been field tested with a group of professionals involved with teacher retention (See Appendix B). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for clarification purposes. I interviewed and probed beginning teachers as needed about what factors caused them to stay at the school in question, and what specific things combated high teacher retention rates for effective teachers on their campus who had less than five years of teaching experience. I asked for clarification and asked them to define certain things, as needed. Furthermore, I asked for additional information from each participant until nothing else was shared and no new information resurfaced.

Ingersoll (2003) created and administered a teacher's working conditions survey for educators. Ingersoll suggested that the greatest amount of data collected with any school related survey come straight from impacted teachers as opposed to parents,

principals, mentors, and other various school stakeholders. This is the reason I focused primarily on teacher interviews and teacher journals with a secondary focus on mentors. I also used some of Ingersoll's terminology as I created my interview questions. After the interview questions were written they were piloted on a sample set of beginning teachers from another middle school in another county. After the pilot interviews had ended, the questions were modified as needed in order to yield the clearest, most helpful results. The greatest modification focused on taking out highly technical terms from the interview questions and asking questions to participants that were more directly focused on my topic of research.

In addition to the one-on-one interviews, teacher participants were asked to reflect and journal about specific items and various prompts in relation to what was done by the school to combat higher teacher turnover rates amongst beginning teachers. As needed for clarification purposes, I discussed general responses to the journal prompts with classroom teachers individually via face-to-face, telephone, or email. I asked questions about anything that came across as unclear and requested additional details as needed. Data was also gathered from interviews with the mentors assigned to this particular school. Data collection was completed at the close of March, 2010. The following table identifies which forms of data were used to provide insight into two primary research questions.

Table 3.2: Data Use

Research Questions to be Explored:	One-on-One Teacher Interviews	Journal Entries	Mentor Interviews
Within a successful school which retains 100% of their beginning teachers, what did the teachers report that the administrative team did to support them and make them want to stay at their respective site?	X	X	
Other than administrative efforts, what other factors influenced teachers to stay at this particular school site?	X	X	X

### *Data Analysis Activities*

As I entered into an analysis of the data, my goals were to take what had happened, make sense of it all, and find a way to share it with others. I synthesized, analyzed, and summarized information in the context of my topic and my research questions. Throughout the entire process, I filtered and digested the information so that I could turn it into a meaningful piece of work which will contribute to the field of education.

According to authors Gall, Gall, and Borg (2005), there are three forms of data analysis that researchers utilize. These three forms include interpretational, structural,

and reflective. Interpretational and structural are two types of analysis that are more rigid and follow a more prescribed method. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the reflective method for analyzing several pieces of data allows the researcher the chance to paint a picture, include great detail, include criticism if desired, and weave various forms of data into the story that you tell and the information that you share. The data that was collected was analyzed using reflective qualitative methods so that different themes and patterns could be identified and explored. Patterns and commonalties emerged from the data as early as the third interview and the second collection of journal prompts.

I analyzed the data as it was collected. It is imperative that I again acknowledge and account for any biases that could have arisen during my interpretation and analysis stages as a result of professional relationships that I shared with teachers included in the study. Although Kanno (1997) suggested that having a personal history with research participants could have many advantages associated with the data collection and data analysis, such as participants being willing to share more information with someone that they know, as opposed to the researcher that simply comes onto a research site and then later leaves, it is important that I keep my role as the researcher at the forefront of my mind throughout each stage of the process.

As the researcher and someone who used to work at this particular school site, I recognize that some teachers may want to report only favorable things about administrative efforts and teacher retention. With that said, I regularly informed participants that by sharing all information, positive and possibly negative, they had the chance to help beginning teachers holistically. I explained that positive and negative feedback was by no means a direct reflection on me. I continually stressed that their

feedback was deemed as neither praise nor harm for me as the researcher. When asked, all participants expressed complete comfort in sharing both positive and negative information associated with this school's teacher retention program.

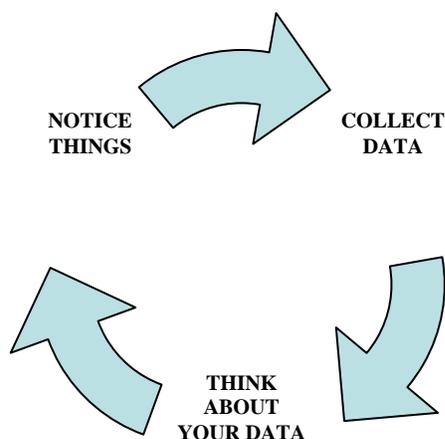
I encouraged all participants to answer questions during the interview and share information in the journals, both positive and negative, in as thorough a manner as possible so that teachers and other schools may benefit from the information gathered. As evidenced by the results, both positive things and negative things were in fact shared.

Seidel (1995) explained that regardless of whether you know the participants, the qualitative data analysis will still remain focused on noticing, collecting, and thinking about the interesting things that have been gathered (1995). This should be the focus of a qualitative data analysis regardless of relationships.

#### *Circular Perspective*

In Figure 3.1 below, Seidel (1995) stressed that the qualitative analysis should be circular, in that the collecting, noticing, and thinking components should weave from one into the other, and often go back and forth. He stresses analysis stages should not be linear, where a researcher works clearly in one stage before thinking about the next and at times not switching back and forth between each component. It is implied that having a relationship with the participants can often assist in creating a stronger, more meaningful analysis, as the participants are more at ease and willing to move along with the researcher, as data is collected (1995).

Figure 3.3: Consideration of Data



As I analyzed the collected data, I identified and focused on common answers, themes, and statements from the participants in order to make generalizations about the successful teacher retention program used at this particular middle school. I looked not only at the information itself, but also explored responses comparing white participants to non-white participants and male participants to female participants.

More specifically, after the data collection was completed, I began to code my data and turn the data into research findings. I searched for common patterns, and I continuously stayed immersed in the data, reading it multiple times and many different occasions. I regularly questioned myself, my thoughts, and others. I challenged my findings and shared findings with participants along the way. I reflected on the raw data and the information that I had coded, which included teacher interview transcriptions, mentor teacher interview transcriptions, and teacher journals.

Initially, as I was coding, I slowly and carefully read through the data on four separate occasions. As I read through the interviews and the journals, I identified themes

as they emerged. This open coding process was continued as I examined the repetition in interviews and journals of key words, phrases, and concepts. I was able to identify and mark commonalities amongst participants and also identify differences.

As I revisited the research questions and continued to focus on key themes, I reread the data and also had someone else read it aloud. As I continued to read, I revised themes and started to name categories under each theme. With each additional reading, I made attempts at recognizing various patterns and refining the themes as needed. I continued this coding process until I felt like it had become circular, in that no new information was surfacing, but instead, the same information and patterns continued.

I identified themes and wrote codes directly on the collected data. I primarily used highlighters to code and then organize the data. At a different point in time and on a separate sheet of paper, I tallied the number of times that themes were mentioned and key words were used by the teacher participants. In addition, I cut and pasted key quotations that I knew I wanted to use into a word document which was created to keep things organized.

As I worked, I remained flexible yet also persistent in my attempts to find out what made this school different from other schools in retention rates with beginning teachers. I examined important factors from the literature in association to this middle school and its efforts at teacher retention.

After coding and interpreting the collected data, I shared the findings with each of the participants. I asked for their questions, their reactions, and their concerns. I conducted regular member checks with each of the teacher participants to make sure that my interpretations were both fair and accurate. I wanted to make sure that what I had written

was factual in that the information either played a significant part in why these beginning teachers stayed at this school, or the collected data spoke to a piece of information that was linked to the literature. Once member checks had stopped, I made modifications and additions as needed.

Along with each stage of the data collection, the data analysis, and the interpretation, I regularly debriefed with advisors and colleagues. This method of debriefing was very helpful for me as the researcher and offered me greater opportunities to question my own assumptions and interpretations associated with the retention of beginning classroom teachers.

The following table identifies the methods I used to analyze the data. While the data was analyzed and various methods were utilized, the analysis process was both fluid and reflective in that I moved back and forth from one method to another until the analysis was completed.

Table 3.4: Data Analysis Activities:

#	Data Analysis Method
1	Read and took notes in the margins of all data collected
2	Completed a word county to identify common words and potential themes
3	Coded all data and renaming codes as needed
4	Organized all comments and codes into categories
5	Identified and labeled all themes
6	Debriefed regularly with participants and colleagues
7	Determined meaning and significance of coded information

### *Confidentiality*

In order to ensure confidentiality, the data had no identifiable characteristics. Participants were assigned a code made up of letters and numbers. This was the only identifier marked on the interviews. The data was never given to any school or county administrators. The beginning teachers were made aware that the group's collective information would be shared with the principal and the system's superintendent. Overall, I provided a rich description of the program by continuously questioning the teachers and encouraging them to share additional details.

### *Risks and Benefits*

There were no obvious physical or emotional risks for the participants. Participation was completely voluntary and the teachers' supervisors were not privy to any of the individual information collected. The supervisors did however have access to the data reported from the group as a whole. The primary anticipated risk with the study was the risk associated with someone determining the identity of a teacher participant. As far as any potential loss, the only foreseeable loss included a loss of time for those who were interviewed and those who agreed to take part in the journaling component of the data collection.

Participants benefited by having the chance to positively impact other teacher retention programs, therefore helping other beginning teachers in their profession. This study benefits school administrators and teachers. The study and the results have the potential to provide schools with the opportunity to retain a greater number of effective classroom teachers and at the same time save money. By choosing a school that had a 100% retention rate, gathering information from teachers in an oral and written manner,

and by interviewing the associated mentors, several things emerged that other administrators might benefit from understanding. Multiple items also emerged which can be replicated by school administrators and school systems in order to retain a higher number of their beginning teachers.

### *Limitations*

My role, as referenced previously, was one of the greatest limitations associated with the study. As the researcher, I was an assistant principal of instruction at CCH Middle School from 2006-2008. The participants worked with me in this capacity; however I no longer work in this capacity and therefore felt comfortable engaging with the teachers about retention efforts made by the administrative team. Having been in this assistant principal position, it could pose some ethical issues and limitations within the study. Teachers could possibly feel as though they would be expected to report only positive information in an attempt to help me as someone that they once worked with. In addition, as someone who worked with new teachers the participants may be reluctant to share all of their true feelings, if they fear negative comments may be directly related to me and my efforts at the school. In the introductory meeting I shared that all information collected, be it positive or negative would help the greater good as educators look at teacher retention programs and a higher teacher retention rate. Hopefully this helped the teacher participants realize that I was not only soliciting positive experiences and feedback, but negative experiences and feedback as well, should it be pertinent.

Participant feedback was not specifically identifiable when reported. There were no identifying marks on the research shared and all teachers were assigned a number so that first and last names were not required on interview documents. This kept anyone

from knowing or being able to trace information from the interviews back to one specific individual. In addition, results were presented as group results and not individual teacher results. The information will be shared as suggestions for other schools that desire a 100% teacher retention rate.

Other limitations with the study include the fact that I only had six teachers participate in the study, as opposed to potentially ten teachers. While six participants yielded results that represented more than half of the population available at this particular school, a greater number of secured participants would have produced stronger, more effective results. In addition, the principal introduced the group to this topic so new teachers may have felt compelled to participate. While it was stressed that participation was voluntary and there were no intended rewards or consequences associated with participating or not participating, in reality this may have been a limitation.

### *Consultation*

On an as-needed basis, along with each of my UNC Charlotte advisors, I consulted with the Assistant Director of Human Resources for the school system in which CCH Middle School belongs. The Assistant Director of Human Resources is responsible for beginning teachers and county retention. She agreed to assist me with any type of information or statistical data that might be needed throughout the course of this research study. She also agreed to review questions prior to their use with teacher participants. She also contributed to the design of interview questions and journal prompts.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### *Introduction*

Chapter One provided readers with a foundation for the topic and explained both the need and the rationale for this study. The chapter stressed a need for additional, successful efforts to be made in the area of beginning teacher retention. Chapter Two reviewed the literature and explained the main ways that schools typically address teacher retention. The chapter showcased mentoring as a strategy to retain effective, beginning classroom teachers, and it also stressed the value of staff development and teacher induction programs.

Chapter Three described the participants, their demographic information, and how they described themselves as a classroom teacher. It also focused on the methodology that was utilized to complete this study. The chapter outlined how interviews and journaling were used with both classroom teachers and mentor teachers; specifically, the interviews offered participants the chance to engage in healthy dialogue and answer specific questions about the teacher retention program at CCH Middle School, and the journals gave teacher participants a more relaxed way to reflect and respond to prompts dealing with administrative efforts to retain teachers.

Chapter Four provides readers with the results associated with this study and the data analysis. It describes the group and reports the findings through the eyes and voices of beginning teachers in relation to their initial years as educators. As previously mentioned, beginning teacher interviews, beginning teacher journals, and mentor teacher

interviews were used to explore two primary research questions about teacher retention in a middle school with a 100% teacher retention rate. Chapter Four then discusses three primary themes that were identified based upon the data collected from the teacher participants.

#### *Description of Participants*

My study included beginning classroom teachers in their first, second, third, or fourth year of teaching at CCH Middle School. There were ten teachers who fit this description and all ten teachers were invited to participate in the study. The goal was to secure at least five participants so that half or more of the teacher population was represented. Six teachers were able to participate in the study and were both highly eager and enthusiastic about doing so. Each of them expressed interest on multiple occasions about being able to share information in such a way so that it could be used to help a wider range of new or beginning classroom teachers. Out of these six teachers, three of their mentors were able to participate also.

Once the teachers agreed to participate in the study, I met with them in person. I met with one teacher participant and one mentor in the media center of CCH Middle School. I met with five of the teacher participants and two of the mentors at a local coffee shop. We met after school or on teacher workdays as needed and the meetings ranged from 20-40 minutes. I shared an overview of the study and general information with each participant. Once this was completed, I began interviewing teachers and mentors. I simultaneously sent journal prompts to the teacher participants. Mentors were interviewed immediately following the teacher interviews.

### *Research Findings*

As outlined in Chapter Three, a large part of the previous chapter addressed the identification and coding of key themes focused on staff development, mentoring efforts, and personal relationships that impact teacher retention. I searched for common themes, remained immersed in the data, and regularly questioned myself. I coded the teacher interview transcriptions, the mentor teacher interview transcriptions, and the teacher journals.

Initially, as I was coding, I slowly and carefully read through my data. I read the data on four separate occasions. This process known as open coding was continued as I examined the repetition in interviews and journals of key words, phrases, and concepts. I marked commonalities and differences.

As I coded data, I revised themes as needed and started to name categories under each theme. I also counted words that continued to show up regularly in the data; for example; care, voice, say-so, professional, appreciate, and value. This helped me identify and confirm themes as they emerged. With six teacher interviews and three mentor interviews, the word care, voice, and professional were the most frequently occurring.

The chart below identifies the top four terms mentioned and the word counts for each term from the totaling of all data collection efforts.

Table 4.1: Common Words Count

Term	Number of times term appeared in interviews
Voice	128
Care	90
Professional	77
Appreciated	24

The following chart identifies the data sources and the main themes which were developed from each source.

Table 4.2: Data Sources of Major Themes

Data Source	Theme #1	Theme #2	Theme #3
Teacher Journals	Teachers who feel as though administrators <b>care</b> about them are more likely to stay at one particular school.	Teachers who feel as though administrators treat them as a <b>professional</b> are more likely to stay at one particular school.	Teachers who feel as though they have a <b>voice</b> and a say in what happens are more likely to stay at one particular school.
Teacher Interviews	Teachers who feel as though they have a <b>voice</b> and a say in what happens are more likely to stay at one particular school.	Teachers who feel as though administrators <b>care</b> about them are more likely to stay at one particular school.	Teachers who feel as though administrators treat them as a <b>professional</b> are more likely to stay at one particular school.
Mentor Interviews	Teachers who feel as though administrators <b>care</b> about them are more likely to stay at one particular school.	Teachers who feel as though they have a <b>voice</b> and a say in what happens are more likely to stay at one particular school.	Teachers who feel the administration <b>appreciates</b> them are more likely to stay at one particular school.

With each additional reading of my notes, I attempted to recognize various patterns and then refined the emergent themes as needed. I continued this coding process until it had become circular, in that no new information surfaced.

I identified themes and wrote codes directly on the collected data. I used highlighters primarily, to code and organize the data. On a separate sheet of paper, I counted the number of times that themes were mentioned and noted the key words that were used by participants. In addition, I cut and pasted direct quotations into a word document which was created to identify the themes that emerged.

### *Emergent Themes*

As I collected and analyzed the necessary data for this qualitative study, there were three major themes that emerged. The themes included the following: 1) beginning teachers reported that having an administrator who cares for you impacts why beginning teachers choose to stay at this school; 2) beginning teachers reported that feeling as though they have a voice heard by administration has a positive impact on retention; 3) beginning teachers reported that being treated like professionals by administrators positively impacts beginning teachers.

These three themes are intertwined with multiple topics of discussions from the interviews, yet expressed most clearly as new teachers discussed staff development, mentoring, leadership roles, and teacher induction programs holistically. The themes and the associated details provided information on each of the research questions in a detailed manner.

*Research Question #1: Within a successful school which retains 100% of their beginning teachers, what did the teachers report that the administrative team did to support them and make them want to stay at their respective site?*

During the data collection, participants described what the administrative team did that supported them, encouraged them, and made them want to stay at their respective school site. They were eager to share information about various administrative efforts that positively impacted teacher retention. The information they spoke about and wrote about included efforts built around topics such as curriculum and instruction and also focused primarily on the roles of the principal, assistant principals, and mentors at this particular school.

#### *Staff Development*

The prevalent themes that emerged from the data were associated with caring for new teachers, offering them a voice, and treating them like real professionals. Much of this stemmed from the comments on staff development efforts, how it was planned by administration, and the content which it focused upon.

All of the teacher participants made statements reflecting the importance of staff development with regard to teacher retention. For example, in his interview, Rick, one of the beginning classroom teachers, noted:

The staff development here for new teachers has been amazing. This is my fourth year and I think they are always coming up with really good stuff to share. If I had to tell you all about the staff development efforts, I'd begin by saying that the presenters, our administrative team, came in and really knew their stuff. They had

our buy-in from day one. I was glad that they cared enough to prepare such meaty, meaningful sessions. It was such a good feeling to attend the monthly staff developments and then walk away with some things that I could use as fast as I wanted to. It was just nice not to have to get information that you have to go back and study or prepare for. This made a huge impact on me as a first year teacher. I was always in my mind and heart saying, thank you, thank you, thank you for remembering what it's like to be a teacher.

Rick stressed buy-in during our first of three separate conversations with one another.

When I asked him to explain, he elaborated in this way:

You could tell that things had been prepared and they had taken the time to really look at what they were going to share with us. It was always practical stuff and it was never worksheets and articles and things that required a lot of effort on our part. Even as first year teachers, they cared about what we thought of them. They wanted us to see them as teachers first, not principals. Just valuing the teacher role and wanting us to see that they were strong teachers at heart made us want to hear what they were sharing. I was able to learn about regular topics like classroom management, but unique topics too, like creating web sites and student-led conferences.

Rick reported that he was impacted by how much the administrators cared about him.

Based upon what he said, the staff development was an effective effort at teacher retention, yet for the staff development to really work, participants had to know that administrators really cared about them beforehand. I then asked him about this further and he stated:

We walked away from the staff development and we were able to use the material immediately. That was one of the promises from the presenters. They made a difference by saying that everything they shared was something that they had used in their own classrooms or it was something that they had tried out on their own. It wasn't a whole bunch of articles or a ton of crap that you file away and never use. It wasn't a stack of books or mindless things that had been run off from the internet and then just passed out mindlessly to the teachers. It impacted teacher retention because I wanted to stay here and do my part because I could tell that they had done their part. They invested time and energy into me and I wanted to make sure that I gave them back effort that was just as good if not better than that which they gave all of us.

Based upon his words, it was clear that principals and assistant principals were investing time and energy into this group of new teachers. With the close of each question, when I asked for any additional comments, Rick repeatedly made the comment, "you can just tell they really care." Lastly, I asked what he meant by "really good stuff to share". He explained:

You just get the stuff that you need to be successful. One month that may be something about best practices and then the next month it could be something different like creating an inviting classroom. The point is, none of us ever wanted to miss a session. After that first or second staff development, we knew the content was too good to miss. We made sure we were not absent or late for any of the sessions. The content and the fast pace made for a life-changing day. It really was great and life-changing too!

Paul identified staff development as one of the main reasons that he stayed at this particular middle school and talked about several feelings that he associated with staff development. He mentioned the topic of having a voice when it came to selecting the time of staff development offerings. I inquired about the importance of voice and how this staff development was effective to him personally. He had the following to share:

The administrators always allowed us to choose when we wanted the staff development to occur. It didn't really matter what they wanted to do or what worked best with them and their schedules, they just asked us what we wanted and went from there. It didn't matter if it was morning, noon, or night, if we picked it, they showed up and presented something meaningful for the whole group. Most of the time, at a beginning meeting for new teachers, you have staff development that is preplanned. You get a calendar of the dates already chosen, the times already chosen, and the topics already chosen. It really sucks the wind out of your sail when you go in all excited and energized about teaching, and then you are given a plan that you had no say-so in.

Several teachers discussed the importance of having a "voice" and here again, Paul reinforced the theme associated with "voice" and having administrators that listen to what you say. There were times when Paul paused and struggled with his words, and he explained this by saying that he was processing information as he spoke just now seeing how much of a voice the new teachers really had at their school. He added that it encouraged him to realize that as a new teacher, he mattered that much to a group of administrators.

Karen also discussed time, her voice as a new teacher, and how it all played a part in the success of staff development for new teachers. She mentioned how much it meant to her that the group of new teachers was able to choose their meeting times and what a message it sent to the group that this was even an option; specifically, she noted:

I was always so impressed that we got to choose what kind of presenters we wanted. We always chose administrative presenters but had the chance to choose other team teachers, our school based mentors, or county office representatives. Sometimes as a new teacher you just don't feel as though you get enough time with the administrators. They, and we, have such busy jobs. This was one opportunity for us to hear them present in a staff development session, and really be selfish as we soaked up the time with them. Not only was it good when they were presenting, but it was good to have them to ourselves before and after the meetings for questions and comments too. I think the staff development that they provided was really one of those things that strengthen your content knowledge and fosters an environment where you want to ask questions about how to teach better, in a way that kids want to learn more and more. The presenters shared information, but also made us laugh and kept us engaged too.

Having the freedom to choose that which she was involved with had a large impact on Karen. She also spoke about the length of each meeting and how she felt empowered by having a say in the staff development that she was participating in. In regard to the timing of the staff development, Karen said:

The stuff that we get in the staff development sessions, which happen almost monthly if not more, is really good. But the group was always very excited about

having the chance to give feedback about time allotment too. At the beginning of each and every school year, we were repeatedly asked about when we wanted to meet and we were also asked how long we wanted to meet. That meant the world to us.

I asked Karen about why this was so significant, and she said:

We had the chance to choose presentations that were 20-minutes, 30-minutes, 45-minutes, or 60-minutes. It was wonderful! Getting the chance to choose the topics for our staff development helped also. I mean it meant the world to all of us. It wasn't like we just filled out a survey and then it was all over. We could all tell that we had a voice with the administrative team. Often, you just feel like unless you are in your classroom with the door shut, you don't have a voice. This selection of times, although it can seem unimportant to some, played a part in making me want to stay here. I was amazed at how much content could be covered in 20 or 25 minutes. It was amazing!

Hannah spoke about similar thoughts in regard to choosing how long each staff development lasted. Feeling cared about and knowing that administrators wanted to protect her time made Hannah feel "cared for" and "protected" by the administrative team. She further explained:

Not many administrators really make it known that they care about your time. We could all tell that our administrative team really cared about us and the time requirements that are placed on all classroom teachers. We could tell that they wanted the staff development to be meaningful, but they also didn't want to put too much on our plates at one time. They wanted us to listen and learn, yet also

recognize that they were very much in touch with all that we had to do. They taught us, but protected our time too. That made me want to stay here because I was convinced that other principals and assistant principals may not be as thoughtful or as mindful when it comes to hectic schedules and time constraints for new teachers.

Christina spoke about staff development briefly and focused on how being able to select the content of the meetings each month made her feel as though she was a valued member of the team. She stated:

I didn't feel like the staff development was something that came in the courier mail each month. It wasn't something that was bought or purchased. I was glad that the administrators asked us about what we wanted to learn and asked us about what we needed to know. When we spoke to them you could tell that they really listened and then planned accordingly. They tailored the staff development to our needs. This made me a better teacher and in turn, it made me see that they cared about me being successful. The staff development did play a part in why I have chosen to stay at this school.

The teachers reported learning all kinds of things from the administrative presenters. They were happy with the presentation style, the topics that were covered, and the voice that they had with each decision that was made.

Holistically, the topics for the staff development sessions included but were not limited to the following: positive classroom environments, engaging instructional strategies, differentiation for exceptional students, parent communication, effective use of classroom technology, and overall content integration. The impact and value of the staff

development was best summarized when Karen commented, “There were several staff developments that changed who I was as a teacher, making me stronger and more effective with all my students.” It was further reinforced when Rick stated “staff development here is like no other that I have seen. It’s truly engaging, helpful, and planned well in advance.”

With an analysis of the journal entries and what made staff development effective, I noticed the mention of retreats. Time and time again, with great detail, the participants would share information about retreats which were planned by the administrative team. The retreats continued to resurface in the data throughout the teachers’ writings. Since the teachers made reference to staff development efforts on numerous occasions, I asked the group of new teachers to think about staff development that had been provided at the school. I asked them to rank the three or four specific staff development opportunities that played the biggest part in retaining them at CCH Middle School. It was my goal to see if the retreats were important to all of the participants or simply a group of the participants. The results are identified in the following table.

Table 4.3: Teacher Patterns Associated with Retreats

	Question: What are the three staff development opportunities that played the biggest part in beginning teacher retention at CCH middle school?		
Participant	First Response	Second Response	Third Response
#1, Karen	Beginning of the year new teacher retreat	End of the year new teacher retreat	Session on invitational classes
#2, Rick	Beginning of the year new teacher retreat	End of the year new teacher retreat	Session on differentiation
#3, Phyllis	Session on classroom management	Session on effective use of technology	End of the year new teacher retreat
#4, Hannah	Beginning of the year new teacher retreat	End of the year new teacher retreat	Session on differentiation
#5, Christina	Beginning of the year new teacher retreat	Session on effective use of technology	End of the year new teacher retreat
#6, Paul	Session on effective use of technology	Beginning of the year new teacher retreat	Session on differentiation

The retreats were mentioned by all six teacher participants. In the table below, you will also see that all of the mentors mentioned the retreats as well, even though each of them was interviewed separately.

Table 4.4: Mentor Patterns Associated with Retreats

	Question: What are the three staff development opportunities that played the biggest part in beginning teacher retention at CCH middle school?		
Mentor	First Response	Second Response	Third Response
#1, Susan	Beginning of the year new teacher retreat	End of the year new teacher retreat	Holiday Session
#2, Callie	Beginning of the year new teacher retreat	End of the year new teacher retreat	Session on differentiation
#3, Tina	Session on student relationships	Beginning of the year new teacher retreat	End of the year new teacher retreat

As I asked questions and read more and more into the journal entries, I could see that there were several things that made these retreats unique, meaningful, and in the best interest of new teachers. Teachers recognized that the way things were planned and implemented spoke volumes about how their leaders valued and appreciated them all year long. One journal prompt in particular asked teachers about effective things that the

administrative team had done to retain beginning teachers. Throughout her journal entries, Phyllis explained the uniqueness of the retreats and stressed how they made beginning teachers feel highly valued and extremely appreciated. She stressed that these positive feelings carried them a long way. She shared the following information in one of her entries:

The administrative team here plans a retreat for new teachers and it is like nothing that I have ever seen before. We have one at the beginning of the year and we have one toward the end of the year too. Everyone talks about it and everyone looks forward to it. I can honestly report that these retreats are a reason I stay here. They helped me that much!

In another paragraph, Phyllis wrote:

The veteran teachers are so jealous and they have begged for a retreat of their own. The retreats really are phenomenal on a professional level and a personal level. It is way better than the juice, doughnuts, and cookouts that you hear about at other schools. Often, juice and doughnuts just send a message that you really aren't important. While I appreciate any efforts, it just feels like you are real low on the priority list when someone sets out a box of Krispy Kreme doughnuts, a bottle of Sunny Delight, and a sleeve of plastic cups. The retreats here are great and you really walk away feeling appreciated, loved, and rejuvenated. You learn a lot and you feel cared for. Sometimes, when I left the sessions, I'd quickly modify my lesson for the day and use something that I had just gotten. It may have been a teaching strategy or a warm up activity, but I could use it that fast. That meant the world to me.

When Phyllis spoke about the retreats, her face truly lit up. This reaction was similar to that which Christina and other teachers had. Christina talked about the rejuvenation associated with the retreats and also described them as “great.” She wrote:

I remember two of the biggest focuses for the retreats being classroom instruction and rejuvenation for all beginning teachers. Rejuvenation was one of those key topics that the administrative team has to bring back every year. They call it rejuvenation, but I call it “spoil me crazy.” I just felt so spoiled and pampered with the food, the gifts, the extra time they gave us in the morning, and the way they let us leave early too. You could tell that they knew burnout was a big issue for new teachers and they did not want us burning out. Plus, during the retreats as they were rejuvenating us and also teaching us, the principal and the assistant principals really did model best practices from start to finish. We learned not only from what they shared but how they shared too. I was always amazed at how they planned and prepared things so that I did not have to do any outside work to make the staff development stuff useful. It was already in a form that I could use quickly and easily.

As I spoke to Christina, it was hard for her to get the words out of her mouth. She stated, “It was much easier for me to write about the retreats than to speak about them.” She explained that speaking about them would leave too many of the extraordinary details out. When I asked her to verbalize the events as best she could, she paused for a moment and then reported:

I could rattle off a list, but you just can’t get the feel without being there. Often, you just feel so lowly as a new teacher. These retreats had prizes and food. It

was just the depth that went along with each and every detail of the retreat. I mean, we didn't just have door prizes. We had gift cards and gift baskets and personalized jackets. It just sent a big message that we really do matter to our school. It was the same way with food too. It wasn't just a catered lunch or a basket of chocolates. We had everything. We had sweet things and salty things. We had homemade things and store-bought things. Again, it was all about the depth.

It was clear by her words and sincere expressions that Christina felt cared for and valued by her administrative supervisors. Karen was also one of the teachers that identified these retreats for new teachers as one of her primary reasons for staying at this middle school. She too felt cared for by her administrative team. In her journal when asked about how administrators could effectively retain classroom teachers, she specifically named the retreats. When further asked about the specific details surrounding these retreats, Karen shared the following information:

They, the administrators, do a lot to make these retreats fun and educational. So many times if it is fun, it isn't really educational. When it's educational, people don't work hard to make it fun, but they should. Our administrative team takes the time to present themselves as experts on classroom instruction when they share on these staff development days. We work throughout the entire day, the principal and the assistant principals model good teaching strategies, and they also share stuff that we can take back to our classrooms and use immediately. I found myself saying to my partner over and over again, "I can use that tomorrow. I can use that this week. I can really use that!" The fact that I walked away with stuff

that I could use that day if I wanted to, meant the world to me. They took the work part out of it for me.

Karen made a comment that every teacher participant also made. She talked about attending a staff development and being able to leave with something that she could use immediately. According to a follow-up question once the initial interviews had ended, this made her feel as though she was treated as a professional and her time was valued and protected.

Rick said that “retreats planned like ours for new classroom teachers at the beginning of the year and the end of the year make me a stronger, more effective instructional leader,” while Paul said that “the way they (the administrators) did staff development retreats made me want to model that in my classroom.” When I asked him what he meant, he simply said, “They always acted in a thorough manner, quick and professional, where anyone in the audience could find something that they needed and make it useful. I want to present in a way where students always find value too.”

I asked Karen about how these retreats helped her as a teacher. She wrote in her journal:

They (all three administrators) really help us kick it up a notch with teaching. Sometimes staff development really isn't like that with other schools and other county folks. It takes a lot to really make this time beneficial for new teachers. Throughout the retreats, there is no lecture and nothing boring. Instead, we see and take part in staff development that implements the best of the best when it comes to strategies and techniques that work for middle school learners. We walk away with so many ideas and we know more about the ideas because instead of

just hearing or reading about the ideas, we take part in them. We are doing the activities, internalizing it all, and being able to answer questions along the way. The way the retreats are planned and carried out just makes the difference for all of us.

Paul talked about how these beginning teacher retreats were different from anything he had ever heard about or experienced professionally or while in college. He also stressed that his wife was a teacher at another school in the county and when he talked about the retreats to her, she often sat in amazement, not believing how much time and effort were put into the events to not only make it helpful but to make it fun too. In his journal, Paul wrote the following:

The retreats are just different from beginning to end. I have not heard of anything like them and I mean that when I say it. I just think people, administrators I guess, have gotten away from caring so much. I don't mean that in a bad way either, but these administrators just make beginning teachers and the retreats a priority. They take the time to do and plan things that others would just let slip away. They (the three administrators) focus on rejuvenation and that is a major piece that I feel never really gets addressed with new teachers. I certainly have never heard about a workshop or retreat that focused on rejuvenation for new teachers. You never see that on a brochure for staff development and you certainly never see it for free either.

Paul went on to report:

Often, people just think that beginning teachers are teachers that are young and excited and that's all we need. They seem to think that high energy and the will to

do well is enough. But they're wrong and thinking like this can be harmful. It can have a bad effect on teachers and the students we teach. The reflection and rejuvenation pieces of the retreats are key and they have lasting effects on our group of new teachers. I have told my assistant principal before that I am a better teacher because of the retreats and my kids get a better me because these retreats help me. I used the analogy of a fish tank. The teacher, to me, is a fish tank and we constantly reach into our tank and give and give and give. If you're not careful, you start scraping the bottom because you have taken everything out of your aquarium. You have to take the time to fill your tank back up or all of a sudden, your aquarium is empty and can no longer serve an adequate purpose. These retreats at the beginning and ending of each year are one of those major things that really fill me up. The retreats get me back to a point where I can give to others without feeling as though I am emptying my tank and no longer doing something useful.

At one point during the face-to-face interviews, I went back to Rick and asked him to mentally walk me through some of the things that made the beginning of year retreats and the end of year retreats so impacting, as outlined in his journal entry. He shared the following information with me:

When you walk in to the staff development, which is housed somewhere off campus in a nice, clean environment, there is always a huge basket of goodies waiting for you there. There is no way that someone could come into the staff development with negative thoughts or feelings. The nice feel that is created by being off campus and walking into a room where there is a huge gift just for you,

automatically makes you open and receptive to the information that will be shared.

Rick talked repeatedly about things that had been done which made him feel cared for and taken care of by the administrative team. I asked him about some of the specific things that were included in this basket that many of the teachers had mentioned.

He went on to explain further:

The basket alone sets the tone for a positive, fun day of learning and makes you smile from the very beginning. But plus, it's the magnitude of the basket. I think sometimes you expect to have a little prize waiting on you when you arrive.

Usually, it's like a pen, a legal pad, and maybe some candy. But that's not the case here. I mean it is a huge basket of goodies. You can't look at it and not say WHOA! The basket has everything in it from water and candy to markers and pens and paper, index cards, anything and everything you would want. There's clipboards, mugs, a thermos, I mean it is huge!

I asked Rick about how receiving these baskets made him feel. I wanted to know what these baskets really meant to the participants. He said:

You really feel as though you are being showered with gifts all for being a great teacher. It makes you feel like your job really does matter. Plus, there's usually a nice hoody or sweatshirt or jacket just for the newbies. It's even personalized with our school, our own name, and the year. This may seem simple to some people, but a nice, quality gift as opposed to something like a \$10 t-shirt really makes you connect with the group. It makes you more cohesive. It makes you really start to have each other's back when it comes to helping. It makes you

want to work harder because you sincerely feel as though you belong here. When we wear those items, we wear them with pride and we work hard to make the group look good. It's like your home. You want your home to be better, neater, cleaner, and fancier than someone else's home. When we get these baskets, it makes us want to make our home, our school, the best that it can be and the best middle school in the whole county.

Once Rick had exhausted the topic of baskets, he proceeded to talk about other perks that made the retreats beneficial. Rick stated again that the retreats were most definitely one of the reasons why he had chosen to stay at CCH Middle School. He further stated:

In addition to all of these good things, we also have door prizes all day long. Plus, the administration also recognizes how tiring our jobs can be and they let us come in to the staff development an hour or so late. This may not seem like a lot either, but it speaks volumes to new teachers. They usually don't tell us until the day before our retreat though. We are supposed to be at school by 8am on regular days and then the eve before our retreats, we get a message that says something about us sleeping later in the morning. Then they tell us that we do not have to arrive at the retreat until 9:00 or 9:30. All of this is great, but again, the retreats just show us the proof. The retreats show us that we are valued and cared for in a way other schools don't seem to replicate.

Rick also made reference to lunch on the staff development days which he wrote about in his journal entry. He said:

The principals also let us leave an hour early from the staff development and they take us to a real nice restaurant for lunch. Usually about 2:30 they tell us that we

have one last activity. As we get prepared, they start packing up and then they give us some kind of closing speech about knowing the tough stuff we have to go through. Then they tell us to complete an evaluation of the retreat and leave. They usually tell us to leave and go take a nap, see a movie, or just do something for ourselves. The room is full of grins. It is a nice, nice experience and we walk away feeling very appreciated. You know how when you teach a kid and you can see the light bulb in their head go off, and then all of a sudden you remember why you went into teaching? These retreats are kinda like that. It's one of those events that just remind you why you work hard and why you stay in teaching, when on some days you just want to quit or give up. It encourages our hearts more than people will ever know.

I asked Rick to step away from the tangible items and talk to me about the rest of the day.

He began by stating:

We learn about current practices, the best research that is available right now, and you get to take part in everything that you are taught by our teachers, the principals. It's all about exciting, engaging activities for teachers and in turn, our students. They (the three administrators) cover student management and classroom instruction. These two concepts are always big topics that we focus on and learn about.

He was highly excited about the reflective piece of the retreats as well as other topics which were stressed throughout the staff development opportunities. Rick commented:

Reflection on the teacher's part is a great topic at the end of the year. Sometimes I feel as though people tell you to be reflective, but then they don't really allow

you any time to reflect. You can't seem to spare one minute to really sit down and process what you have done, what worked, and what you may change if you had the opportunity. At the retreats, we are given the time to reflect alone, we are given the time to reflect with a peer, we have the time to reflect as a group, and they guide us along the way with various questions and prompts focused on reflection.

I asked Rick about the other topics that he had mentioned first. He quickly refocused and then commented:

Aside from the reflective piece that means so much, there are other topics which I call classics, like discipline and creative teaching methods. These are always highlights of the day for me and for others in our group of teachers. Our group of newbies gets to choose the topics for our retreat so how can you ask for anything better than that? We get to pick 90% of the topics that are covered and that is so important to us as new teachers. That makes us feel so valued and like we are not little kids, but instead, true, hard working professionals. Each of the administrators let us choose what we need to be better at, what we need to strengthen. They trust us to make some decisions on our own as opposed to simply attending mandated sessions which are sometimes planned and implemented by people who know the least about us.

At the end of our conversation, I asked Rick to summarize things in regard to how these retreats could both positively and significantly impact the retention of new teachers. He said:

I think a lot of people say that they do these things for teachers, but in all actuality, they don't. The words of a lot of administrators do not match their actions. With the nature of our business, education, everything can not fit on our plates and some things fall off our plates. Unfortunately, it is my belief that new teachers are the items that fall off of most plates. I've talked to first year teachers at other schools a lot. We meet at county functions and other county initiatives. Very few school administrators, in my opinion, would go this far, as far as our administrative team, to make a new teacher feel appreciated, valued, and just vested in general.

#### *Summary, Staff Development*

It was easy to hear the voice and the message which came from each teacher. They were certain that staff development played part in why they chose to stay at this particular school. While staff development was a secondary reason for wanting to stay, their primary reason for staying dealt with the role that they had in planning the staff development. In general, for those that may wish to replicate items taken from this research, beginning teachers recommend that administrators prepare well for the staff development which they deliver, avoiding a delivery of information that may appear to be rushed or thrown together at the last minute. In addition, new teachers suggest that being allowed to choose their meeting time and place played a part in why those chose to stay at this particular middle school. They were also quick to share that being able to select the content of the staff development and the presentation style were reasons that they chose to stay. Christina, one of the beginning teacher participants summed it up nicely stating:

I just know that staff development doesn't happen like this at other schools. I hear about new teachers hating the presenters, hating the information that is shared, and often talking about how they get information that they really don't need. Our administrators here are doing exactly what any good teacher should do as they gather our input and then differentiate the staff development based upon each year's group and each year's different needs. It was as though everything was planned with a purpose and the smallest details were paid attention to. The educational part was fabulous too. The strategies were great. But it was just so special because you looked at the whole day and then you stood back, saying, WOW, they did all this for me? Really? For me?

### *Mentoring*

For the most part, when mentors were spoken of by the two teachers above as a reason for staying at this school, it was done so in a relatively positive manner. The importance of mentors was not stressed or emphasized by four of the beginning classroom teachers. Because the research suggested strongly that mentoring played a significant and positive role in retaining new classroom teachers (Bartell, 2005; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Hicks, Glasgow, & McNary, 2005; Lee, et al., 2006; Nguyen, 2000), when four of the six teacher participants failed to identify mentors as a reason they stayed, I did bring up the topic and asked about its overall importance. Four of the six participants reported that mentoring was in fact not a reason that they chose to stay at CCH Middle. Because they did not identify the mentoring role as one which greatly impacted their experience, it was difficult for them to speak on why they thought it could be a positive effort at teacher retention. When asked the question, Paul stated, "No, I like my mentor

but I can't say that she would be a deal breaker for me. She is a nice lady, but to say that my mentor provided me with something that I think I couldn't get at another school would be false. Also, to answer your question, I can't really report that having a mentor or the efforts made by my mentor would be one of the reasons that I stayed here, nor do I think it would be a reason that any of us really chose to stay here." Christina had a similar comment and explained, "I can definitely say that I did not choose to stay at CCH because of my mentor. While I appreciate the effort that the county makes with mentors, I just don't know if I see the real value. I think a good school will have good teachers who naturally want to help you or mentor you. Having a mentor would not be a reason that I think our school was able to achieve a 100% teacher retention rate."

Aside from principals and assistant principals, mentors typically play an especially large role when it comes to new teachers. Having mentors is one of the most common ways for schools to make an attempt at positively impacting teacher retention (Hicks, 2005). In addition, effective mentoring is a natural point of concern for those interested in successfully retaining classroom teachers in their beginning years of classroom service.

During the interviews, I asked the teacher participants why they stayed at this particular school. I interviewed them about favorable working conditions, various forms of teacher support, and inquired about anything they deemed as important in regard to teacher retention. I asked each teacher participant to identify one or two specific things in our discussion that made them stay at CCH Middle School. Mentoring was not well represented based upon the teachers' answers though the literature led me to expect mentoring would surface as a critical element.

Throughout her journal, Karen shared several things that made her want to stay at CCH Middle School. She wrote the following:

I think the number one reason I stay at CCH Middle is because of the administrative support. I feel like they try their best to support and help me with any situation that comes up. I feel like they have my back and work to be an advocate for me.

I asked her what she meant by being an advocate and she said:

I think a lot of principals help beginning teachers but that is very different than being their advocate. I think the administration here is a true advocate, speaking up on my behalf, protecting me from unnecessary worries, and caring about me in a holistic manner and really working to make the quality of my days better and better.

Aside from administrative support, Karen also listed having the necessary resources to teach well as a specific reason she chose to stay at CCH Middle School. She spoke of resources that included human resources such as her teammates, monetary resources such as those that came from the PTA, and physical resources including everything from paper and pencil to Smart Boards and Active Expressions. When mentoring failed to come up in our conversation naturally, I asked about human resources that had made Karen's work at CCH more enjoyable and more productive. She quickly named the following positions: principal, assistant principals, librarians, team mates, front office secretary, and the school's data manager. At no point did Karen reference teacher mentors as one of the primary reasons she stayed at CCH. Mentors and their roles were not mentioned at any point in the conversation.

I again, spoke to a second teacher and thought that mentoring would be brought up as a reason for staying at CCH Middle School. Phyllis shared two things that made her want to stay at this particular school, yet she struggled with providing much detail. She identified staff development and administrative support as two key components which played a part in her successful retention. In her journal, she wrote the following:

Often staff development can be nothing more than a workshop and the mentality that goes along with a traditional workshop. When I think of a workshop, I think of the Charlie Brown teacher saying blah, blah, blah. Staff development on the other hand has to be more than that.

I stepped away from the topic of mentoring for a moment and quickly asked Phyllis to explain how staff development at CCH was different than the Charlie Brown scenario that she had just referenced. She explained that anyone could lead your typical workshop but for true staff development to occur there were other things that needed to transpire. She stated:

At CCH, the principals created staff development opportunities that go far beyond the sharing of information. The presenters work hard to cover the content, model effective instruction, and keep me engaged. However, they also serve as a catalyst for the change that will occur in my classroom. They hold me accountable, offer me the resources I need, and care about me in a way that makes me believe I can change the world for my students.

Phyllis also stated that administrative support was one of the primary reasons she stayed at CCH Middle School. In her journal she wrote:

There is a support system at CCH like I have never seen at any school where I have visited or completed clinicals. It is like the administrative team will not let you fail. No matter what your struggles might be, the principal and assistant principals are ready to see you through it. Some people say that they are willing to meet you half way, but the administration at CCH is willing to meet you farther than that in any situation or at any time.

Phyllis continued to speak about the administrative team, yet failed to mention her mentor as she spoke of people that had helped her along her way as a new teacher. I was careful not to lead teachers as I asked them questions, yet it was at this point when I asked Phyllis specifically about mentoring efforts while she had been at CCH Middle School. She explained in a typical situation with typical circumstances a mentor can be very effective. However, when I asked her if her mentor was a primary reason she chose to stay at CCH, she became very quiet. When I asked her a second time, she still offered no response. I then asked Phyllis if she felt like she was learning from her mentor. She made the following statement:

I like my mentor and really think she is a good teacher. I think she cares about kids and I think she is certainly qualified to be a mentor. I know she wants to help me and I know she wants me to do a good job here. I think she knows a lot about teaching and she seems to know a lot about students and working with others. But since you have asked me to be completely honest, and since you asked me directly, I can't say that any mentor, not just her, would be my deciding factor for staying at any school. I just think that there are bigger, more important

things that would keep me at a school, much like those factors that I mentioned previously.

Phyllis shared her thoughts on mentoring with me in a very hesitating, awkward manner. I could tell that she was worried about what I would think about her or if I would share the information with her mentor directly. I spoke as frequently as I could about confidentiality and she seemed to be more and more at ease.

Rick and Christina were the only two teacher participants that brought up mentoring on their own as I completed interview after interview. Rick explained that while he had a good mentor and it made him want to be at CCH Middle School in some degree, he was quick to report that mentoring alone would not be the determining factor in keeping him there. He spoke very freely and with great ease about his mentor and stated:

I guess you could say that my mentor is a small part of why I stay here, I guess. At the same time, I can't say she is the only reason I stay here. I can't even say that she's one of the main reasons that I stay here. My mentor enhances my experience at CCH. I appreciate the fact that she is there when I need her and she never turns me away when I have a question.

Christina had positive things to say about her mentor and did in fact identify mentoring as a reason she stayed at this school. When I asked her about the administrators' part in mentoring, she said:

Some administrators don't take the time or see the importance with placing the right mentor with the right beginning teacher. Here at CCH, the administration does far more than simply assigning a name to a new teacher. It's more than

paperwork to them and you can tell too. When I was hired the principals asked me a lot about what kind of mentor I needed to be successful as a beginning classroom teacher. Later, when I first met my mentor, it was clear that the things I said had not fallen on deaf ears. I was matched with someone that could make me more successful.

I asked Christina specifically about the questions the administrators had asked her.

Christina stated the following:

I remember them asking me if I wanted a mentor that was more nurturing or more straight forward. I also remember them asking me if I preferred someone on my grade level more or if I preferred someone in my content area more. They also asked me to list three or four adjectives that would describe my perfect mentor. In the end, they took the time to describe four or five different mentors at their school. I can remember them asking me to choose my first and second choices. Out of a forty-minute interview, I bet twenty minutes was focused on assessing my needs as a new teacher and matching those needs to the specific strengths of a veteran mentor.

Again, Rick and Christina were the only two teacher participants that mentioned mentoring in any fashion or regard during their interviews or throughout their journal writing.

I continued to ask participants about the impact of mentors. Hannah explained, “I hope to be a mentor one day, but no, mentoring did not impact me really wanting to stay here. There were several other issues and factors that we’ve discussed that made me want to stay here more. I don’t mean it in a negative way, but no, the mentors do not

play a big part in making me stay here, but I don't want my mentor to necessarily know that. The same question to Phyllis yielded the following response:

Mentoring would be way down on my list. I don't wanna discredit people that work hard and help, but there are greater things that make teachers want to stay here. The administrative team, staff development, the kids, the parents. Those are things that are really important in choosing a job. I'd have to say no, not really, my mentor would not be one of the main reasons that I stayed here at CCH Middle.

Surprisingly, and in addition to the teacher interviews and the teacher journals, mentors themselves did not stress the importance of their role when it came to retaining teachers either. One of the three mentors interviewed discussed that mentors were important, yet their importance was primarily with the classroom and students, not retention efforts. She did not see a clear link between successful classroom experiences and overall teacher retention. The first mentor, Susan, explained it in the following manner:

I know that having a mentor is important, but I can't say that in my heart of hearts that I am sure it makes a difference with teacher retention. I think our role is not necessarily to retain teachers or create an environment where they want to stay, but really instead, to help them once they arrive here.

I then asked Susan to explain in greater detail how she would define the role of a mentor to someone else. She had the following to report:

I see the mentoring role as one that places an expert with a new teacher. That means that by my own personal definition, a real teacher mentor should be an expert with everything from classroom management and student discipline, to

effective classroom instruction and building rapport with students, parents, staff, administration, and community members.

It was at this point that I asked Tina, another mentor, what she saw as her goals associated with new teachers. She stated:

My goal as the mentor is not necessarily to make new teachers stay, but it's to make their stay here better for kids and better for themselves. It's all about making instruction better for the students and making the ride a little more enjoyable, more beneficial, more productive, for both students and teachers. I am the resource that is here on campus and always available for whatever a new teacher may bring to me, regardless if that is in the form of a teaching question or student concern.

This component of the interview with Tina was similar to what other mentors reported. At a separate point during the interview, when I again asked Tina about her roles with beginning teachers, she said:

I feel my role is to welcome new teachers to the building and to help them with processes, lesson plans, and students. I am here as both a sounding board as well as a guidance counselor. They know that I am here and as they learn their way, they can come to with any bump in the road.

I then took this opportunity to ask Susan directly, who had mentored for several years, if she thought she played a part in retaining teachers and if she thought it was even part of her responsibilities to focus on the retention of new teachers. Susan commented:

I guess maybe, maybe not. I think as a mentor you do the best that you can for as long as you can when it comes to supporting new teachers. I think in the end

some people are made to stay in the classroom and some are not. I mean I try my best to make people want to be here. As far as job responsibilities, I'll help with anything I can, but I guess teacher retention is something for the principals to focus on.

When I met with the third and final mentor, Callie, I asked her the same questions. She responded stating:

I think I do play a part in retaining new teachers. I hope that I play a part with that. I think the relationship they have with me should be a dynamic, educational, entertaining one. I hope in turn, this relationship between my mentee and me does have a positive effect on teacher retention. I think if my new teacher has a connection with me then common sense says they may want to stick around longer.

I reminded Callie about the second part of my question and asked her whose job responsibility it was to encourage and retain beginning classroom teachers. Callie responded:

I see this as a mutually joint effort. I don't think I can do it alone and I don't think any administrator can either. I think the responsibility is shared by the new teacher, mentor and the administrative team. It's going to take all three parties working well together, communicating effectively, and helping one another if we are going to positively retain new teachers.

### *Summary, Mentoring*

There is a great deal of value that comes from the information that beginning teachers share about retention. At this particular school site and based upon teacher

feedback, it was not clear that mentoring had a significant impact on the 100% teacher retention rate for beginning teachers. While teachers reported that they appreciated efforts made by the county and the school's administrative team, they did say that mentors would not be a primary reason that they chose to stay at this particular school. Mentors were largely underrepresented throughout the interviews and the journal entries. As I asked about mentors and the support that they gave to new teachers, the participants were quick to answer questions in a manner which brought others in as part of retention efforts, but again, failed to showcase any significant value in their mentors. In an interview, Rick summarized the group's collective feelings by stating:

She helps me with school processes, reminds me of various school deadlines, takes things off my plate when she can, and tends to make my experience here more manageable. But again, I can't say that if my mentor were taken away, it would drastically impact my job performance or make me want to switch to another middle school in this county or a surrounding county.

#### *Personal Relationships and Individualization*

Although the mentoring relationship was not one which seemed to positively impact the retention of beginning teachers, there were some other points in the interviews where personal relationships and individualized attention seemed to play a significant part in keeping new teachers at CCH Middle School. The third theme that emerged from the data dealt with personal relationships and a sense of individualization, in that needs were addressed on a highly specific, one-on-one basis. Personal relationships were key when it came to this group of beginning classroom teachers and why they chose to stay at this site in particular. Categories within this third theme where individualization was

addressed included areas such as instructional leadership, attention in general, and personal needs.

### *Instructional Leadership*

It was clear that instruction was at the forefront of the minds with each participant in the study. Although the instructional leadership was identified by some teachers as coming from the principal, others identified an assistant principal of instruction as the primary instructional leader. Either way, regardless of the person mentioned, teachers and mentors both reported that this personalized type of instructional leadership had a positive impact on why beginning classroom teachers stayed at CCH Middle School.

One might not immediately associate a personal relationship with instructional leadership without further explanation. Specifically and collectively, this group of new teachers spoke about a personal relationship with administrators that guided the instructional leadership component. The group shared thoughts about how the administrative team visited classrooms, knew about individual teacher strengths and was ready to help you combat any weaknesses or struggles that may be identified. Paul summarized it like this in his interview:

One of the greatest things that make me stay here is the educational component that comes along with my job. It's very individualized, not like everyone gets the same kind of help. I came out of my college program and I felt like I knew enough to get started in the classroom. I knew that I would struggle with some issues, but I also knew that I had a strong enough foundation to at least begin as a teacher and then hopefully grow throughout the years to come. What I was looking for, really, was someone who was willing to get to know me as a person,

get to know me as an educator, understand me to some degree, and then take me to that next level instructionally as a teacher, not just look at me as another member of the faculty.

After a long pause and a moment of reflection, Paul continued:

I can remember an education professor in college telling us that realistically speaking, as first year teachers, we probably would not even be on anyone's radar, much less an administrator's radar. I can remember them telling us to be prepared to not be a priority for anyone in the building or on campus. That just was not the case here at CCH.

I asked Paul what he meant by that. Paul then stated:

The administrators here don't just know about instruction. They know about instruction in conjunction with how you as a teacher fit into it all. It's easy to take feedback from them, because one, it's clear that they know what they are talking about and two, they model everything that they say during grade-level meetings, faculty meetings, and other staff developments. You don't wonder what kind of a teacher they were when they were in the classroom. You can see what kind of teacher they were, cause they are showcasing it right in front of you as they share information.

I asked Paul if he thought his experience was typical as to what most schools offered new classroom teachers with instructional support. He laughed and then commented:

It isn't like some schools where I hear teachers say administrators tell you not to lecture, but then anytime there is a meeting, all they do is lecture to you. I think some schools focus on one topic like questioning or differentiation for their whole

group of new teachers. Here, you may have ten teachers with ten different topics surrounding instructional leadership, cause I may need help with exceptional kids, you may need help with questioning, and someone else may need help with differentiation. It's just all different for each person and here, the administrators know that needs are different and they appreciate that or they at least embrace it and plan for it accordingly.

I asked Paul for a bottom line statement in regard to what he called an “individualized approach to instructional excellence.” He thought for a moment and then carefully spoke:

I guess the bottom line is that I believe in the people that lead me with instruction here at CCH. They (the administrative team) do their homework, they learn all they can about best practices, and then they share it with me in a way that I can understand it, use it, and make it work with whatever situation I am in. I can't say that I have heard such positive things coming out of the mouths of my friends who work at other schools. I am not saying that in a bad way either. Leading new teachers instructionally and making time for it all is a hard task. What's even harder, is leading new teachers instructionally and individually, but it's done here.

Rick and Christina both identified a personal approach to instructional leadership as one of the main things that kept them at CCH Middle School; for example, Christina reported in her journal:

The one thing that I think can change lives for students is instruction.

Instructional leadership can change the lives of teachers too. But with busy days and all kinds of necessary, yet time-consuming mandates, sometimes I don't have

the time to fine-tune my instructional skills or my lesson plans. I'm just being completely honest. However, the administration here really does have the ability to lead me with instruction and in a fun way too.

I asked Christina in a follow up prompt to tell me more about how the administration had led her instructionally. She wrote:

I know right off the top of my head that I have gone to the principals here for a great deal of help with instruction. They have taken the time, even when they didn't have it, to help me with lesson planning, higher-level thinking, questioning, student objectives, integration, and effective ways to use homework to support my instruction. If they had the answer, they shared it. If they didn't have the perfect answer, I was never brushed off or given a "cookie cutter" answer. They said they'd get back to me in a day or so and then they actually did. It's a good feeling to have that kind of relationship with an administrator. With the bigger picture, the administrators have this relationship with every new teacher that I know of. You don't get a flavor of the month topic with instructional leadership; you get what you need and what you ask for. It's a very personal kind of thing here at CCH.

Hannah and Karen spoke of times when this tailored kind of instructional leadership played a part in making them successful classroom teachers, yet also played a part in their overall retention. Karen shared the following:

The administrative team here has helped me with so much when it comes to being stronger with instruction. They helped me and led me with writing objectives, planning strong lessons, gaining a better understanding of the curriculum, and

delivering lessons that appealed to all types of learners. I don't know as I have ever seen a group of administrators be so strong collectively, when it came to classroom instruction. Everyone here knows that instruction is above everything else. It's above athletics, the arts, the PTA. It really is the number one priority here at CCH.

It was at this point that I asked Karen if she could share a specific example of something instruction that one of her leaders had done that really made her want to stay at CCH Middle School. She responded by saying:

With one case in particular, there was a situation where I received a ton of help beyond the hours of our normal school day. It was a time when I was really trying to plan effective learning centers for my students. I was struggling with making it all fit together, making it all flow, and just making it as rigorous as I wanted it to be.

I asked Karen about what specific things the administration did with this situation to make her really want to stay at CCH Middle School. She spoke of the following:

My assistant principal of instruction came by at the end of the day and stayed with me well past after eight o'clock. He had brought some examples from other classroom teachers on my grade level where centers had been used effectively. He not only sat down and helped me plan well for the seven days of centers ahead, but then he helped me physically create each center as well. He sat there right along beside me as we searched the internet, cut and pasted items, and created directions for each learning station.

At the close of our conversation, I asked Karen about how this made her feel. She was quick to tell me:

This personal approach to helping me, this incident alone made me want to work harder and perform better. I knew that the administration cared about me or they would never have been willing to stay so late. I felt like I was sitting there with a celebrity. Every other classroom door was closed and every other light was off, and there I sat with a principal that cared enough to do whatever it took to make me successful. I have never heard of this happening somewhere else. It would be hard for me to leave CCH because of times like this, where the individualization was not just stressed for kids, but carried out for me as an adult too.

I asked Karen if there was anything else that dealt with instructional leadership which made her think about staying at CCH when opportunities from other schools were clearly available. She reported that having a principal in charge of instructional leadership with beginning teachers made all of the difference in the world. Karen went on to explain:

I have never heard of another middle school where beginning classroom teachers were not delegated out to someone else. With instruction, I have only heard of lead mentors and curriculum coaches being in charge of this topic with new teachers.

I asked Karen about how this made her feel. She stated:

It makes you feel like you really are a priority. I feel like I count here and that makes me want to stay. It feels so nice, so empowering to be part of a group that is led and taken care of solely by principals, when often, the group of new teachers say they are defined as “less” by various school stakeholders, including

veteran teachers. I'd stay here if for no other reason, because my principal has agreed to take on my group (of new teachers) and serve us in whatever way they can. That means the world to me and for that alone, I couldn't just up and leave and go somewhere else.

Karen's mentor agreed wholeheartedly and spoke the following:

I have regularly heard the new teachers talk about how much it means to them that this is something that stays on the principal's plate. They talk a lot about how they appreciate the fact that one of the administrators comes to all of their meetings. They talk to us in small groups about the messages that it sends to others in the school. I think they see it as a blessing or a privilege to have the attention of our administrative team. I think it does make a great difference with this group of new teachers. I think it increases their level of "buy in" for the school. I definitely think they mean it when they say it. It does make a difference. People do notice.

### *The Personal Side of Teachers*

Personal, individual needs were also mentioned by several beginning teachers as an area recognized and addressed by CCH administration, again individually, which impacted them staying at CCH Middle School. When the beginning teachers talked of their leaders being willing to serve them and take care of personal needs, I asked for additional clarification and numerous examples were shared as a result. For example, Paul stressed the importance of looking at new teachers beyond the professional realm and remembering that "we are people after school too." He spoke of more common needs being met by the administrative team such as the principal or assistant principal

giving him some unofficial time off when his son was in a championship basketball game. Since he only needed an hour of time, the assistant principal taught class for him while he attended the game off campus and then returned. Paul was quick to report:

Although it was personal for me, it impacted my role professionally. I mean as a teacher, you can bet I am more willing to work and volunteer for someone that remembers that I am a daddy too. Since my AP let me go off campus for that one little hour, since he cared about me personally, you can bet the next time he needs something or needs a volunteer, he can count me in.

Both Karen and Christina spoke of a more uncommon example that impacted them staying at CCH Middle School long term. Christina noted:

I know that the administrative team cares about me outside of the classroom and it does make me want to stay. It does make me want to work harder. One of the things that stand out most for me has to deal with groceries. That sounds a bit funny, huh? Nonetheless, it is true. We have an administrative team that for the most part, really tries to serve our beginning teachers and take care of us when we need it. Anyone who is a part of the public school sector knows that December can be a hard month. Teachers are paid two weeks early in December because the pay period stops early, due to the holiday break. Then, teachers have to go six weeks until they are paid again, at the end of January, as opposed to making it four weeks.

I asked Christina about just how difficult this time period was for beginning classroom teachers. She shared:

This is an extremely hard time for teachers, much less a new teacher who doesn't get paid what they deserve anyway. In addition to stretching that money over your six-week period, you have Christmas in there to account for and that always takes extra funds. So again, it can just be a hard month. With all of this in mind, you can imagine the shock, the love, the amazement, whatever you want to call it, you can imagine how the new teachers felt when on the last day of school, prior to the holiday break, we all received several bags of groceries. I want to be clear. Every beginning teacher received several bags of groceries.

Christina then shared some of the specifics associated with the groceries and the holiday season. She said:

I'm talking about bread, eggs, milk, cakes, chips, fruits, vegetables, turkey, and more. I have never seen anything like it. We were at school, but I really felt like I was at more of a family get-together.

Christina's mentor, Susan, shared in expressing the magnitude of this act and commented further stating:

Those teachers could not believe that their administrators cared that much about them. They were crying, hugging, and talking about how grateful they were for weeks. I kid you not, this act, this deed, this gesture, made the teachers and me want to serve my kids in the same way. We all wanted to go back to our classrooms and meet any need that our kids had, academic or personal. This day in particular, with the groceries, was one that we will never forget. The teachers had a personal need and the administrative team met it fully.

Phyllis and Rick spoke of yet another personal time when they needed assistance and received it. They recalled that several new teachers were in the work room discussing the difficulty of getting assignments scored and grades submitted prior to the end of the nine week grading period. At this particular time, the office manager made the deadline for all grades one week prior to the actual close of the grading period, which increased the level of difficulty for teachers. Phyllis and Rick reported that they simply felt a bit overwhelmed. They were stressed with too many things to grade as the close of the marking period approached.

Phyllis explained:

It was just that straw that broke the camel's back. It was that time of year when your to-do list never seemed to end and your emotions were out of whack. On top of that, all the new teachers didn't know to plan for this early deadline with grades and we had lots of end-of-quarter stuff that still needed to be scored.

Rick echoed Phyllis's feelings and added:

I can still recall how many stacks of papers I had in my room that needed to be graded. I truly had essays and poster projects and even some book reports that had not been read. Not only did I have to grade it all, but I had planned to grade them and record stuff over the weekend. That was my plan at least before I heard of this early deadline before grades were actually due.

Rick went on:

Well, a member of the administrative team walked in on us and our conversation. It was clear that they took note of what we were saying to each other, but we really didn't think of it a whole lot more. Then, the next day, all teachers who

were in their first, second, third, or fourth year of teaching were given a handmade coupon.

Phyllis described the coupon like this:

The coupon explained to the recipients, and we felt like celebrities, that with the coupon, the teacher could turn in up to 150 papers to be scored by a member of the administrative team. Yeah! There were several guidelines outlined on the coupon, such as an answer key had to be provided and projects were not allowed. However, everything else was fair game, according to the coupon. Beginning teachers could turn in homework, class work, tests, quizzes, or essays. New teachers were guaranteed on the coupon to have the graded papers back in their hands within 24 hours. It was amazing!

Phyllis's mentor, Tina, explained:

This act alone made a substantial mark on the new teachers. They could not believe what they held in their hands. It was like Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and each one of those teachers was holding a golden ticket.

I asked the mentor if she thought every teacher utilized the administrative coupons for scoring papers. She commented:

Although I am quite confident that not every teacher utilized the coupon, every new teacher commented on the coupon. It not only helped with the work load, but it was a huge act of encouragement for the heart, at a time during the year when beginning teachers could really use the boost.

*Summary, Personal Relationships and Individualization*

Many of the things that came from this study deal with tangible items. Anyone could read the interviews and the journals and replicate many of the suggestions. Tangible suggestions include everything from classroom resources and gift baskets to gift cards and groceries. However, this group of teachers was clear in saying that the items alone did not make all of the difference. While it reportedly helped, according to each of the participants, the relationship and the individualization that each teacher felt with a principal or assistant principal was the biggest thing that kept them at this school. Although all tasks were completed in a positive, professional, meaningful manner, the relationships and the simple fact that administrators cared enough to take an interest in new teachers and their needs made a lasting difference with each of these teachers. It was clear that these personal relationships were a reason why beginning teachers choose to stay at CCH Middle School.

*Research Question #2: Other than administrative efforts, what other factors influenced teachers to stay at this particular school site?*

Both beginning teachers and their mentors had the chance to share information about items aside from administrative efforts that made them want to stay and continue teaching at this particular middle school. The most frequent teacher response was team mates. Each teacher participant commented that they also stay at this particular school because of their team mates on both the grade level and throughout the school. Teachers reported that they felt “welcomed at school” and that they “feel like they can go to just about anyone for help if they need it.”

Karen explained:

I think my teammates do play a part in why I stay here. I think they know that we sink or swim together. They watch out for me and offer me help throughout the year. I know that they are especially mindful of high stress times and they are always there to lend me a hand. It may not be my number one reason for staying, but yes, I'd say it does impact me a little.

Christina mentioned her teammates as well and commented:

My team is very much set up like a family here. I don't know if the administrative team does anything to foster that, but we are like a family. We take care of each other and we try to always help if there's a mean kid or an angry parent. I mean, we don't just leave one another out to dry. We're all in it together.

Other than team mates, no other collective effort or point was shared which had more than half of the participants in agreement.

Several other attractions were noted throughout the data; for example, location and academic freedom. Paul reported that the school's location itself played a part in why he chose to initially apply there. He noted during an interview that the school was "accessible to some major highways and that led me here and also plays a small part in why I stay here." The teacher explained that if the school had "unfavorable working conditions," he would not simply stay for the location, but "when you have a great school full of support and it just so happens to be a minute or two away from a major interstate, it does make you want to stay at that school for some level of traveling convenience."

Along with the school's location, Hannah highlighted in her journal that part of the reason she stayed at CCH was academic freedom in the classroom. She wrote, "I stay

at CCH because I know that I have more academic freedom and more control over what I teach and how I teach it. Although this is only one of the reasons I stay here, it is a reason.”

### *Summary*

As I reflected, I could tell that I had learned a great deal from the participants. I learned what things impacted them and what made them want to stay at this school in particular. I learned that collectively, they wanted to be treated as professionals and respected by those around them. The participants wanted to see and know that administrators cared about them and valued them in the work place and outside of school as well. They wanted to work for administrators that cared about their time, understood their needs, and worked to form a personal connection with them.

In addition, the teachers have a voice at CCH Middle School and they want it to be heard. They want to be involved in what is planned for them and offered to them. These themes of caring for new teachers, valuing beginning teachers, and hearing their voices were present in a multitude of areas including the school’s staff development opportunities and daily interactions between teachers and administrators.

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative study explored one middle school that had a 100% teacher retention rate with all of their beginning classroom teachers. Teacher interviews, mentor interviews, and teacher journals shed light on the administrative efforts which new teachers reported caused them to stay at this particular middle school, therefore having a positive impact on teacher retention.

Chapter Five, the final chapter, outlines conclusions which are based upon the findings. This chapter also discusses implications and contributions of this study in regard to the field of education. Lastly, Chapter Five offers numerous recommendations for those responsible for teacher retention efforts, and it also offers recommendations for further research concerning the effective retention of beginning classroom teachers, specifically those in their first, second, third, or fourth year of teaching. As promised in Chapter One, I will share the information I have explored and gathered. This study was guided by two primary questions:

1. Within a successful school which retains 100% of their beginning teachers, what did the teachers report that the administrative team did to support them and make them want to stay at their respective site?
2. Other than administrative efforts, what other factors influenced teachers to stay at this particular school site?

### *Primary Goals*

My goals as the researcher were multi-faceted. The research was completed for professional gains and because of personal interest. It was my intent to dialogue with participants about what administrators were doing at this school to achieve the 100% teacher retention rate, yet to also determine if other factors outside of the administrators' control were playing a part in why teachers chose to stay at CCH Middle School. I also wanted to accurately convey the messages of beginning classroom teachers so that other new teachers and various school personnel could benefit from the information they shared. My ultimate goal was to share the messages of this group with those who were willing to hear their voices.

### *Conclusions*

There were several key conclusions that can be drawn from the teacher interviews, the teacher journals, and the mentor interviews. Each conclusion was identified as a teacher retention effort on the administrators' part and focused primarily on topics including staff development, mentoring, and teacher induction programs available to new teachers within the middle school. While teachers identified such topics as staff development and teacher induction programs as reasons they chose to stay, an analysis shows that while these did play a part in causing the teachers to stay, there were also many other feelings associated with each topic which led to a high teacher retention rate as well. Each of these administrative efforts were identified by the beginning classroom teachers as something that substantially made them want to stay specifically at CCH Middle School as opposed to going to other middle schools. The results were confirmed by the mentors. There were multiple conclusions that were formed which lead

to recommendations that potentially strengthen and positively impact teacher retention programs at other schools, at all levels, and in various school districts.

### *Staff Development*

Based on the research findings, I learned that staff development does play a significant part in retaining new classroom teachers. The voices of beginning teachers at CCH Middle School supported various researchers who stress the positive impact and meaning associated with staff development that is planned and implemented well (Haar, 2007; Knight, 2006; Olson, 2007; Parsons, 2003; Wong, 2003). The findings of this study revealed that staff development and several factors involved with staff development such as timing, content, and delivery style not only helped teachers become stronger in a variety of areas, but the ways in which the professional opportunities were implemented sent messages of encouragement and hope to the new teachers. Staff development was mentioned by every participant as a key to teacher retention. Participants also reported that the quality staff development which they received took a great deal of time and effort to prepare and implement, which made them feel extremely valued. The professional development opportunities themselves, coupled with great attention to detail on the administrative team's part, made a positive and lasting impact on this group of new teachers.

The content of the staff development planned by CCH administration was a topic that was often mentioned by beginning classroom teachers and their assigned mentors. The content of monthly staff development was very important also. Typically, teachers spoke of topics that were highly important to them such as classroom management, differentiation, and student discipline; this is directly supported by Knight (2006) and

Olson (2007) who encouraged those that planned staff development to ensure that the content delivered to teachers was practical, beneficial, and applicable to each participant.

While the participants did report that the staff development was a reason they chose to stay at CCH Middle School, there were numerous other things associated with the staff development which really made a positive impact on this group of new teachers; for example, having a voice in staff development. They were excited about staff development because some of the planning power had been relinquished to them. They were free to choose what would help them the most as a group. Participants reported that the information learned at each meeting was useful and beneficial, yet this “voice” that the group spoke of regularly seemed to be weighted even more heavily.

It is important to highlight that the teachers expressed a strong opinion about voice. They were adamant that the “voice” component associated with staff development made them want to stay at CCH Middle School. The staff development piece minus the “voice” would not have been as influential as a teacher retention tool, according to this group. They clearly reported that having someone listen to them and consider their feedback caused them to feel vested in the school.

Both new teachers and mentors said they felt most schools say that they gather input from faculty before planning and implementing staff development opportunities; However, they also said they believe that there is a major, unhealthy disconnect when it comes to the reality of staff development planned by those outside of their school’s administrative team. For example, and best illustrated by Karen’s statement, “words and practice do not always match.”

Karen was quick to explain that she had graduated from a nearby university and she further explained that she was in a graduating cohort where most of her classmates lived and worked in the district where CCH is located. Karen also reported that she remains in touch with many of these fellow classmates. She was quick to share that based upon her conversations with fellow beginning teachers at other schools, in her opinion, most schools say that teacher input drives staff development, yet in the end, this is not always the case. Karen explained that saying you have teacher input is the “right thing” to say when you are questioned by others. She also stated that “claiming that teacher feedback guides your staff development is the politically correct thing to do.” Karen and Rick reported that the way CCH administrators tailor staff development to the needs of each teacher, allowing feedback and suggestions at every point throughout the year, is not always true based on their experiences at other schools and conversations that they reported having with new teachers from other schools. Karen also stressed that as she travels to other school sites for orientations and professional development work sessions, the staff development at other schools is nothing like the staff development which occurs at CCH Middle School. She is quick to report that many of her visits to other schools for staff development often begin late, go over the allotted time frame, are filled with lecture, and have very little opportunity for teachers to share or voice their opinions. She, like all participants, was grateful for the sensitive and focused efforts that were taken when planning the staff development at CCH Middle School by the principal and other assistant principals.

Furthermore, this group of new teachers voiced an appreciation about being able to choose when and where they met for their staff development. Further, they enjoyed

the chance to select what topics were addressed and who would serve as the group's presenters. This made the group feel as though they were a serious priority for school leaders on their campus. They felt as though the administration cared about them and treated them as professionals while honoring the collective voice of the group. It was clear time and time again that the participants felt like the administration cared about them.

I also learned that additional focus should be given to beginning and year-end retreats. While I can see how all of the staff development opportunities mentioned were meaningful and provided great modeling and numerous resources for teachers, the retreats were definitely highlights for 100% of the new teachers.

As evident in my findings, there were many things that made the retreats exceptional, as opposed to the more common "meet and greet" sessions for new teachers, which they described as typically lackluster and not well prepared by school stakeholders. I realized quickly that the consequences and effects of a poorly planned meeting are far more lasting than the initial meetings themselves. These retreats made beginning teachers feel professional. According to this group of participants, a good beginning and a great deal of effort will produce teachers who then go out and for months feel valued, appreciated, and cared for as professionals.

While some teachers were quick to point out how the all-day retreats, which were off campus, made other activities at other schools fade in comparison, as an administrator, other implications were made as well. When new teachers feel neglected or "put off" at the start and close of a year, they remember it all year long. One small event can play a part in the success or overall failure of a new teacher. The beginning

and end of a school year is the perfect time to remember your new teachers, show that you care about their needs, and also nurture their personal side. In the end, data from the interviews and teacher journals show that the beginning and end of year retreats, which were instituted with great detail for new teachers, was most certainly a shining administrative effort that positively impacted teacher retention and kept teachers working at CCH Middle School. This finding does in fact confirm research that demonstrates how effective staff development can be as a tool for administrators, when it is planned thoroughly and used to teach and retain beginning classroom teachers (Breaux and Wong, 2003; Haar, 2007; Knight, 2006; Olson, 2007).

Hannah, one of the beginning teachers, summarized information regarding the retreats nicely. She stated:

To say that the retreats we have are staff development opportunities really shortchanges all that goes into these events. You walk away from the well-planned events with your arms full, your mind full, and your heart full. With my arms, I walk away with a personalized jacket, classroom resources, gift cards, food, books, and other phenomenal prizes. My mind is spilling over just as much as my arms. I am thinking about the new activities, how I can better question kids, what my homework needs to look like, how I can organize my room, and things that will enhance my classroom web site. And lastly, most importantly, my heart is full. I feel loved. I feel cared for. I feel like my administrators are also my friends. My heart feels encouraged and I feel as though we're really in this all together, not just today, but all year long. How many people can say all that about a staff development session?

### *Mentoring*

The beginning classroom teacher has a great deal to manage when they accept a teaching position and assume all of the associated responsibilities for approximately 100 middle school students or more. As suggested in the literature, mentoring is one of the most common attempts at helping new teachers feel as though they are supported both at the time of hire and throughout the year as well (Bartell, 2005; Hicks, Glasgow, & McNary, 2005; Lee, et al., 2006; Nguyen, 2000;). I was most surprised to realize that mentoring at this school site was not as important as staff development and healthy relationships with the administrative team members. This is in opposition with some of the most current literature (Breux & Wong, 2003; Jonson, 2008), which says mentoring is one of the most important keys to beginning teacher retention.

The mentoring relationship in general was not discussed on more than two occasions, and then the comments and remarks made by beginning teachers made mentoring look significantly less beneficial as an effort to retain them. With the exception of one case, each new teacher said that having a mentor or not having a mentor, quality or not, would have very little impact on them staying at this particular middle school. Paul stated clearly, "I like my mentor but I can't say that my mentor provided me with something that I think I couldn't get at another school. I can't really report that having a mentor would be one of the reasons that I stayed here." Christina had a similar, yet more direct comment, stating, "I can definitely say that I did not choose to stay at CCH because of my mentor." They were quick to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to the system and the school for having a mentor teacher, yet none of the beginning classroom teachers deemed mentoring as an effective administrative effort

which made them want to stay at CCH Middle School long term. Collectively, the group seemed to think that people outside of the official mentor would be willing to help, guide, and assist new teachers as needed and in a very effective manner when given the chance.

This study identified a possible disconnect between the use of mentoring and how effective it may or may not be for beginning classroom teachers. The literature suggests that mentoring is one of the best ways to combat new teachers leaving the classroom (Bartell, 2005; Hicks, 2005; Nguyen, 2009) and exiting the profession, yet with this school there is 100% success without this component. In fact, the mentors themselves saw their roles as supportive and not necessarily related to actual teacher retention efforts. Mentors were quick to say that teacher retention efforts should be facilitated and monitored by school administrators. Mentors also reported that teacher retention was not one of their primary focuses as they worked with new teachers.

Assigning a qualified mentor to each and every beginning classroom teacher is not only costly, but it also takes a great deal of time when it comes to training mentors, assigning mentors, and monitoring the time that is spent with each new classroom teacher. As an administrator, I expected a stronger correlation between such a costly attempt at retaining teachers and the feedback that was shared by beginning classroom teachers who were in fact successfully retained.

#### *Teacher Induction Programs*

The findings of this study offer essential insight into the needs of new teachers. Beginning classroom teachers require a significant support system in order to ensure greater success with students and also lead to higher teacher retention rates. The data supports current literature and revealed that teacher induction programs, when planned in

a thorough, teacher-centered manner, can increase the likelihood that new teachers will want to stay at their respective school sites (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2006; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Futernick, 2007). Participants shared that while simply having a teacher induction program will not be enough to positively impact teacher retention rates, having a program where teachers are included with the planning, where administrators are directly involved, and where effective classroom instruction is a constant focus can increase the rate of retention for beginning classroom teachers.

Beginning teachers in this study spoke regularly about administration and induction programs. While the group felt that induction programs could be successful without a principal being in charge of the program, it was clear that they felt empowered, supported, and encouraged by knowing that they were not simply delegated out to someone else, but instead taken care of, guided, and taught individually by their school administrators. The beginning teachers spoke regularly about how they had never heard of a principal or assistant principal taking on the challenge of new teachers as far as teaching and learning was concerned. In most cases, they reported lead mentors or other personnel being utilized to plan programs for beginning teachers. Here again, I learned that teacher induction programs can be beneficial in regard to increasing teacher retention rates, yet there are other components that have to be addressed and planned for. The group's thoughts on having an administrator that new teachers can connect with on a personal level, relate to as a professional, and learn from can make teachers want to stay at one site over another one. This was supported by current literature (Garies & Little, 2006; Grady & Brock, 2005; Haar, 20007) who stress the importance of school administrators working with new teacher directly, taking a personal interest in their

success, and assuming the role of instructional leader. This interaction with the principal and the assistant principals sends a strong message that new teachers matter and they are a priority.

In short, teacher induction programs are present on many school campuses in various school districts all across the nation. However, the quality associated with teacher induction programs may need to be addressed. Feedback from the beginning classroom teachers at CCH Middle School involved with this study supported what Harry Wong (2003) and others reported (Garies & Little, 2006; Grady & Brock, 2005; Haar, 2007) when they found that an induction program is far more than simply assigning a mentor to a new teacher at an informational orientation session. Teacher induction programs have to make concentrated, multi-year efforts at supporting, leading, and truly teaching new educators how to become stronger instructional leaders in their classrooms. All teacher induction programs need goals that are grounded within the school's mission statement, regular benchmarks for monitoring teacher's and student's success, and teacher feedback at various points throughout the school year.

This means that leaders and administrators will have to place additional time and energy into building meaningful teacher induction programs. School administrators need to create strong, teacher-centered induction programs where beginning classroom teachers feel welcomed, supported, and encouraged. Information has to be gathered from veteran teachers, new teachers, and other experts associated with teacher retention and the formation of a teacher induction program has to begin months before the arrival of new teachers. It can not, as stressed by this group of beginning teachers, be formed two weeks prior to the start of school, based upon what they hear from beginning teacher

team mates at other schools. If a teacher induction program is going to be successful, it will take far more than that which seems to be offered at many schools. Children and new teachers are worth more than the doughnuts, juice, and supplies that are tossed at them at the beginning and close of each school year.

### *Leadership Roles*

Although the information dealing with leadership roles came up with only four of the teacher participants, I discovered that leadership roles, like teacher induction programs, do play a part in why some of the beginning teachers chose to stay at CCH Middle School. As evidenced from the data collected, I saw from the teacher interviews and the journals that offering a leadership role to new teachers makes them feel “respected and treasured.” While one teacher was asked to serve as a club advisor, two other beginning classroom teachers were asked to serve on leadership teams within the school. Each teacher shared that this request from the administrative team, to serve in this capacity, did play a part in why they chose to remain at this school.

It was good to see from the participants that it was not only the positions which caused them to stay, but also that school leaders saw them as professional and competent enough to serve in these leadership positions. One teacher mentioned that often veteran teachers see new teachers as inexperienced, too “touchy-feely,” or “wet behind the ears.” Beginning teachers felt empowered that the administrative team would take a chance on them as they assigned or requested that they work in leadership roles for the school.

I think although at times administrators may think that keeping things off of a new teacher’s plate is most appropriate, sometimes this is just not the case. New teachers bring a great deal of energy, creativity, and service to the schools where they teach.

While you never want a beginning teacher to feel overwhelmed or as if the classroom is secondary to a club or sport, the data in this case suggested that opening up leadership opportunities to new teachers could play a part in why they choose to stay at one school over another. Hannah, a second-year teacher participant in this study, made a point often forgotten. She explained that “taking care” of new teachers is a tough role to balance. She further stated that although new teachers want to “be protected and sheltered from a lot of things,” they also “want and need to feel as though they are a valued professional on the school’s team.” She went on to say that “sometimes we’re up for the challenge of a leadership role, we just need to know that someone else thinks we’re up for it too.”

During the interviews, along with Hannah, Rick, Phyllis, and Christina also spoke specifically about leadership opportunities. Each one of the beginning teachers knew that as a new teacher they were not required to coach a sport, advise a club, or serve in any other capacity outside of the instructional school day. However, each of these individuals were approached by a member of the administrative team and solicited for various leadership roles within the school. While not required, the teachers reported that they were encouraged to think about possibly serving the school in one of several different roles. All four of the previously named teachers welcomed this chance and commented on the impact that serving as a leader for the school had on their successful retention. Each candidate felt that if their administrator believed in them enough to request that they serve others in a leadership capacity, they were definitely more likely to stay at this particular school as opposed to leaving for another position. The leadership role made them feel vested, secure, and grounded as part of the team, regardless of their status as a new or beginning classroom teacher.

*Other Factors*

In regard to other factors, aside from administrative efforts, only one teacher mentioned the school's location and student population as a reason which may have slightly impacted him staying at CCH Middle School. No other participant mentioned either of those two reasons when explaining how they had been successfully retained.

Money was not a factor for this group of beginning teachers either. None of the teachers identified pay as a reason that made them want to stay at CCH Middle School, nor did pay make the teachers want to choose a surrounding county with a higher teaching supplement. This downplay on money supported current literature that says focusing on teacher pay as a means for increasing retention is not an effective means for retaining beginning teachers (Garies & Little, 2006; Greiner & Smith, 2007; Imazeki, 2005). Based upon information which was shared and the items that participants said caused them to stay at this school, the findings of this research study demonstrated that factors such as teacher pay, the location of the school, and student population did not play a key part in retaining this group of new teachers. These findings are consistent with findings in previous research which outlines although many people think teacher pay and location may impact retention, it often does not have a significant impact (Garies & Little, 2006).

There was one consistent item that was shared collectively by all six members of the beginning teacher group when it came to things that made them stay at CCH Middle School, aside from administrative efforts; this was team mates. As evident in my findings, who you work with on a daily basis does impact whether or not you want to stay at your current teaching location. This conclusion also has significant implications for

those that work to retain beginning classroom teachers. School administrators must continuously be aware of group dynamics and interactions. Administrators have to know teachers well and be able to identify major strengths and weaknesses. Placement of a new teacher on the “right” team can be the difference in making them successful or having them leave the teaching profession altogether.

### *Study Benefits*

Chapter One outlined the need for a study such as this one. The site selected was a school which had a 100% teacher retention rate with educators in their first, second, third, and fourth year of classroom teaching. The purpose of this study was to identify which administrative efforts had a positive impact on teacher retention. It was also to identify what other factors, aside from administrative efforts, may have influenced teachers to stay at this particular site. My goal was to accurately capture the voices of the teacher participants, send the messages they wanted others to hear, and collect data from a group of successful beginning teachers in regard to what their needs were and what positively impacts teacher retention. This part of the chapter will highlight the benefits of this study.

After careful examination, the majority of the existing literature focusing on retention efforts for beginning classroom teachers reviews ways to retain new teachers, yet fails to include beginning teachers as study participants. In addition, recent literature asked principals, mentors, and even new teachers who have left the profession what it takes to effectively retain a greater percentage of beginning classroom teachers; however, it again fails to question new teachers themselves (Breux & Wong, 2003; Brown, 2003; Garies, 2006; Haar, 2007; Huntly, 2008; Knight, 2006; Kutcy & Schulz, 2006; Spinella,

2008; Quinn & Andrews, 2004). In one documented piece of literature, a successful beginning classroom teacher was surveyed, yet it was only one teacher and not a group of new teachers (Brown, 2005). There is a need to survey successful beginning teachers collectively as opposed to surveying other school stakeholders. In addition, there is a need to find participant groups that are larger than one or two individuals.

Effectively retaining new teachers is getting more and more difficult as evidenced by half of the new teacher population leaving the profession each year (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This qualitative case study, a detailed description of the experiences of beginning classroom teachers who are part of a school which has a 100% retention rate with new teachers, helps us to better understand the needs of new teachers and how these needs can best be addressed. This case study gives readers the chance to examine specific things that one administrative team did in order to reach the atypical retention rate of 100%. In short, this study describes effective administrative efforts, as reported by new teachers, to retain beginning classroom teachers. With firsthand information from new teachers who have been successfully retained, school leaders and administrators can see certain components which caused new teachers to stay at this particular school. In turn, this information could be used and replicated in other schools so that teacher retention rates for beginning teachers can be drastically and positively impacted.

The main participants in this study were beginning classroom teachers, as opposed to other studies where principals, assistant principals, district leaders, and mentor teachers offered feedback and suggestions on effective teacher retention (Breux & Wong, 2003; Brown, 2003; Garies, 2006; Haar, 2007; Huntly, 2008; Knight, 2006;

Kutcy & Schulz, 2006; Spinella, 2008; Quinn & Andrews, 2004). While mentor teachers were included during the interviewing, they were not the primary focus of the data collection.

In addition, this study is different from others in regard to the number of participants. The study included six beginning classroom teachers and three mentors. Other studies utilized one or two beginning teachers only or other stakeholders aside from new teachers themselves (Brown, 2005).

Knowing the needs of new teachers, questioning new teachers about working conditions, and planning effective teacher retention programs is imperative for the development of beginning teachers. This qualitative case study is helpful in understanding ways to create a program which not only retains new teachers, but also promotes lifelong learning and encouragement among them. A potential increase for schools in the number of new teachers retained will also hopefully have a positive impact on student achievement and the overall quality of daily instruction and education for students everywhere. Principals especially, should have an interest in schools that can retain 100% of their beginning teachers. This is an atypical situation and school administrators should be open to finding and using new tactics for teacher retention.

As mentioned previously, this study is beneficial for students, teachers, and school administrators. The study has benefits for school districts holistically as well. Effectively retaining quality teachers can impact the instruction that students receive in the classroom (Olson, 2007). Additionally, increasing the teacher retention rate for beginning classroom teachers will save thousands and thousands of dollars for school

systems (Barnes, 2004). This money can be utilized in other ways to serve students of varying levels and with varying abilities and backgrounds.

It is my hope that by sharing the experiences of beginning classroom teachers who have been retained, further research will be completed on this topic. I am also hopeful that this study will help school stakeholders address lower teacher retention rates for new teachers and ultimately, support new teachers and make them more successful as they look for better ways to serve children.

#### *Recommendations for Professional Practice*

Teacher retention is an important topic for any school administrator. It is especially important when dealing with populations such as beginning classroom teachers. New teachers often enter a classroom with admirably high levels of energy and enthusiasm. They have the best interest of students at heart and they typically put in countless hours for the good of their students. However, with so many factors to take into consideration and with a workload that can be unmanageable for even the best classroom teacher, at times, schools experience a huge loss when it comes to beginning classroom teachers being effectively retained (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The following are recommendations for professionals in the field of education in regard to effectively retaining beginning classroom teachers.

#### *Professional Practice Recommendation One: Recognize the Need*

First and foremost, simple recognition is key. It is important that school professionals realize the potential in beginning classroom teachers. Additionally, school leaders have to identify that teacher retention amongst new teachers is a struggle that has to be addressed. Recognizing the issue at hand and making a commitment to find

solutions is imperative for all school administrators if they are to effectively retain a higher number of new teachers each year. A large part of this study surrounds the voice of beginning teachers calling others to act on their behalf. The new teachers in this research study recognize that individually, a great deal of progress can not be made with teacher retention efforts. However, they recognize that collectively, they do have the power to share their stories and impact the field of education on a greater level.

*Professional Practice Recommendation Two: Listen Attentively*

I would also recommend that school administrators and leaders listen more attentively to their beginning teachers. While it may sound simple and look effortless on paper, this is not the case. New teachers are bright professionals who typically know what they need assistance with. They know themselves very well and with some support, they can identify their greatest strengths and weaknesses far quicker than someone else. As we truly listen to new teachers, we have to treat them with a high level of professional courtesy.

We not only need to listen to the voices of beginning classroom teachers, but we also need to commit ourselves to being their voice. At the school level we need to speak up on behalf of new teachers and let others know that they are a priority. We need to create safeguards which protect beginning teachers with everything from class size to course assignments. We need to lead by example and let all teachers know that ultimately, we are all mentoring new teachers in some form or fashion as various needs arise. In addition, we need to serve as their voice and advocate at the district level. As mandates are created and tasks are assigned to beginning teachers, new teachers need the

voice of someone that will simply do what is right, fair, and just when it comes to issues that deal with them.

*Professional Practice Recommendation Three: Implement Effective Staff Development*

Staff development is critical, and the effective planning and implementation is key. If you take the time to care, nurture, and effectively teach, beginning teachers will in turn feel valued, see themselves as a part of your school family, and be more productive for their students and the school as a whole. Professional development has to be a priority and it can serve as a vehicle for advancement when it comes to beginning classroom teachers. This advancement may come in the form of instruction, discipline, classroom management, or other important areas.

In addition to content, staff development has to have someone's attention, preferably an administrator, all year long. This is not merely a topic that can be addressed at the beginning of a year and at the close of a year. Additionally, when staff development is being planned, not only should beginning teachers be involved with the planning process, but special attention needs to be paid to detail. The teacher participants stressed the amount of detail and attention that was given to every component associated with the staff development ranging from planning and preparation to time limits and site selections. It is also imperative to remember to focus on the following items when staff development is planned and delivered: instructional leadership, teacher encouragement, rejuvenation, and teacher reflection.

*Professional Practice Recommendation Four: Assign Beginning Teachers to an Administrator*

I would also recommend that a principal or assistant principal take charge of beginning classroom teachers and the events surrounding them. Not only does it help create healthy relationships, but it speaks volumes to new teachers about how important they are to the school.

Principals and school administrators need to also pay special attention to issues concerning human resources. One, it is essential to place a high level of importance on teaming. New teachers will need a team which is positive, effective, student-centered, and encouraging. The lasting impacts of placing a new teacher on a team within a school will not only impact that teacher's life, but it will also likely impact their students. Taking the time initially to find the best fit for each beginning teacher with a qualified mentor can yield many rewards for teachers and students in countless advantageous ways.

Secondly, in regard to human resources, mentoring at the school level must be studied in order to maximize usage and effectiveness. Based upon the feedback from retained beginning teachers at this specific school, mentoring may not be as effective as is commonly thought. With new teachers, the associated monetary costs, and the amount of time invested in mentoring taken into consideration, additional information and various forms of data needs to be gathered if the role of a mentor is going to be more effective and beneficial.

*Professional Practice Recommendation Five: Walk your Talk*

Lastly, it is necessary for school leaders to make sure their thoughts and words match their actions. The beginning teachers and mentors in this study spoke about principals who reported one thing and then did another. The new teachers in this research study shared information about how administrators at other school sites would make promises, yet in reality, the words never came to fruition. The effective retention of beginning classroom teachers has to be brought back to the forefront of the minds of school leaders and administrators. Actions have to be taken in order to plan for, support, and lead beginning classroom teachers. It is not acceptable for administrators to merely talk about ways to support beginning teachers and speak of plans which ensure new teacher success. Instead, our words have to mirror our actions.

*Recommendations for Further Research*

The field of education is always changing. When you consider students, teachers, technology, needs, and resources, it is clear that regular change is inevitable. With such an ever-changing profession and with a topic such as effective teacher retention, further research is necessary. Recommendations include:

*Recommendation One: Examine Mentoring*

Mentoring is costly, and it is also one of the most common ways that schools report that they try to combat new teachers leaving the classroom. However, based upon the completed study, it is not clear that mentors play a significant part in retaining beginning classroom teachers at CCH Middle School. In fact, the data from this study suggested just the opposite, in that mentoring does not play a part in why teachers are effectively retained at this school in particular. Beginning teachers in this study simply

did not report mentors as a school related effort which caused them to stay at CCH Middle School. Research needs to be completed with beginning teachers so that mentor usage can be better used to meet the needs of new teachers. For whatever reason, there appears to be a large disconnect between the purposes of having a mentor and what the mentoring relationship actually yields.

*Recommendation Two: Expand Sample Size*

In addition, while my study included six teacher participants, I would suggest additional research using a larger number of effective beginning teachers who are part of a school with a proven record for success. A greater number of teacher participants would increase the level of validity and reliability associated with this study. It would also offer readers greater details about methods and techniques used to effectively retain beginning classroom teachers. While the collective voice of six beginning teachers can reflect a great deal of helpful information in regard to teacher retention and administrative efforts, increasing that number would offer additional benefits and a continuation of insight gained.

*Recommendation Three: Vary the Contexts*

I would recommend additional studies with various settings. While my study was completed in a primarily suburban school, it would be beneficial to find other schools in an urban or rural setting with effective new teacher retention programs. Furthermore, additional research would be beneficial if it were focused on the elementary or high school level. It would be interesting to see if techniques and messages from the middle school group of teachers compared to viewpoints and strategies from another level.

Again, this would only diversify the study and offer a higher level of generalization when it comes to a possible replication.

*Recommendation Four: Focus on Interpersonal Skills*

Lastly, I would recommend additional research that focuses on interpersonal skills. It would be interesting and beneficial to see what interpersonal skills are deemed as important by beginning teachers. In addition, it would also be advantageous if it could be determined how much benefit actually comes from the personality and dedication of an individual administrator, as opposed to the “things” that can be easily replicated by other administrators. Hopefully, one could learn about both areas, both tangible and interpersonal, for a combined effort to do what is best for new teachers and in general, students.

*Summary*

As beginning classroom teachers continue to leave the classroom and at times exit the profession altogether, it is vital that school leaders and administrators have a clearer, stronger understanding of the positive experiences which beginning classroom teachers reported as causing them to stay in the profession. CCH Middle School has a teacher retention rate of 100% with their beginning classroom teachers.

This qualitative case study adds to the previous literature associated with new teachers and what can be done by school administrators to effectively retain new classroom teachers. Examining various schools that are successful at retaining new teachers and then exploring the methods used to increase teacher retention is necessary if we are to gain a more in-depth understanding of the topic. This case study offers readers the chance to examine and understand a middle school where beginning classroom

teachers have been effectively retained for four years. The collected data showed that teachers who feel they have a voice that is heard by the administration, feel as though they are cared for by administrators, and feel treated like professionals, are more likely to be retained.

My secondary goals were to thoroughly understand, describe, and then explain the retention program in place at this particular school. My primary goal however, was to hear the participants and accurately serve as their voice as they took part in the study and shared personal experiences and feelings associated with the topic of new teacher retention.

In the end, I learned from the participants that although others may make them feel as though they do not matter at times, school administrators at CCH make them feel as though they do matter. This group of new teachers has a lot to offer students, colleagues, and school administrators. They are looking for their time to shine as they teach, help others, and change the face of education. As they do these things, they certainly feel that CCH administrators are willing and able to assist them each and every step of the way. Their words, comments, and suggestions are offered to those who serve in schools and who wish to have a positive impact on retention with beginning teachers for years to come.

## REFERENCES

- AARP's Educator Community and Farmers Insurance. (2003). *Exodus: a study of teacher retention in america*. Washington, DC: Author.
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities. (2006). *Teacher induction programs: Trends and opportunities*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Barkameyer, Nancy. Personal interview. 8 Jan. 2010.
- Bartell, C. A. (2005). *Cultivating high-quality teaching through teacher induction and mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Blanson, A. (2005). A case study of teacher retention at one urban school district. Retrieved April 12, 2010 from <http://repository.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/3820>
- Breaux, A. & Wong, H. (2003). *New teacher induction: How to train, support, and retain new teachers*. Mountain View, California: Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc.
- Brown, S. (2003). Working models: Why mentoring programs may be the key to teacher retention. *Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers*, 78(5), 8-21.
- Brown, S. W. (2005). Emily and Rebecca: A tale of two teachers. *Teaching and Teacher education* 21(1), 637-648.
- California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (1992). *Success for Beginning Teachers. The California New Teacher Project 1988-92*. Sacramento, CA: Author.
- Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education. (2003). *Special education teacher retention and attrition: a critical analysis of the literature*. Florida: Author.
- Cox, S., Parmer, T., Tourkin, S., Warner, T., and Lyter, D.M. (2007). Documentation for the 2004-2005 teacher follow-up survey (NCES 2007-349). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: University of Chicago Press.
- Doerger, D. W. (2003). The importance of beginning teacher induction in your school. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*, 7(21), 20-30.
- Educational Alliance at Brown University. (2004). *Minority teacher recruitment, development, and retention*. Rhode Island: Author.

- Farrar, Timothy. Personal interview. 2 Dec. 2009.
- Futernick, K. (2007). *A possible dream: Retaining California's teachers so all students learn*. Sacramento: California State University.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245.
- Gall, J.P. Gall, M.D., & Borg, W.R. (2005). *Applying Educational Research: A Practical Guide*. Boston: Pearson.
- Garies, C. and Little, C. (2006). *Teacher pay and teacher quality: Attracting, developing, and retaining the best teachers*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Grady, M. & Brock, B. (2005). *Developing a beginning teacher induction plan: Guide for school leaders*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Greiner, C. & Smith, B. (2006). Determining the effect of selected variables on teacher retention. *Education*, 126(4), 653-659.
- Haar, J.M. (2007). Retaining experienced, qualified teachers: The principal's role. *The Rural Educator*, 28(2), 8-34.
- Hanushek, E. A., Kain J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2001). Why public schools lose teachers. *NBER Working Paper Series*, 8599, 1-24.
- Hiemstra, R. (2002). *Promoting journal writing in adult education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hicks, C., Glasgow, N., & McNary, S. (2005). *What successful mentors do*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Hirsch, E., & Emerick, S. (with Church, K., & Fuller, E.). (2007). *Teacher working conditions are student learning conditions: A report on the 2006 North Carolina teacher working conditions survey*. Hillsborough, NC: Center for Teaching Quality.
- Huntly, H. (2008). Beginning teachers' conceptions of competence. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 1(5), 125-145.
- Imazeki, J. (2005). Teacher salaries and teacher attrition. *Economics of Education Review*, 24(4), 431-449.

- Ingersoll, R. M. (2002). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*, 86(631), 16-31.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 30-33.
- Johnson, S. M. & Birkeland, S. E. (2003). The schools that teachers choose. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 20-24.
- Jonson, K. F. (2008). *Being an effective mentor: How to help beginning teachers succeed*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.
- Kanno, Y. (1997). *Researcher-Participant Relationship in Narrative Inquiry*. Chicago: American Education Research Association.
- Knight, J. (2006). Instructional coaching: Eight factors for realizing better classroom teaching through support, feedback and intensive, individualized professional learning. *The School Administrator*, 63(4), 36-40.
- Kutcy, C. & Schulz, R. (2006). Why are beginning teachers frustrated with the teaching profession? *McGill Journal of Education*, 41(1), 77-89.
- Lawson, H. A. (1992). Beyond the new conception of teacher induction. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(3), 163-172.
- Madsen, C. K. & Hancock, C. B. (2002). Support for music education: a case study of issues concerning teacher retention and attrition. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 50 (1). 6-19.
- Malloy, W. W. & Allen, T. (2007). Teacher retention in a teacher resiliency-building rural school. *The Rural Educator*, 28(2), 19-27.
- Mehra, B. (2002). Bias in qualitative research: Voices from an online classroom. *The Qualitative Report*, 7(1). Retrieved February 1, 2010, from <http://nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-1/mehra.html>
- Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- Meier, D. (2009). Reinventing schools that keep teachers in teaching. *Rethinking Schools*, 23(3). 1-14.
- Miner, B. (2009). Teaching's revolving door. *Rethinking Schools*, 23(2). 6-10.

- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2002). *Unraveling the "teacher shortage" problem: Teacher retention is the key*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2007). *The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts executive summary*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Nguyen, A. (2000). Class act: How to get better teachers. *Washington Monthly*, May.
- Olson, L. (2007). Top-to-bottom support. *Education Week*, 26(29), 24-26.
- Parsons, A. (2003). The importance of professional development. *Childhood Education*, 79(1).
- Quinn, R. J., & Andrews, B. D. (2004). The struggles of first-year teachers: Investigating support mechanisms. *Clearing House*, 77(4), 164.
- Seidel, J. (1995). *Using Computers in Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Spinella, F. A. (2008). *Principal's role in teacher retention*. Germany: VDM
- Sweeny, B. (1994). A new teacher mentoring knowledge base of best practices: a summary of lessons learned from practitioners. *Resources for Staff and Organizational Development*. Retrieved October 5, 2009 from <http://www.teachermentors.com/Mcenter%20Site?Mknow.html>
- Tellis, W. (1997). Introduction to case study. *The Qualitative Report*, 3(2), 30-41.
- Texas Center for Educational Research. (2000). *The cost of teacher turnover*. Austin: Texas State Board for Educator Certification.
- Wong, H. (2003). *Induction programs that keep working*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Wong, H. (2005). *New Teacher Induction and Mentoring: The State of The Art and Beyond*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Yin, R. (1989). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Rev. ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Yin, R. (2002). *Applications of case study research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Zepeda, S. J. (1992). *Staff development: Practices that promote leadership in learning*

*communities*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education.

Zonabend, F. (1992, Spring). The monograph in European ethnology. *Current Sociology*, 40(1), 49-60.

## APPENDIX A: TELEPHONE SCRIPT

I am completing a study at CCH Middle School and I wanted to share some information to see if you would be willing to serve as a study participant.

I have spoken with the school's principal and the system's Superintendent. They have both offered their support and their approval of the study.

May I tell you about the study?  
(wait for response)

This is a study that focuses on teacher retention and beginning teachers. The purpose of this project is to create a case study which examines one school, your school, that has had a teacher retention rate of 100%. It is my hope that this case study will assist other schools as they create effective teacher retention programs.

I, **James Davis**, will be the principal investigator and **Dr. Marvin Croy, Dr. Jeanneine Jones, Dr. David Pugalee, and Dr. Rosemary Traore**, all professors at **UNC Charlotte**, will serve as my faculty advisors.

As a participant, you would answer several questions in an interview setting and also keep a journal where you respond to three separate prompts. I can send you a letter of consent that outlines all of the specific information.

Would you be willing to assist me by serving as a study participant?

YES: conversation continues

\*NO: conversation ends

*\*The lead mentor has already agreed to serve as a participant in the study*

#### APPENDIX B: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following questions will be used during the interviews with beginning classroom teachers and they are listed in no particular order:

- I am interested in why teachers stay at this school in particular. Why do you stay at this school?
- I am specifically interested in how to better understand the role that administrators play in effectively retaining effective beginning classroom teachers. Is there anything particular that the school administrators did that impacted you staying here?
- What contributed to you staying here to teach?
- Were there times when you thought about leaving this school? Can you explain why you chose not to?
- What are the specific things that the administration did to support you here at CCH middle school?
- In your opinion, what else could the administrative team have done to assist you more effectively during your beginning years of classroom teaching at CCH middle school?
- Do you think you would have been as successful at another school as you were here?
- What are the favorable working conditions at this school which make you want to stay?
- What kind of advice would you give administration about how to positively impact teacher retention?

## APPENDIX C: CONSENT LETTER



The University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
 9201 University City Boulevard  
 Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

College of Education  
 Department of Middle, Secondary,  
 And K-12 Education  
 704/687/8875  
 FAX 704/687-6430

Dear Study Participant,

“**START: Supporting, Training, And Retaining Teachers**” is a study that focuses on teacher retention and beginning teachers. This study involves a research component and the purpose of this project is to create a case study which examines one school that has had a teacher retention rate of 100%. It is our hope that this case study will assist other schools as they create effective teacher retention programs.

I, **James Davis**, will be the principal investigator and **Dr. Warren DiBiase, Dr. Jeanneine Jones, and Dr. David Pugalee**, all professors at **UNC Charlotte**, will serve as my faculty advisors. Any teacher at **Northwest Cabarrus Middle School** in their first, second, third, or fourth year of teaching during the 06-07 year is eligible for participation in this study. In addition, the mentor will be interviewed. Teachers and mentors from outside of Northwest Cabarrus Middle School will not be interviewed.

There will be approximately 6-10 teacher participants. The data from all interviews will be transcribed, collected, and coded. The study will focus on what administrative efforts are being made to retain teachers. Participants will also journal three times when offered prompts by the research and dealing with administrative efforts to retain teachers.

Furthermore, participants will be interviewed individually unless otherwise requested by the participant. The information collected will be kept confidential. Upon completion of the study, all material will be destroyed. Only the researcher will have access to the raw data. The raw data will be kept on the hard drive of James Davis in a locked office. Access to the hard drive is password protected and only James Davis has access to his files. Raw data will not be shared with the group of teachers or the administrators of the teachers

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study. In addition, there are no benefits in participating. It is our hope that the study will reveal information that can be replicated at other school sites and used to positively impact teacher retention. There is also no compensation and no costs associated with this study. Participants can withdraw from the study at any point and without any form of penalty.

You are a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate in the study or if you stop once you have started. If you are hurt during this study, I will make sure you get the medical treatment you need for your injuries. However, the university will not pay for the medical treatment or repay you for those expenses.

UNC Charlotte wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the university’s Research Compliance Office (704-687-3309) if you have questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Dr. Jeanneine Jones (704-687-8876, [jpjones@uncc.edu](mailto:jpjones@uncc.edu)) or James Davis (704-857-7038, [davisjv@rss.k12.nc.us](mailto:davisjv@rss.k12.nc.us)).

I have read the information on this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age or am an emancipated minor. I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study. Thank you for your participation in this study. I understand how busy you are and appreciate your time very much. Sincerely,

James V. Davis, M.Ed, M. SA  
 Principal, China Grove Middle School / Doctoral Student, College of Education / UNC Charlotte  
 9201 University City Blvd. / Charlotte, NC 28223-0001 Phone: 704-213-6680 / Email: [davisjv@rss.k12.nc.us](mailto:davisjv@rss.k12.nc.us)

_____	_____
Participant	Date
_____	_____
Researcher	Date