

A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF NOVICE TEACHERS
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT EXPERIENCES IN HIGH-POVERTY HIGH-MINORITY
RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS

by

Celestine LaVan

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. David Benders, Committee Chair

Dr. Tara Mack, Committee Member

Dr. Abreena Inscore, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of novice teachers who remain teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina in relation to the administrative support they received. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) How do novice teachers describe their administrative support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority schools? (2) How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe administrative emotional and social support experiences? (3) How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe administrative instructional support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools? This study intended to capture the authentic voice of novice teachers who teach in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. The theory guiding this study was House's (1981) theory of social support as it grounds research that administrative behaviors such as leadership style, feedback, and support impact teacher career decisions. The method for this transcendental phenomenological study incorporated purposeful sampling, individual in-depth interviews and focus groups as the primary data collection methods. Data in this phenomenological study was analyzed by using reduction methods and analyzing specific statements to reveal overarching themes as recommended by Moustakas (1994).

Keywords: administrative support, high-poverty schools, high-minority schools, novice teacher, rural schools, teacher attrition, teacher retention

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my mother and father- who clipped my wings and encouraged me to fly. This work is also dedicated to the women in my family who fought the good fight yet lost the battle to cancer. I am achieving all that you would have expected of me.

To my children, go further, achieve higher and change the world. You are the best things that God ever gave me. Forgive me for any of my shortcomings. I love you so much.

Finally, to my husband, Cornillus, you have been right there with me through three degrees. Thank you for your understanding and supporting my goals.

Acknowledgment

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”- Philippians 4:13. First, I must acknowledge my Lord and Savior for providing me with the heart and courage to pursue my goals for the betterment of His people. My life is a testament that His grace is sufficient. To all my Liberty University professors, I say thank you for providing a quality and rigorous graduate and post-graduate experience. To my dissertation chair, Dr. Benders and committee members, Dr. Mack and Dr. Inscore, thank you for your feedback, encouragement, and commitment during this journey.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
Dedication.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
List of Tables	8
 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	 9
Overview.....	9
Background.....	10
Situation to Self.....	17
Problem Statement.....	18
Purpose Statement.....	19
Significance of the Study.....	21
Research Questions.....	23
Definitions.....	25
Summary.....	26
 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	 27
Overview.....	27
Theoretical Framework.....	28
Related Literature.....	32
Summary.....	58
 CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	 60

Overview.....	60
Design.....	60
Research Questions.....	62
Setting.....	62
Participants.....	63
Procedures.....	63
Role of Researcher.....	65
Data Collection.....	66
Data Analysis.....	73
Trustworthiness.....	76
Ethical Considerations.....	78
Summary.....	79
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	80
Overview.....	80
Participant.....	80
Anna.....	82
Bethany.....	83
Carlene.....	84
Debra.....	85
Evelyn.....	86
Freda.....	87
Grace.....	87
Henry.....	88

Isabella	88
Jason.....	89
Karen.....	89
Leanne.....	90
Madison.....	91
Results.....	92
Summary.....	107
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	108
Overview.....	108
Summary of Findings.....	108
Discussion.....	112
Implications.....	120
Delimitations and Limitations.....	125
Recommendations for Future Research.....	126
Summary.....	128
REFERENCES	130
APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM.....	140
APPENDIX B: INITIAL TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE.....	143
APPENDIX C: OPEN CODING RESULTS.....	144
APPENDIX D: THEME FORMATION RESULTS	146

List of Tables

Table 1: Participant Demographics.....	82
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Novice teacher attrition is a challenge disproportionately faced by poor, rural schools with large minority populations (Djonko-Moore, 2015; Guarino, Brown, & Wyse, 2011; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Coupled with the challenge of recruiting experienced teaching staff, high-poverty, high-minority rural schools feel the immediate effects of teacher turnover in staff morale and, most importantly, student achievement. Administrative support has been indicated throughout the literature as a key factor in novice teachers' career decisions (Boyd et al., 2011; Cancio, Albrecht, & John, 2013; Grissom, 2011; Ian, 2015; Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb, Kalogrides, & Beteille, 2012). However, a gap exists in the literature describing the authentic voice of a novice teachers' lived experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools as it relates to administrative support (Boyd et al., 2011; Brown & Wynn, 2005; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Ladd, 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; Wynn et al., 2007).

The focus of this transcendental phenomenological study is to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of novice teachers who remain teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. This research is intended to contribute to the literature on teacher attrition in high-poverty, high-minority schools by providing descriptions of novice teachers' lived experiences of administrative support in rural schools in South Carolina with high-poverty and high-minority populations. Understanding novice teachers' perceptions of administrative support will allow school leaders to examine existing practices and to develop support systems that increase the likelihood of novice teacher retention in schools serving the nation's most at-risk population.

Chapter One discusses the need for a study that deepens the understanding of novice teacher experiences in relation to administrative support in high-minority, high-poverty, rural schools. The chapter also provides an overview of current issues in teacher retention and attrition as well as the justification for conducting the study. Issues surrounding novice teacher attrition are presented in historical, social, and theoretical contexts. Lastly, the problem statement, purpose and significance of the study are presented followed by important definitions.

Background

Since the late 1990s, increased rates of teacher attrition have drawn researchers' attention to identifying the factors that influence teachers' decisions to transfer within and out of schools or to leave the profession altogether (Boyd et al., 2011; Ingersoll, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb, Darling-Hammond & Luczak, 2005). The rate of attrition among novice teachers, those having less than 3 years' experience, is the most pronounced issue in teacher retention. Roughly one-third of novice teachers exit the profession within the first 3 years (Brown & Wynn, 2007, Haynes, 2014, Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), and by year five, half leave the teaching profession completely (Ado, 2013; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). Considering that novice teachers "make tremendous improvement during their first years in the classroom," the need for addressing the shortage of qualified teachers in high-poverty, high minority rural schools becomes an issue of retention more so than recruitment (Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007, p. 210).

High rates of attrition and novice teacher turnover in schools with large minority populations results in classrooms filled with underqualified and inexperienced teachers and thwarts efforts toward closing the achievement gap between White and minority students. Continuous teacher turnover disrupts the continuity of instruction, negatively impacts staff morale, and undermines pedagogical efforts to elevate student achievement (Djonko-Moore,

2016, Guarino et al., 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2014). The escalating rate of teacher turnover places a significant burden on the US economy. Each year the United States spends approximately \$2.2 billion dollars to recruit, hire, train, and replace teachers (Haynes, 2014). The current literature on the impact of administrative support on novice teacher retention focuses primarily on large urban high-minority school systems. (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Djonko-Moore, 2016, Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014; Guarino et al., 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2014). This study contributes to the existing literature on novice teacher retention by examining the lived experiences of novice teachers with administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools.

Social Context

Teacher turnover has a considerable financial impact on the educational system and limits equitable access to qualified teachers in the nation's most vulnerable communities. A 2014 report produced by the Alliance for Excellent Education (Haynes, 2014) estimated the annual cost for recruiting and retaining novice teachers as almost \$2.2 billion dollars (p. 3). States and local districts are attempting to address teacher retention by allocating or increasing funding directly toward recruitment efforts in rural and high-poverty areas without little, if any, result. By focusing only on recruitment of new teachers, states are neglecting to examine ways to support early career teachers in ways that increase the likelihood of retention. In 2016, the South Carolina legislature passed a proviso to address the shortage of teachers, known as the Rural Teacher Recruiting Initiative, allowing the state to allocate \$1.5 million dollars toward recruitment efforts in rural areas (CERRA, 2016). While student loan forgiveness and salary step increases will draw teachers to one of the 42 South Carolina school districts affected by this proviso, the initiative may not reduce attrition or teacher transfers within the district to schools

with lower levels of poverty and minority enrollment if these teachers are not adequately supported.

Yearly funding allocated for recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers depletes resources that could otherwise be used to support novice teachers in disadvantaged areas and subsequently to improve student achievement. The elevated rates of teacher turnover in these high-poverty, high-minority schools require them to spend more of their available funding on teacher recruitment, hiring, and separation than high-performing schools with lower minority enrollment (Hunt & Carroll, 2003). In a study of high-poverty, high-minority schools in Wisconsin, Hunt and Carroll (2003) found that teacher turnover costs those schools \$67,000 more to annually recruit and hire new teachers. The researchers posit that developing systems to support new teachers in Wisconsin's high-poverty rural schools would allow for those same funds to be spent directly on efforts to improve student learning outcomes. Developing targeted support systems that encourage retention and influence job satisfaction should come at a lower financial cost particularly in rural, high-poverty schools that often face budgetary constraints (Ingersoll & May, 2016).

Teacher attrition impacts schools across the United States as school leaders strive to provide adequate support to novice teachers in an effort to retain quality teachers in the classroom. Although most previous research about attrition focuses on urban communities, high-poverty, high-minority rural schools have a great need for research devoted to retention of quality teachers (Boyd et al., 2011; Cancio et al., 2013; Ladd, 2011; Papay et al., 2015). To increase the likelihood of novice teacher success in rural schools with challenging populations, it is important to understand teachers' lived experiences in relation to administrative support and

the impact of those experiences on teachers' decision to continue teaching in economically challenging schools; this is the present study's aim.

The key to improving the educational outcomes for students in high-poverty, high-minority rural areas is to provide these students with equitable access to highly effective teachers (Goldhaber et al., 2014; Isenberg et al., 2013; Isenberg et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2011).

Addressing the societal context of novice teacher attrition in these schools involves acknowledging the pedagogical impact of the need to provide repeated training for teachers transferring in and out of our most at risks schools: it depletes the instructional momentum gained through professional development and collaborative planning and can halt academic progress. Career teachers who could support novice teachers through mentoring and collaborating feel burdened by the need to continually train novice teachers in basic pedagogy (Loeb et al., 2005). Attrition among career teachers leads to a reduction in available induction mentors who have pedagogical and organizational knowledge and whose support can promote retention among inexperienced teachers and student achievement.

Historical Context

The current shortage of experienced teaching staff in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools can be traced to desegregation. Declaring racial segregation of schools unconstitutional, the landmark case *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954) intended to bring equal opportunities for quality education to students of color through integration of the nation's public schools. The decision resulted, however, in unintended consequences that impacted the staffing of high-minority, high-poverty schools. As African-American students were bused to White schools and schools in African-American communities began to close, an estimated 39,000 African-American teachers across 17 states were terminated or displaced (White, 2016).

Desegregation policies also resulted in the loss of teachers of color who were “familiar with the cultural context of their students . . . having lived in communities in which they taught” (Milner & Howard, 2004, p. 286); school leaders were forced to hire African-American and White teachers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds who were less likely to remain in these schools if not granted adequate support (White, 2016). Subsequently, the number of African-American teachers began to steadily decline until by the 1970s, they represented a mere 12% of classroom teachers employed in the United States (White, 2016). To date, the overwhelming majority of classroom teachers in high-poverty, high-minority schools are White, female novice teachers, many of whom require additional support to engage students from diverse backgrounds (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Simon & Johnson, 2013). Goldenberg (2014) attributes this need for additional support to White female teachers’ “markedly different experiences” (p. 113). As a phenomenological study of novice teacher administrative support experiences in high-minority, high-poverty schools, this study illuminates the perceptions of support for all teachers serving in these schools.

Changes in the nation’s demographics has resulted in an increase in minority student enrollment, particularly in poor communities with already large minority populations. The National Center for Educational Statistic (2015) reported that while 50% of public school students are of a minority race, 80% of the teacher workforce is White and female, who leave high-poverty, high-minority schools at faster rates than their non-White counterparts. As a result, school leaders and policymakers have increased efforts to recruit minority teachers guided by the belief that minority teachers can best serve minority students and are more likely to remain committed to teaching in high-minority and high-poverty schools; consequently, this targeted recruitment has also been part of an effort to slow the cycle of teacher attrition in the most at-risk

schools. (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton & Freitas, 2010; White, 2016). However, without an influx of minorities entering the profession, researchers recommend further research into personalized and specific types of support that will keep teachers in schools serving disadvantaged populations (Goldenberg, 2013; Simon & Johnson, 2013; Papay & Kraft, 2016). By capturing novice teachers' experiences with administrative support in schools with disadvantaged populations, this study could provide school leaders with ideas for how to more effectively support novice teachers of all racial groups and varying background experiences, leading to increased retention rates among novice teachers.

Theoretical Context

Rising rates of teacher attrition have drawn researchers' attention to studying the factors that contribute to teacher transfer or career exit (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2011; Ingersoll, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb et al., 2005). Using national longitudinal data to report the cumulative rate of novice teacher turnover, Brown and Wynn (2007) found that over half of all novice teachers leave the field within the first 5 years of teaching. Research on teacher attrition points to factors such as inadequate pay, increased class sizes, job dissatisfaction, ineffective leadership, student misbehavior, and lack of support as causes of teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb et al., 2012; Marshall, 2015). One factor consistently emerges from the current research on retention: the impact of perceived administrative support. Perceptions of administrative support have been directly linked to job satisfaction for both new and career teachers and have a tremendous influence on teacher retention decisions (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Goldring et al., 2014; Ingersoll, 1999). Ingersoll (2005) found that teacher turnover rates were lower in schools where teachers reported high levels of perceived administrative support and lower enrollment of minority students.

Current literature does not, however, include the authentic voice or lived experiences of novice teachers' perceptions of administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Borman and Dowling (2008) provide a general definition of administrative support as "assisting teachers with issues such as discipline, instructional methods, curriculum and adjusting to the school environment" (p. 380). Boyd et al. (2011) suggested additional studies to identify "what in particular the administrator does or does not do that influences a teacher to stay" (p. 329). Ado's (2013) research supports the need for school leaders to "provide flexible support for all teachers" (p. 149).

The social support theory (House, 1981) posits that organizational practices impact the development of supportive relationships. Social support, according to House (1987), "is most often measured in terms of perceived psychological sentiments" (p. 137). The support-matching hypothesis calls specific attention to how supportive actions may promote coping when the support provided by others matches the cause and level of stress (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cohen et al., 2000; Viswesvaran, Sanchez & Fisher, 1999). In a study led by Jean Cladinin (2016) on attrition among early career teachers, the researchers posit that novice teacher support should be "tailored to each person and context" (Clandinin et al., 2016). The researchers summarized the need for further research as follows:

What is known, usually, is that they are beginning teachers, which means a great deal is assumed but very little is known except how long they have been teaching. With no idea of how to support them, perhaps what is imagined as support is not support. Worse still, the support that is offered might be harmful to sustaining them in composing their lives as teachers. (p. 6)

The theoretical framework guiding the present study is grounded in House's (1981) theory of social support. Understanding how teachers perceive the support provided is important to understanding how best to support them in the early years of their career. House's theory corroborates research that finds administrative behaviors, such as leadership style and feedback, help new teachers transition into the profession. Conversely, the theory supports the idea that a perceived lack of support or unmatched support negatively impacts teachers career decisions. A close examination of the lived experiences of novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools is needed for school leaders to adjust organizational practices, such as novice teacher support systems, that can lead to increases in retention rates for early-career teachers.

Situation to Self

I bring into this research years of experience working in high-poverty, high-minority schools both as a teacher and an administrator and a deep understanding of the need to recruit and retain high-quality teachers in our most challenging schools. Although I attended private and rural schools growing up, I have spent my entire career in education teaching in or leading high-poverty, high-minority schools in both rural and urban settings. Throughout my career and as both a teacher and a principal, I have experienced both support and a lack of support by school-level and district administrators. My perceptions of administrative support had a direct impact on my commitment to the school and my career decisions.

As an administrator, my primary goal is to provide an equitable and high-quality education to the students enrolled in my school and secondly to support teachers by eliminating barriers to teaching. Every year that I have served as an administrator, newly hired teachers have transferred to less challenging schools or exited the profession altogether. At times, I have questioned my leadership and, more specifically, the quality and type of support I provided to

them. I consider myself a nurturing and supportive person and principal, yet teachers at my school leave each year. I reflect often on how I could have more effectively supported them in their new role. Over the last 2 years, I have taken a more direct role in mentoring novice teachers and new hires in my building in an effort to increase teacher retention. Many of the novice teachers specifically attribute their decisions to leave the school to the demographics of the students and the community.

My motivation for pursuing this research is the firsthand experience of seeing how administrative support and student demographics have influenced the career decision of new teachers that I have hired over the years as a building principal. I believe the keys to retaining novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority schools are found in understanding what it means to feel supported as a new teacher; this knowledge will enable leaders to design systems of support to maximize our retention efforts. Additionally, as a minority, I view the elevated rates of attrition in high-poverty high-minority schools as a systemic educational problem that perpetuates a widening racial achievement gap that has far-reaching effects. It is my belief that education is a matter of life and death for poor minority students. This study was conducted based on an ontological assumption as it intends to report the perceptions or “multiple realities” of the participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Using a social constructivist lens, I seek to gain understanding of what it means to feel supported as a new teacher in a high-poverty, high-minority rural school. It is my hope that this research sheds light on how to help retain the best teachers to teach in our most underrepresented and underserved communities.

Problem Statement

Research indicates that there is a lack of understanding of the perceptions of administrative support for new teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Perception

of the school administration is recognized as having a significant influence on novice teachers' career decisions (Boyd et al. 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011). However, novice teachers' lived experiences with administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools have not been studied for its potential to address novice teacher retention.

Current literature links the perception of principal support to novice teacher retention particularly in high-poverty, high minority schools (Boyd et al., Grissom, 2011, Ladd, 2011, Simon & Johnson, 2013, Tickle et al., 2011). Higher rates of teacher attrition are reported in schools serving students in low-income and high-minority populated communities (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). However, much remains unknown about how novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools perceive the administrative supports they receive and how their perceptions impact the decision to remain or exit the teaching profession.

This qualitative phenomenological study provides a rich description of novice teachers' experience of administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. Individual interviews and a focus group discussion. Participant statements are examined to uncover the essence of the shared phenomenon. The study includes an analysis of novice teachers' perceptions of administrative support that impact their decisions to remain teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. The findings of this study may provide school leaders with a deeper understanding of novice teacher experiences and support novice teacher retention efforts.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to develop a deep understanding of the lived experiences of novice teachers who remain teaching in high-poverty,

high-minority rural schools in South Carolina in relation the administrative support that they received. Research surrounding novice teacher attrition suggests a gap exists in the literature as it pertains to understanding the essence of novice teachers' administrative support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority and rural schools (Boyd et al., 2011; Brown & Wynn, 2005; Ladd, 2011; DeAngelis & Presley (2011); Tickle et al., 2011; Wynn et al., 2007). Administrative support is described as "assisting teachers with issues such as discipline, instructional methods, curriculum and adjusting to the school environment" (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 380). High-poverty, high-minority schools are generally classified as schools that have over 50% of the student population in poverty, as defined by free and reduced lunch counts, and where non-White students are the majority (Welton & Williams 2015). The National Center for Education Statistics (2010) defines a rural school as one situated at least 5 miles from an urban area. High-poverty schools are those in which 76% or more of the student population receives free or reduced-price lunch (NCES, 2010). For the purposes of this study, schools with at least 75% minority enrollment are considered high-minority. Novice teachers are defined as teachers with less than three years of teaching experience (Knight & Moore, 2012).

This study seeks to provide an opportunity for the participants to describe the support they received, express their opinions about administrative support structures and how they feel the effectiveness of the supports may be improved to retain novice teachers. The theoretical framework guiding this study is House's (1981) theory of social support that corroborates research findings that administrative behaviors such as leadership style, feedback, and support impact teacher career decisions. A deeper understanding of how novice teachers describe feelings of administrative support can assist in the identification of gaps in novice teacher support structures that contribute to novice teacher attrition.

Significance of the Study

The importance of effective support practices for novice teachers is widely recognized, although as Ingersoll and Strong (2011) have speculated, the support systems that are effective may differ with the school setting and requires further research. Specifically, there has been insufficient attention given to capturing the perceptions of the novice teacher experience in relation to administrative support particularly in low-income minority communities. The present study examines the lived experiences of novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools, a school setting for which there is a gap in the literature (Boyd et al., 2011; Brown & Wynn, 2005; Ladd, 2011; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; Wynn et al., 2007). An effective support programs in affluent school systems may look different in content and duration from novice teacher support programs in low-income community schools. This study is significant as it focuses on capturing the experiences of novice teachers who work in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in relation to the administrative support they received in the early years of their career. Several studies have explored teacher retention and attrition in high-poverty, high-minority urban schools (Ado, 2013; Grissom, 2011; Whipp & Geronime, 2015); however, existing literature currently lacks an examination of the lived experiences of novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools.

Although the school leader is central to the amount and type of support provided to novice teachers, Peters and Pearce (2012) point out that is it uncommon for principals to receive formal professional development in supporting and building relationships with novice teachers. Many novice teachers lack experience working with underserved populations of students and therefore need administrative support specific to working with diverse student populations and children living in poverty (Ronfeldt et al., 2014). Central to the study of teacher attrition is the

impact of administrative support as a primary factor in novice teacher career decisions (Boyd et al., 2011; Ian, 2015; Tickle et al., 2011). To improve novice teacher retention in schools serving disadvantaged student populations, it is imperative to capture and examine the viewpoints of novice teachers' experiences of administrative support. The data gathered from this study provides valuable insight into how school leaders can enhance support structures and systems that increase retention among novice teachers and thereby advance the development of highly effective teachers who persist in high-minority, high-poverty rural schools.

According to the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA), South Carolina school districts reported a 33% increase in teacher vacancies at the start of the 2016–2017 school year (CERRA, 2016). Over 5,300 certified teachers who taught in the 2015–2016 school year did not return to their positions in the following school year. Of these 5,300 certified teachers, 39% left before year six of their career (CERRA, 2016). Fourteen percent of first-year teachers left their teacher positions in the 2015–2016 school year in South Carolina (CERRA, 2016). Such rates of teacher attrition in South Carolina have caught the attention of the governor and state policymakers. The South Carolina House of Representatives proposed a plan to distribute \$9.1 million dollars to 42 high-poverty school districts to be used to improve teacher recruitment and retention (Adcox, 2016). Large numbers of high-poverty schools in three regions of South Carolina account for nearly two-thirds of the vacancies, yet collectively employ less than half of the state's certified teachers. This study is significant as it seeks to understand South Carolina's new teacher attrition challenges by shedding light on how novice teachers experience administrative support in South Carolina's poor, rural, high-minority schools.

Much of the existing literature explores novice teacher retention in urban schools with large populations of poor minorities (Ado, 2013; Boyd et al., 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2011; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). Novice teacher turnover is found to be higher in schools with high percentages of non-White and low-income students (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). The isolated location of rural schools further compounds the retention of highly qualified experienced teachers. For example, DeAngelis and Presley (2011) found rural Illinois schools had the largest rates of new teacher attrition. The findings in this study may assist school systems struggling to recruit new teachers to improve their ability to retain early career teachers and lessen the impact on student achievement of rapid teacher turnover.

Research Questions

Teacher attrition is becoming a pervasive issue in education that has sparked interest in preventing a shortage of qualified teachers in America's classrooms. The research is clear that teachers are leaving the profession long before retirement (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Goldring et al., 2014; Ingersoll, 1999) with higher rates of attrition in schools serving impoverished and minority youth (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Wynn et al. (2007) noted at the conclusion of their research on novice teacher retention through professional learning communities that additional research is needed to explore the specific leadership practices that impact teacher retention. Similarly, Boyd et al. (2011) suggest a more detailed examination of what teachers define as administrative support. Support, a broad and ambiguous concept, has numerous operational and conceptual definitions making it difficult to explain and examine. House (1981) divided the concept of workplace support into social support which he defined as "the flow of emotional concern, instrumental aid, and/or appraisal between people" (p. 26).

The following research questions will guide this study:

RQ1: How do novice teachers describe their administrative support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?

RQ2: How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe administrative emotional and social support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?

RQ3: How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe administrative instructional support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools? Questions were open ended to reveal the “essences and meanings of human experience” and the participant responses are reported in “careful, comprehensive descriptions, vivid and accurate renderings of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 105).

Beginning teachers are particularly vulnerable to work-related stress. Friends and family members of novice teachers may not understand or be sympathetic to the stress that new teachers experience. Schonfeld (1990) compares the stress levels of teachers with other occupations and finds among teachers high risk of psychological distress coupled with high levels of job dissatisfaction. In this study, open-ended questions that focus on work-related stress as a factor in new and career teacher attrition provide insight into how it feels to be emotionally supported by the administrator in the early years.

Previous studies indicate that effective principals create conditions and provide resources to novice teachers to support their professional growth and development. For example, Brown and Wynn (2009) studied the role of the principal in teacher retention and found that successful principals with low attrition rates view administrative support as “growth and development” of teachers’ “legitimate learning needs that cannot be grasped in advance or outside the context of

teaching” (p. 52). Participant responses will illuminate the role of principals in providing direct and indirect instructional support.

Novice teachers have identified informal support networks as important to resilience and persistence in the beginning years of teaching. In a study on new teacher retention, Tricarico, Jacobs, and Yondol-Hoppey (2013) reported that “participants nurtured local relationships that could support them personally and professionally, and believed these relationships contributed to their staying and impact power within a challenging context” (p. 246). Interview responses provided insight into how school leaders could promote and extend opportunities for collaboration and high-quality mentorship through their induction support programs.

Future research into identifying the supports that offset the challenges of teaching in schools with large populations of disadvantaged students was recommended by Ladd (2011). The findings of this study could narrow the broad definition of administrative support into observable characteristics that principals and school leaders in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools can employ in an effort to increase novice teacher retention, thus minimizing the impact of teacher attrition.

Definitions

The following terms are defined below for the purpose of this study:

1. *Administrative support* – Support described as “assisting teachers with issues such as discipline, instructional methods, curriculum and adjusting to the school environment” (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 380).
2. *High-minority schools* – Schools whose majority enrollment is identified as non-White (Welton & Williams, 2015).

3. *High-poverty schools* – Schools in which at least 75% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch (NCES, 2017).
4. *Novice teacher*- Classroom teachers with less than three years of teaching experience (Knight & Moore, 2012).
5. *Rural schools*- The National Center for Education Statistics defines rural as being situated at least five miles from an urban area (NCES, n.d.).
6. *Teacher attrition*– The voluntary departure from the teaching profession or transfer to a different school or school district (Ingersoll, 2001).

Summary

Novice teachers are leaving the profession in large numbers causing vacancies that are often filled with more novice teachers. The cycle of teacher turnover is negatively impacting school systems in many ways. Schools and districts are forced to use instructional funding for retention and recruitment efforts. Instructional continuity is disrupted, and teacher morale begins to diminish. Most importantly, a disparity in the quality of education is created between the nation's most disadvantaged populations and their middle and upper-class counterparts. Chapter One provided a discussion of the underlying issues in teacher retention as it relates to administrative support and novice teachers. The chapter included explanations and definitions of key terms used through the study. Transcendental phenomenology is the chosen research design in order to deepen the understanding each participant's lived experiences. The problem in this study is the lack of understanding novice teachers' perceptions of administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority schools. The central research question and sub-questions were reviewed. A list of key terms used in this study were defined in the last section.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

With half of all new teachers leaving the profession within the first few years, teacher attrition is gaining attention as a pervasive problem in education (Ado, 2013; Boyd et al., 2011; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Djonko-Moore, 2016). Retaining novice teachers is especially difficult for school leaders in high-poverty, high-minority schools. This research study seeks to understand how administrative support affects novice teachers in rural schools with large populations of poor minority students.

Chapter Two begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework; it introduces the background of the theory, its constructs, and the theory applicability to the proposed study. This chapter also presents a review of related literature, which synthesizes research articles relating to teacher turnover, novice teacher career decisions, the impact of administrative support, and the negative consequences of novice teacher turnover in high-poverty, high-minority schools. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Teachers attribute the lack of administrative support as a primary factor in their decisions to transfer schools or to leave the profession (Boyd et al., 2011; Cancio et al., 2013; Ian, 2015). Both qualitative and quantitative research studies have revealed connections between the perceived lack of administrative support and teacher attrition for both novice and career teachers (Boyd et al., 2011; Tickle et al., 2011). Many of the studies conclude with recommendations for school leaders to investigate the types of support that may reduce novice teacher attrition (Fantilli & McDougall, 1992; Goldenberg, 2014; Ladd, 2011; Simon & Johnson, 2013; Papay & Kraft, 2016).

Elevated rates of teacher attrition place the nation's most underserved student groups at further at risk of low academic outcomes as both new and experienced teachers migrate to schools with lower rates of poverty and smaller populations of minority students (Djonko-Moore, 2016; Guarino et al., 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2014). Staffing challenges in low-income and high-minority communities leave district and school administrators with no choice but to fill vacancies with underqualified and less experienced teachers. While existing research links perceived administrative support to novice teacher career decisions, current literature does not capture the authentic voice of novice teachers' experiences of support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in House's (1981) theory of social support, which is rooted in social psychology's interest in exploring how social relationships influence our behaviors, thoughts, emotions, health, and wellness. Three theoretical perspectives shape the theory of social support research: (a) supportive actions, (b) social constructionism, and (c) relationships (Cohen et al., 2000). The supportive actions perspective assumes that the supportive actions of others have the potential to reduce the effects of life stressors. The theory of social support substantiates research that finds administrative behaviors such as leadership style and feedback help novice teachers cope and persist in teaching during the early years and, furthermore, impact teacher career decisions. Developed in the 1920s as a form of social psychology, symbolic interactionism informs the principles underlying the theory of social support. First used by Herbert Blumer in 1937, the term *social interactionism* defines an individual's actions as a "construction" that is built through a person's "interpretation" of the situation or environment (House, 1977, p. 166). To understand social interactions is to recognize

“the processes through which individuals interpret situations” and make meaning based on their interpretations or perceptions of human interactions (House, 1977, p. 167). Social interactionism is thus similar to phenomenological studies’ attempt to understand the essence of an individual’s experiences.

Social support theory concerns three aspects of social relationships: (a) the existence of social relationships, (b) the structure of social relationships, and (c) the function or context of the relationship (House, 1987). House further explained that in order to understand how social supports (relationships, networks, and sentiments of support) work together, we “must attend to what components of social relationships and networks are most relevant to perceived support” and study how perceptions of being supported are affected by the behaviors of others (p. 139). Earlier research by House (1981) explored the role of support relationships between individuals, their peers, and their supervisors and the effects of work stress on these individuals in the workplace. House (1981) examined the reciprocal process of social support and noted that individuals either perceived or interpreted these interactions as supportive or unsupportive. Exploring how social support impacts work-related stress is relevant to research on teacher turnover as job dissatisfaction related to administrative support is reported as a primary influence in teacher career decisions (Boyd et al., 2011; Cancio et al., 2013; Ian, 2015).

Social support can be defined as the emotional support or concern received by a person during a stressful event or situation and can be measured in terms of “perceived psychological sentiments” (House, 1987, p. 137). According to House (1981), the level of support a worker receives from a supervisor positively impacts the employee’s mental and physical health. Cohen and McKay’s (1984) the stress-matching hypothesis offered uses social support theory to provide insight into how social support can potentially buffer an individual against stress when the level

and type of support needed is appropriately matched. Support can potentially lessen the effects of “stressful life events on health (i.e., acts as a stress buffer) through either the supportive actions of others (e.g., advice, reassurance) or the belief that support is available” (Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000, p. 30). Studies on the support-matching hypothesis have called specific attention to how supportive actions may promote coping when the support provided by others matches the cause and level of stress (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cohen et al., 2000, Viswesvaran, Sanchez & Fisher, 1999). For example, when members of a person’s support network offer alternative behaviors to dealing with a stressor, based on their own personal experience, this will likely increase the individual’s ability to cope or tolerate the stressor (Cohen & McKay, 1984). Cohen and McKay (1984) argued that supports are effective only when “interpersonal relationships provide the resources for fulfillment of the coping requirements elicited in a particular situation” (p. 264). When perceived support does not match the level or type of stressor, the support is perceived as ineffective and can cause the individual to feel unsupported. The present study was designed to capture novice teachers’ lived experiences with administrative support. The information gathered from their collective experiences may in turn shed light on support mismatches or gaps in the current structures and systems of novice teacher support currently in place in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools.

Administrators play a key role in shaping the organizational practices that are intended to support novice teachers and reduce the effects of stress. These organizational practices can either cultivate or hinder the development of supportive workplace relationships (House, 1981; Ingersoll, 2003). Viswesvaran, Sanchez, and Fisher (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of literature on the role of social support in work-related stress and concluded that the effects of perceived work-related stress can be reduced or alleviated with models of social support.

Research dedicated to examining the role of administrative support and work-related stress among teachers has resulted in similar findings. Russell, Altmaier, and Van Velzen (1987) used House's social support theory to investigate teacher burnout in relation to administrative support and found that perceived administrative support decreased teachers' vulnerability to stress thus promoting improved physical and mental health and consequently reducing teacher burnout.

Beginning teachers enter the classroom with the same level of responsibility for lesson planning, instruction, and classroom management as experienced teachers. The first year of teaching is generally considered the most stressful year in a teacher's career. Fantilli and McDougall (2009) described the induction of novice teachers in the profession as a sink-or-swim process that triggers high levels of stress and thereby increasing the chance of attrition. In a study of stress among first-year, female teachers, study participants attributed job-related stress to perceptions of unsupportive colleagues and administrators (Schonfeld, 2001). Additionally, teachers in this study who perceived their work environment as unsupportive reported depressive symptoms almost immediately after the school year began (Schonfeld, 2001). To provide the type and amount of administrative support needed to minimize job-related stress among novice teachers, a closer examination of their lived experiences with emotional and social support is required.

Social support is important to a novice teacher's ability to cope with sources of workplace stressors encountered during the first years of teaching, such as administering student discipline and building relationships with peers, parents, and supervisors (Reig, Paquette & Chen, 2007). Induction programs, school-based mentors, and informal support networks are a few of the mechanisms implemented by school systems to coach new teachers and assist them in coping with the overwhelming stress they encounter during their first year in the classroom.

These structures are designed to provide social support to novice teachers; however, the literature on novice teacher career decisions cites a perceived lack of administrative support as a leading cause of novice teacher attrition and migration (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Tickle et al., 2011; Hong, 2012). The rate of novice teacher attrition indicates a disconnect in the support offered by schools and schools systems and teachers' perceptions of these supports. The disjuncture between novice teachers' perception of administrative support and the actual support behaviors of school principals is consistent with House's (1981) theory of social support. According to House, behavior that is intended to be supportive is not always perceived as such and these perceptions are built by behavioral patterns of observed in those persons offering the support (1987). Support is most effective when supportive actions match the level and type of stress. When stress matching occurs, supportive actions are matching the demands of the stressor (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Cohen et al., 2000). Unmanaged stress leads to burnout and affects the career development of new teachers and, as a result, impacts student achievement (Hong, 2012).

Related Literature

Teacher attrition is a pervasive issue that is nearing the level of crisis for many schools and districts across the nation. Building administrators, district leaders, and policy makers are searching for solutions to the alarming rates of teacher turnover. For over a decade, researchers have paid increasing attention to identifying factors that influence teachers' decisions to transfer out of schools and districts or to exit the profession (Boyd et al., 2011; Ingersoll, 1999; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Ladd, 2011; Loeb et al., 2005; Monk, 2007; Weiss, 1999). Critically, this continuous cycle of teacher turnover is having a profound impact on the nation's schools. Recent surveys have indicated that each year approximately 13% of public school teachers in the United States either transfer (6%) or leave the profession altogether (7%; Alliance Report, 2014). This

pattern of exodus is leaving a shortage of experienced and qualified teachers in the country's neediest classrooms. However, teacher turnover is not a new problem for this country's schools, as persistent patterns of high rates of mobility have been examined closely over the past few decades.

Teacher Attrition

As patterns of teacher turnover began to emerge in recent decades, researchers assigned terms to describe the movement of teachers within the profession. Ingersoll (2003) is credited with coining the term *migration* as it relates to the voluntary transfer of teachers to different schools in the same district. Migration is becoming a prevalent trend across the nation and accounts for 50% of teacher turnover within districts (Ladd, 2011). Other researchers have classified teachers into three categories: stayers, movers, and leavers (Goldring et al., 2014; Johnson & Birkland, 2003). In a longitudinal study of 50 new teachers in Massachusetts, Johnson and Birkland (2003) categorized teachers' career decisions in terms of leaving the teaching profession, moving or migrating to other schools or districts, or remaining at their current school as leavers, movers, and stayers, respectively. In year three of the study, only 28 of the 50 teachers were still employed in the school where they were first hired to teach (Johnson & Birkland, 2003). Additionally, 22% of the participants had left the public school system altogether by the third year and 12% left after having taught only one year (Johnson & Birkland, 2003). Movers in this study described the lack of support from the principal and colleagues as the primary reason for transferring schools in the hope of finding better working conditions (Johnson & Birkland, 2003). Likewise, Guarino, Brown, and Wyse (2011) found that between 1995 and 2006, 38% of North Carolina teachers requested transfers for the same reason. In a study of teacher mobility in Georgia, Scafidi, Sjoquist, and Stinebrickner (2004) found that 20%

of new teachers moved to a different school at the end of their first year. These findings are similar to a longitudinal analysis of novice teacher attrition rates in the state of Illinois.

DeAngelis and Presley (2011) found that Illinois lost two out of every three teachers within the teacher's first years of employment from 1987 to 2011. Forty-one percent of new teachers who began their teaching careers in Illinois, where 90% of students were identified low-income, left the state within the first 5 years of entering the profession (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011).

The attrition problem is more pronounced with novice teachers, who leave the profession every year in the thousands each year. Research on teacher attrition indicates that approximately 30–50% of novice teachers exit the profession within the first 5 years (Goldring et al., 2014; Ingersoll, 2003, 2004) and approximately 30% percent leave within the first 3 years (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Goldring et al., 2014; Weiss, 1999).

As one of the most cited experts on teacher retention and attrition, Ingersoll provides updated statistics related to novice teachers in the workforce. According to a recent report by Ingersoll, Merrill, and Stuckey (2014), 147,000 new teachers entered the profession in 2011 compared with only 84,000 in 1987. Additionally, the report estimates that in 2011 45% of US teachers had less than 10 years' experience, an increase of 8% from 1987 (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Although "new teachers can be a source of fresh ideas and energy," these inexperienced professionals lack the pedagogy, classroom management skills, proven instructional strategies, and curriculum knowledge compared to career teachers. In urban high-poverty, high-minority schools, where 5-year retention rates for novice teachers range from 26% to 56%, school leaders have more questions than answers about how to retain novice teachers (Papay, Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2015). The research is consistent in indicating the negative perception of building-level leadership, specifically the lack of administrative support, as a primary factor for the exodus of

novice teachers from schools and the profession.

The Instructional and Financial Costs of Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover comes with substantial financial costs as well as an immeasurable cost to academic achievement. As teachers leave the profession or transfer between schools and within districts, many students are denied access to the quality of education that can be provided by an experienced teacher. Early teacher attrition can also create financial hardships for schools and districts that must allocate funds from shrinking budgets to recruit, hire, and train novice teachers.

Millions of dollars are spent each year at the local level to recruit and replace teachers, adding up to several billion dollars nationwide. The Alliance for Excellent Education (Haynes, 2014) calculated the cost of recruiting and retaining new teachers for the workforce is reaching almost \$2.2 billion annually (p. 3). A cost is attached to the number of teachers migrating or transferring between schools and districts as well. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future estimates the annual cost associated with teacher transfers for an urban school is \$70,000 (Hunt & Carroll, 2003). Comparatively, the cost associated with teacher transfers for a non-urban school is estimated at \$33,000 per teacher (Hunt & Carroll, 2003). These costs are absorbed by schools that are often struggling to upgrade buildings, increase teaching staff to reduce class size, or purchase instructional materials, contributing to both financial and instructional deficits.

Calculating the financial impact of teacher attrition and migration in five US school districts, Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007) found that Chicago Public Schools spends approximately \$9,500 in administrative costs for each teacher that leaves the district for non-retirement reasons, totaling \$86 million dollars annually. Similar costs were reported by Papay et

al. (2015), who reported the average administrative cost associated with replacing teachers who leave ranges from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and includes advertising vacancies, recruiting expenses, conducting background checks, interviewing candidates, staff orientation, and professional development. Non-instructional expenses associated with teacher turnover annually cost districts \$4 million dollars to fill vacancies left by novice teachers (Papay et al. 2015). While within-district transfers minimize administrative costs associated with hiring new staff, constant turnover creates organizational instability and erodes school culture and staff morale. In a time of budget shortfalls and increased federal and state mandates, school leaders are struggling to find time and resources to replace the revolving door of novice teachers.

High rates of staff turnover do not afford schools the opportunity to develop capacity in novice teachers before having to replace them with quite possibly more novice teachers, in turn minimizing potential gains in student achievement. In their study of teacher turnover in New York City Schools, Marinell and Coca (2013) captured the frustration felt by one experienced staff member concerning the toll novice teacher turnover is having on career teachers. The participant stated:

Each year we have to, sort of, repeat everything we said all over again to new set of teachers that come in. It's like you're always giving [professional development] over and over again. And it's frustrating and tiring. You just wish that once you put all that effort into a new teacher they would just stay and develop, but they leave, and you have to start over again (p. 33)

Schools with consistently high rates of teacher turnover are challenged to provide high-quality instruction to students. With a minimal return on investment, districts spend thousands of dollars on training and developing new teachers only to have a large majority of them leave their

schools and districts the following year (Papay, et al. 2015). The instability created by continually hiring teachers who lack experience and effective pedagogy diminishes the continuity of instruction (Djonko-Moore, 2016, Guarino et al., 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2014). In a study of the effects of teacher attrition on achievement in California schools, Loeb and Darling-Hammond (2005) connected their findings with longitudinal student achievement data and found that schools with high rates of turnover that repeatedly replaced teachers with novice teachers saw negligible growth in student achievement. Repeated turnover erodes the continuity of instruction and makes it extremely difficult to build and maintain an effective quality teaching staff.

A similar finding was noted by Ronfeldt et al. (2014) in their analysis of the reading and math scores of over 850,000 fourth- and fifth-grade students in their study of the academic impact of teacher turnover in New York City schools. The analysis of 8 years of student achievement data indicated that when teacher turnover numbers are high, grade-level cohort performance drops in comparison to years with less turnover within the same school-grade level. The analysis also indicated that schools with large populations of minority students suffer an even larger drop in achievement when turnover is high (Ronfeldt et al, 2014). The researchers stated that the impact of teacher turnover is “especially deleterious” in schools that are considered historically underperforming (Ronfeldt et al, 2014, p. 28). Marinell and Coca (2013) suggest that novice teacher turnover in schools serving large populations of poor minorities creates “chronic instability” within the school and existing teaching staff (p. 6).

There are far-reaching negative effects for disadvantaged students who are taught year after year by inexperienced and less effective teachers. Students taught by less effective teachers score significantly lower on achievement tests than do students who are taught by highly

effective teachers (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). Students who perform poorly on achievement tests are consequently less likely to attend college and earn a living wage as adults. Novice teachers are inherently less effective than experienced teachers in terms of instructional practices, knowledge of the curriculum, classroom management, and relationship building with parent and students. These combined factors predict student success in the classroom. The inability of schools serving high-poverty, high-minority students to retain and develop teachers has lasting negative effects on students who are at the greatest disadvantage and most need effective teachers. There is an urgent need to examine district policies that “promote stronger retention for higher performing teachers” and to inform principals of practices that could minimize the high percentages of teachers fleeing our low-income, high-minority schools (Papay et al., 2014).

Highly effective career teachers are leaving low-income urban schools to teach in more affluent schools with a history of high performance. For example, in a study of effective school hiring practices, Loeb et al. (2012) found that teachers with high valued-added scores (a measure of teacher effectiveness based on standardized test scores) moved to schools with higher value-added scores. Moreover, teachers with advanced degrees, National Board Certification, and higher SAT scores are more likely to transfer out of a historically underperforming school (Barnes et al., 2008). Furthermore, the researchers found that lower-achieving students were assigned primarily to teachers with less than 3 years’ experience.

Career teacher migration to higher-performing schools is leaving poor, rural, and high-minority schools with less-qualified and less-experienced teachers to fill vacated positions. In a quantitative analysis of national data from the 2003–2004 Schools and Staffing Survey of more than 6,000 schools, Grissom (2011) reports that teachers in disadvantaged schools have 1.5

years' experience on average. These findings substantiate research that describes the challenges facing lower-performing, high-poverty, high-minority schools in recruiting and retaining high-quality and experienced teachers. A study of 55 West Virginia public school district researchers found that teachers with National Board Certification left at higher rates, 9% compared to 6% of teachers who had not earned their National Board Certification (Lockmiller, Adachi, Chesnut, & Johnson, 2016)

A recent study evaluated the effects of teacher turnover on student achievement in the District of Columbia Public School system under a new performance assessment and teacher incentive system. Researchers found that under the new performance system the removal of low-performing teachers from the classroom increased achievement scores significantly (Adnot, Dee, Katz & Wyckoff, 2016). The research found, however, that when highly effective teachers (as measured by student achievement scores) leave a low-performing or high-poverty, high-minority school, it is difficult to replace these teachers with similarly effective teachers (Adnot et al., 2016). Although not all teacher turnover is necessary negative, particularly if continuous turnover results in a more effective teacher presenting instruction, the continuous teacher turnover in historically underperforming schools exacerbates the school's low performance. While it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of a teacher during the hiring process, new teachers are apt to be initially less effective than their experienced counterparts.

Teacher transfers within and out of a district likewise have the potential to deplete schools of teachers with experience and possibly higher levels of effectiveness, likely contributing to varying levels of teacher quality in hard-to-staff schools. Effective school leaders influence student achievement by creating school environments conducive to learning whereby instructional capacity is built and sustained by a stable staff of quality teachers (Grissom, 2011).

The quality of the teachers in a school is one of the most influential school-related factors linked to student achievement. In a longitudinal study of teacher mobility in North Carolina, Guarino et al. (2011) found the likelihood of a teacher transferring within district declines steadily over time during the span of their career. However, many school leaders struggle to support novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in a such a way that improves the likelihood a teacher's continued service for long enough to decrease the likelihood of attrition or transfer.

Factors Impacting Novice Teacher Career Decisions

As efforts to minimize teacher attrition continue to be a focus for urban and low-income schools, it is necessary to examine literature on the factors influencing teachers' career decisions. Existing research attributes teacher attrition to factors such as inadequate pay, growing class sizes, job dissatisfaction, poor school leadership, student misbehavior, and retirement. Organizational factors (i.e., perceived workplace conditions and leadership), in particular, are among the primary factors that influence teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb et al., 2012).

Organizational practices either promote or inhibit the development and maintenance of support relationships and have a far-reaching effect on a person's ability to function effectively at work and at home (House, 1987). Ingersoll, a major contributor to the literature on teacher attrition, shifted the focus of research on teacher attrition from teacher shortage as a question of supply and demand toward examining organizational practices that precipitate attrition (1999). Ingersoll used organizational theory with a sociological perspective to examine causal factors of teacher retention and attrition (Ingersoll, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005). This sociological perspective examines systemic issues of organizational practices that lead to high rates of

employee attrition.

Drawing upon the research literature on the sociology of organizations, Ingersoll (2003 and 2005) analyzed employee turnover by examining the working conditions of organizations. Ingersoll (2005) posits that negative organizational conditions lead to teacher turnover and, in turn, have a detrimental impact on student achievement. In his work, Ingersoll identifies four organizational conditions in schools that impact teachers' career decisions: salary structure, perceptions of school leadership, school climate, and decision-making influence (2005).

Addressing teacher retention necessarily includes examining teacher concerns with workplace conditions that impact career decisions (Ingersoll, 2001). In reference to teacher shortages and attrition in the United States, Ingersoll (2003) emphasized the importance of examining workplace conditions, stating, "the root of the teacher shortage largely resides in the working conditions within schools and districts" (p. 32). Parker, Ndoye, and Imig (2009) is one study that confirmed this: they studied factors related to teachers' career decisions in North Carolina charter schools and found that the perception of school leadership contributed significantly to whether teachers remained at the school or transferred within district or out of state. Consistent with the literature suggesting that strong leadership minimizes teacher attrition, Marinell and Cocoa (2013) found administrative support to be a strong predictor of teacher turnover in New York City schools, second only to student behavior. Sixty-six percent of New York City middle school teachers who participated in this study rated administrative support as a very important factor determining whether they remained in their current school. In their analysis of the US Department of Education's 2007–2008 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) results, Almy and Tooley (2012) indicated that teachers were more likely to leave a school due to a perceived negative culture than due to student demographics; they cited school leadership and

staff cohesion as particularly important to teachers in high-poverty schools. When teachers were dissatisfied with both administrative practices and level of staff collegiality, there was an increased probability of leaving or transferring out of the school (Almy & Tooley, 2012).

Recent research has focused specifically on job dissatisfaction and its relationship to teacher retention. Perceptions of leadership is a prominent theme in the literature related to job dissatisfaction. Supportive school leadership positively impacts teachers' workplace satisfaction (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011) and, in turn, serves as a predictor of teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001; Tickle et al., 2011; Weiss, 1999).

Novice teachers are highly sensitive and vulnerable to workplace conditions. Teachers who work in adverse conditions are less likely to remain committed to the organization and are more likely to leave the profession or transfer schools. Survey data from the Schools and Staffing Survey from 1987–1988 and 1993–1994, which consisted of survey data from over 5,000 first-year teachers, indicated that teachers who perceived their induction-year experience as unsupportive were less committed to remaining in the profession (Weiss, 1999). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that only 10% of new teachers received comprehensive induction support, consisting of two years of ongoing professional development, common planning time with experienced peers, and opportunities to network inside and outside of school. When these practices were consistently implemented, the likelihood of novice teacher retention increased by 50% (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Ingersoll's (2005) research on organizational factors that influence teacher attrition found 42% of teacher attrition attributed job dissatisfaction to a lack of discipline support, low salaries, minimal input in decision making, and lack of administrative support. The perceived lack of support from administrators, according to Cancio et al. (2013), can be characterized as principals

“having competing priorities and being unavailable or inattentive” (p. 72) or “so occupied with the daily minutiae of their responsibilities that they cannot look at the big picture” (p. 90). Teachers in the study, 408 teachers of emotionally disturbed children, were asked to make judgments about the amount of administrative support and rate the importance of each type of support using a Likert-type scale (Cancio et al, 2013). The participants reported feedback and appreciation from school leadership as most relevant to career decisions regarding their intent to remain in teaching. Research consistently indicates that lack of support by school administrators creates poor working conditions and serves as the primary reason why teachers leave the workforce or transfer within district or out of state (Boyd et al., 2011; Cancio et al, 2013, Grissom, 2011, Ingersoll, 2001, Ingersoll, 2005).

The rate of teacher turnover in low-performing high-poverty, high-minority schools makes it difficult for staff to establish institutional norms or a collective vision, both of which are key to improving the educational outcomes of disadvantaged students. Building principals have no control over school demographics and location; however, administrators play a critical role in establishing both a culture of support and a positive work environment. As Simon and Johnson (2013) state, “unlike demographics characteristics of students, working conditions can be changed” (p. 49).

The Role of Administrative Support

While the literature on teacher attrition indicates that career decisions are influenced by many factors, research consistently points to the vital role that the administrator plays in teacher retention. Definitions of administrative support are, however, ambiguous. Only a few research studies have provided specific contextual examples of observable behaviors that illustrate

administrative support. Brown and Wynn (2009) conducted semi-structured interviews of 12 principals with relatively low rates of attrition in a small urban school district. The purpose of the study was to explore specific strategies and leadership styles that lead to lower rates of new teacher attrition. One building principal, who participated in the study, stated, “Support means a lot of different things . . . discipline, organization, affirmation, resources, parents, teachers, curriculum, instruction Everything you do, I think, falls under the umbrella of support” (p. 51). Three-fourths of the principals in the study identified a perceived lack of support as a primary factor in novice teachers’ decisions to leave the profession (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Likewise, teacher ratings and perceptions of the effectiveness of school administrators are strong predictors of job satisfaction with strong correlations to teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011) These correlations are stronger in schools that serve a large number of minority and low-income students where staffing challenges are much greater (Reininger, 2012; Whipp & Geronime, 2015).

Malecki and Demaray (2003) highlighted the importance of social support behaviors that support an individual in such a way that the individual has greater capability to function and a reduced level of stress. School administrators’ supportive actions and behaviors lay the foundation for structures and conditions that support beginning teachers. These supports help to shape novice teacher experiences and, in turn, influence their career decisions. Using the 2003–2004 Schools and Staffing Survey, which included data from 53,190 teachers, Tickle et al. (2011) found perceptions of administrative support as a stronger predictor of teachers’ job satisfaction than teaching experiences, student conduct, and salary. This study further contributes to the literature by suggesting that teacher attrition could be decreased by examining teachers’ perceptions of support (Tickle et al., 2011).

In a study of novice teacher attrition in Alberta, Canada, researchers found variations in how novice teachers identified and described supportive behaviors (Clandinin et al., 2015). In their analysis of interview statements, the researchers determined that support for new teachers must be based on individual need and context. Furthermore, the researchers added that school leaders lack knowledge of how best to support new teachers; consequently, intended support may be ineffective and may thereby lead to teachers feeling unsupported (Clandinin et al., 2015). Consistent with House's (1981) theoretical perspective of social support, Russell, Altmaier, and Velzen (1987) found a strong correlation between the type and source of stress and the type of support provided. When the level and type of support provided by the administrator matched the stressor, the support mitigated the effect of workplace stress for classroom teachers (Russell et al., 1987).

Perceived administrative support has been indicated as a primary factor in why new and career teachers change schools or leave the profession (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Tickle, 2011; Hong, 2012). Administrative support is a broad concept that can be described in terms of the observable actions and behaviors that contribute to an effective teaching and learning environment. As defined by Johnson and Birkeland (2003), administrative support refers to "the extent to which principals and other school leaders make teachers' work easier and help them improve their teaching" (p. 307). In a study of teacher stress and burnout among secondary science teachers, participants who decided to leave the profession stated that they "could have stayed if the sources of dissatisfaction would have been identified and better handled" (Hong, 2012, p. 425). Other novice teachers describe support as having opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in ways that made them feel valued as a professional, such as participating in team meetings, professional development, and common planning time (Clandinin et al., 2015).

Moreover, Hong (2012) found the ability to maintain a strong sense of self-efficacy with support from school administration and peers was distinguished stayers from leavers.

Administrative support has also been associated with a novice teacher's motivation to teach (Schonfeld, 2001). In a study of first-year female teachers, using measures of perceived support, Schonfeld (2001) concluded that colleague support was positively correlated to motivation, whereas support from supervisors was positively correlated to both motivation and self-esteem. Marinell and Coca (2013) also reported the importance of collegial support for retention among novice teachers. Teachers were surveyed regarding their intent to remain or leave their current school and the relationship of their experiences to their final decisions. The researchers found that high levels of mutual support, respect, and trust were indicative of collegiality and had a significant influence on teachers' career decisions second to administrative support experiences (Marinell & Coca, 2013). Teachers who remained at their current school attributed their decision to strong leadership, staff collegiality, and teacher autonomy. The idea that administrative behaviors that support collegiality encourage retention is repeated throughout recent literature on this topic (Cochran-Smith et al., 2013)

Administrators play a role in encouraging collegial support networks that provide additional support for novice teachers. According to Marinell and Coca (2013), collegiality among teaching staff provides stability and influences teachers' career decisions. The school leader's actions can heavily influence the culture of collegiality and peer support between new and career teachers. Peer relations can serve as a support network to novice teachers and likely increase teachers' ability to tolerate the stress associated with teaching (Cohen & McKay, 1984). Induction programs, school-based mentors, and informal support networks established by school districts may be insufficient to buffer the effects of stress experienced by novice teachers. These

support mechanisms are designed to provide support to novice teachers; however, the literature on novice teacher career decisions repeatedly cites a perceived lack of administrative support as a leading cause of novice teacher mobility (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Tickle, 2011; Hong, 2012).

The concept of administrative support is broad and not easily defined. House (1981) categorized administrative support behaviors into four specific areas: emotional, instrumental, feedback, and informational. Emotional support includes showing appreciation, interest, trust, and respect. For example, building leaders can take interest in the teachers' work and encourage input in decision making. Instrumental support is viewed as supporting teachers through resource management, protecting instructional time, providing planning time, and assisting with paperwork. Improving instructional practices through professional learning communities, staff development and assisting with classroom management are elements of informational support. Feedback, or appraisal support, includes setting clear expectations and providing regular performance feedback.

A study by Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2015) on teacher retention at hard-to-staff schools categorized administrative support into the following domains: environmental, instructional, technical, and emotional. In their study, support was defined as "the principal taking an active role in assisting, encouraging, and displaying approving attitudes towards teachers" (p. 130). Most participants rated emotional and environmental support as having the most significant impact on their career decisions and specifically cited positive feedback and the principal's availability and accessibility as primarily important (Hughes et al., 2015). The perceived support potentially lessened the effects of the stressor placed on teachers, which supports House's (1987) theory that the supportive actions of others buffer individuals from

workplace stressors. However, the actual level of perceived support from the principal was greater than what was reported by the teachers participating in the study. House's theory of social support posits that when the perceived level of support does not match the level or type of stressor, the individual may feel unsupported (House, 1987).

It has been well established that teachers who leave schools and the teaching profession directly link their dissatisfaction with their principal (Boyd et al., 2011; Cancio et al., 2013; Ian, 2015; Ingersoll, 2001; Tickle et al., 2011; Weiss, 1999). Much of the reported dissatisfaction with principals is due to a perceived lack of support. Given this, it is important to investigate the forms of support that match the needs of novice teachers and to thereby increase the probability of retention, particularly in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. By matching the type and level of support to workplace stressors, school administrators have the potential to reduce novice teacher attrition rates and increases. However, the authentic description of administrative support in rural high-poverty, high-minority schools is missing from the current literature on novice teacher retention.

Success in the early years of a teacher's career is critical in setting a foundation for career longevity. Recent graduates seek to begin their career in a setting that is a "good fit" and where they feel supported. Papay et al. (2015) suggested that "teacher employment, particularly early in the career, is a two-way match process where both the hiring district and the teacher candidate evaluate the strength of the match" (p. 6). The strength of match during the initial year can determine whether the teacher remains at the school and perhaps in the profession.

The quality of support a new teacher receives, particularly in schools where day-to-day challenges are compounded by poverty and a lack of resources, make the support match critically important. Early career teachers need support and professional development embedded into the

day and on an ongoing basis in order to persist in teaching. In a longitudinal cross-case analysis of teacher retention and teacher practices, researchers found that participants were willing to transfer schools until they found a school with “a collaborative culture and administrative structures that supported their practice” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012, p. 877).

Johnson and Birkeland’s (2003) study of new teachers in Massachusetts was described principal support in terms of management, instructional leadership, and the ability to give constructive feedback, whereas teachers in a related study in New York characterized support by the types of professional development available and opportunities to collaborate (Boyd et al., 2011). Ian (2015) studied the effect of principal behavior (delegating, evaluating, communicating, and planning) on beginning teacher retention decisions in secondary schools and found that teachers remained committed to their current school primarily due to the administrators’ leadership style. Likewise, in a study of teacher attrition among New York City middle school teachers, Marinell and Coca (2013) found teacher retention was highest in schools in which the principal was described as supportive, knowledgeable, and an effective instructional leader. Additionally, teachers describe supportive administrators as leaders who consistently provide recognition and praise (Hughes et al., 2011). Wynn et al. (2007) collected data from 217 novice teaches in a small urban school district and found that principals have a tremendous influence on new teacher job satisfaction and decision to remain at the same school. Data from both recent qualitative (Boyd et. al, 2001) and quantitative studies (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003) indicate that perceived levels of administrative support greatly influence new teachers’ decisions to remain at their current school. The direct influence of principal leadership on school culture and climate, and level of teacher commitment is widely supported by the literature on retention and school leadership (Boyd et al, 2011; Ian, 2015; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Marinell &

Coca, 2013).

Although a considerable amount of research has been dedicated to identifying the reasons behind teacher turnover, less is known about “effective interventions to prevent or alleviate burnout and improve retention” (Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996). Providing support that matches the needs of novice teachers and that take into consideration the challenges of the school based on demographics, socioeconomic levels, and location may help teachers persist in teaching in the most disadvantaged schools.

Teacher Turnover in High-Poverty, High-Minority, and Rural Schools

Novice teacher turnover in rural, high-minority, and high-poverty schools is found to be disproportionately higher than in schools with a majority of White and middle-class students (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Ingersoll et al. (2014) found that in 2004–2005, 45% of all public-school turnover occurred in just one-quarter of US public schools, with the highest percentage of teacher turnover taking place in high-poverty, high-minority rural and urban schools. Ingersoll refers to the phenomenon of “asymmetric reshuffling” of teachers from high-poverty schools to schools with higher-income families and from schools with large populations of non-Whites to schools with small minority enrollment (p. 23). In a study of 16 urban school districts across seven states, significant variation was reported in new elementary teacher attrition across states and districts (Papay et al., 2015). For example, Los Angeles lost 57% of new elementary teachers within 5 years, whereas Philadelphia, which is significantly less populous than Los Angeles but considered a metropolitan area, sees novice teacher attrition rates as high as 84% within the first 6 years of their career (Papay et al., 2015). Addressing teacher attrition and turnover is a significant priority for most school districts and requires viewing teacher attrition not as a

problem limited to urban schools but rather “an individual school problem [requiring] work to identify and provide more targeted assistance to schools of all types that are particularly burdened by the problem of high teacher turnover” (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011, p. 616). Research links administrative support directly to job satisfaction in high-poverty, high-minority schools for both new and career teachers and identifies its significant impact on career decisions (Ingersoll, 2003; Grissom, 2011; Guarino et al., 2011, Ronfeldt et al., 2014, Whipp & Geronime, 2015).

Drawing upon decades of research on teacher turnover in high-poverty schools, Simon and Johnson (2013) suggest that in order to minimize the rates of teacher turnover in high-poverty schools, school leaders may need to take a more personalized approach to providing support. The researchers recommend that district leaders reverse the trend of hiring young inexperienced administrators to head the most challenging schools (Simon & Johnson, 2013). They suggest instead assigning to high-poverty, low-performing schools administrators who demonstrate “effective management, fair and encouraging leadership, instructional support, and inclusive decision-making” (p. 37).

High rates of teacher attrition are particularly harmful to schools in low-income areas, historically underperforming schools, and schools with higher populations of minority students. Research on teacher attrition in low-income and high-minority schools suggests that there is a disproportionately higher percentage of inexperienced teachers employed in rural schools and in schools serving the most disadvantaged populations (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Djonko-Moore, 2016; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Guarino et al., 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2014). Persistent teacher turnover in schools that serve low-income students and large populations of minority students gives rise to “inequitable access to qualified teachers” that can only be mitigated by

recruiting and retaining effective teachers (Guarino et al., 2011, p. 962). Scafidi et al. (2007) found that schools in Georgia with high percentages of minority students struggle with higher rates of teacher turnover than schools with a majority of White students. In their sample of 11,070 new teachers, 38% of the teachers remained at the same school during the 7 years of the study. Additionally, 20% of the teachers in the sample moved to a different school after their first year of teaching (Scafidi et al., 2007), adding validity to Ingersoll's (2003) research on migration. These higher rates of attrition and novice teacher turnover in minority schools further compound the achievement gap between White and minority students. Data indicate that teachers in disadvantaged schools have on average 1.5 years' experience (Grissom, 2011).

Trend data indicate that teachers serving students in highly impoverished communities are less likely to hold the appropriate teaching certification, less likely to have graduated from a competitive undergraduate program, score lower on standardized teaching qualification exams, and are less likely to be nationally board certified (Djonko-Moore, 2016; Loeb et al.; Ronfeldt et al., 2014). Similarly, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002) found evidence that highly qualified teachers in New York experience higher rates of mobility, in terms of both attrition and migration, than their less qualified colleagues. When experienced and highly qualified teachers continuously exit schools serving poor and underrepresented minority students, it leaves these students at an academic disadvantage. Goldhaber, Lavery, and Theobald (2014) found teacher quality in terms of experience, licensure exam score, and value-added measure "inequitably distributed" in schools across Washington state with high percentages of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, high-minority enrollment, and historically low academic performance. Principals of schools with large populations of poor minority students are challenged to recruit new teachers with high Praxis scores from competitive undergraduate education programs or to

attract experienced teachers with similar described characteristics; these teachers indicate a preference for schools with low minority populations in higher socioeconomic communities (Guarino, et al., 2011).

Rural schools are faced with the same disconcertingly high rates of teacher attrition and migration, although much of the research on teacher turnover is confined to large urban areas. Research is lacking on how poor rural school communities are negatively impacted by high rates of turnover and large percentages of inexperienced teachers. The 12 million school-aged children in rural areas account for a quarter of the students attending schools in the United States (NABE, 2016). The shortage of qualified teachers resulting from increasing rates of teacher attrition in rural schools thus affects a sizeable population of the nation's students. Given this, the effect on this unique subgroup warrants closer examination of the administrative support structure in these schools. In an earlier examination of recruitment and retention data in rural schools, Monk (2007) revealed data that indicates an unequal distribution of teacher experience levels by school type (e.g., urban, rural, suburban) and school size, and suggests small rural schools are more likely to employ teachers with less experience than large urban schools. A more recent study on the impact of location on novice teacher retention is Lockmiller et al. (2016), which examined teacher retention in 55 West Virginia public schools districts and found that 32% of new teachers left West Virginia public schools from 2008 to 2013, with 19% of new teachers either transferring or leaving the profession at the end of their first year. The challenges of staffing rural schools are supported by Ingersoll's (2001) earlier findings that teachers leave small schools at higher rates.

In 2016, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) conducted a study on the challenges facing rural schools across the United States. Rural schools and districts

are confronted with obstacles similar to urban districts: increased percentages of students living in poverty, a decrease in state and federal funding, and the continuous need to replace teachers exiting the profession or their schools and districts (NASBE, 2016). Students in rural schools of all income types are less likely than their urban counterparts to enroll in college during the fall following high school graduation. However, this study did not specifically examine challenges facing rural schools with large populations of low-income and minority students.

Geographic isolation creates a challenge to recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, particularly new teachers who did not live in a rural area prior to college. Stifled industrial growth and a weakened economy diminish the tax base in rural areas and results in districts' inability to pay salaries comparable to what urban and suburban districts can offer (NASBE, 2016). The study also indicated that the increase in the diversity of teachers working in rural schools is not keeping pace with the percentages of non-White students attending rural schools. School administrators in rural areas are challenged to find a diverse pool of applicants (NASBE, 2016).

Presently, there is a need to more closely examine and address this challenge at state and local levels as "teacher retention challenges remain poorly defined at state and district levels" (Papay et al., 2015, p.1). West Virginia and Arkansas are two states where researchers have studied teacher turnover in poor rural school districts. In a study of teacher retention in West Virginia, researchers found the lowest retention rates in rural West Virginia schools and in schools where 58% of the enrollment receives free or reduced lunch (Lochmiller et al., 2016). One study by Hughes (2012) contradicted early findings on teachers' preferences to teach at high socioeconomic schools. In a study on rural schools in Arkansas, Hughes (2012) reported survey data that indicated Arkansas teachers in the poorest schools indicated that they would likely

remain in the profession until retirement. The researcher attributed this finding, which conflicted with previous research on attrition in high-poverty schools, to the possibility of limited career options in rural Arkansas and the fact that Arkansas is a rural state whose population is majority White (Hughes, 2012).

Using the value-added model to analyze student achievement data from 26 districts across 15 states, Isenberg et al. (2016) suggested that districts in the southern parts of the United States have the highest effective teacher gap as measured by teacher value-added scores. Districts use the value-added model to evaluate teachers; the teacher's instructional effectiveness is measured each year by comparing their current students' test scores to those same students' scores from previous years. Isenberg et al. (2016) collected data on teacher effectiveness as measured by growth and achievement on standardized assessments in low-income schools and found significant variation in teacher effectiveness in some of the study districts. Their findings are consistent with literature suggesting that low-income students are taught by less effective teachers than students in higher socioeconomic areas. Additionally, the researchers found that 18.3% of teachers in high-poverty schools had less than 3 years' classroom teaching experience, which would account for the variance in teacher effectiveness in low-income classrooms (Isenberg et al., 2016).

The National Association of State Boards of Education (2016) described problems in recruiting and retaining novice teachers for rural schools as more critical than in urban areas, further suggesting rural schools must develop a wide range of induction supports specifically for rural teachers to help them cope with challenges encountered in isolated areas. Reininger (2012) found that teachers move shorter distances than other newly graduated professionals for their first jobs, adding to the difficulty to recruit teachers to rural schools. Additionally, the results of

Reininger's study indicate that, on average, teachers live within 20 miles from the high school where they graduated. Consequently, if a rural area does not graduate a large number of students who enter the teaching profession, locality preferences further exacerbate staffing challenges in rural areas, particularly with high rates of poverty and large minority populations (Reininger, 2012).

The quality of a school's working conditions is thought to be directly related to student demographics. Workplace factors linked with high levels of dissatisfaction among teachers in high-minority and high-poverty schools range from minimal parental involvement, perceived lack of student motivation, unsupportive administration, and student discipline issues (Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb & Darling-Hammond, 2005). Throughout the literature, schools with large populations of poor and minority students are associated with poor working conditions (Djonko-Moore, 2016; Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald (2014), Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2004). Guarino, Brown, and Wyse (2012) conducted research on school demographics and teacher mobility behaviors in North Carolina public school teachers and found that school demographics had a lesser role to play in teachers' decisions to leave the profession, yet teachers' decisions to transfer to another school or district were largely due to student demographics. In a study of teacher mobility in Texas, researchers found mobility was attributed to student school demographics and school performance significantly more than an increase in salary (Hanushek et al., 2004). Larger populations of minority students increase the likelihood that non-minority teachers will request a transfer (Hanushek et al., 2004). Although some research indicates that minority teachers are inclined to begin their careers serving students who identify with the same race or ethnicity, minority teachers also leave schools with poor working conditions and unsupportive leadership, contributing to inflated rates of attrition in high-minority schools

(Ingersoll, 2014). This research further contributes to the data that indicate schools with large populations of poor minority students have difficulty recruiting (Ingersoll, 2001; Boyd et al., 2005; Lankford et al., 2002) and retaining qualified teaching staff (Djonko-Moore, 2016; Loeb & Darling-Hammond 2005; Ronfeldt et al., 2014).

Novice teachers are more likely to leave the profession in their early years of teaching if they are underprepared and unsupported, compared with teaching in schools challenged by increasingly diverse populations and rising rates of poverty. The perceived effectiveness of the principal's leadership has been identified as one of the most predictive indicators of novice teacher retention. Perceptions of administrative leadership and support as they relate to retaining novice teachers are most notably influential in high-poverty, high-minority schools (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011; Simon & Johnson, 2013; Tickle et al., 2011). Challenges to retaining novice teachers are not isolated to large urban districts; the rates and impact of teacher turnover "vary widely across regions." There is thus a need to expand research into rural high-poverty, high-minority schools and districts (Papay et al., 2015, p. 2) Until recently, the majority of studies on retention issues in high-poverty, high-minority schools have been quantitative and limited to urban school settings. Cancio et al. (2013) suggested that future studies should seek to identify differences in perceptions of administrative support between urban and rural schools. Additionally, Simon and Johnson (2013) have called for a redesign of principal preparation programs to promote effective social, managerial, and instructional leadership skills.

Although the current literature makes clear that principal leadership as it relates to novice teacher retention is important, several studies suggest that additional research is needed to identify the critical attributes (Wynn et al., 2007) or observable characteristics (Boyd et al., 2011) of supportive principal leadership that positively impact novice teacher retention

decisions. However, the existing literature is insufficient in identifying the observable actions or characteristics of supportive leadership that influence novice teachers to remain at their current school, particularly in rural high-poverty, high-minority schools. Boyd et al. (2011) suggest that additional studies are needed to identify “what in particular the administration does or does not do that influences a teacher to stay” (p. 329).

Summary

The literature indicates that the key to retention is helping principals to understand the degree of influence that establishing positive supportive relationships with novice teachers has on teacher retention. Throughout the literature, administrative leadership and support have been linked to teacher retention in both new and experienced teachers (Boyd et al., 2011; Cancio et al., 2013; Ian, 2015). Teachers exiting the profession report experiencing a lack of support from principals and more experienced colleagues, limited opportunities to collaborate with veteran teachers, and minimal feedback from supervisors.

Existing qualitative studies have placed primary emphasis on examining why teachers leave schools and positions considered hard to staff (e.g., special education teachers; juvenile correctional facilities; high-poverty, high-minority urban schools). Very few studies have examined why teachers remain at these hard-to-staff schools and, specifically, what administrative support influenced their career decisions. Ladd (2011) recommended that future research identify the “comprehensive supports” that mitigate the challenges of teaching in schools with large populations of disadvantaged students (p. 256).

Increased rates of attrition in high-poverty, high-minority schools are creating a disparity in equitable access to experienced teachers as teachers move from schools with large populations of poor minority students to schools with more White and middle- to upper-class students

(Djonko-Moore, 2016; Guarino et al., 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2014). School leaders create and shape workplace climate and culture as a direct result of their leadership style; therefore, it would advance existing research to investigate the perceptions of those whose level of commitment is informed by administrative behaviors (Marshall, 2015) and by understanding their lived experiences.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study is designed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, with respect to administrative support received, of novice teachers who remain teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. By developing an understanding of the experiences of these novice teachers, the study provides insight into how novice teachers' perceptions of administrative support impact career decisions in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. A review of the previous research on teacher attrition revealed that existing literature lacks an understanding of novice teachers' experiences of support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. (Boyd et al., 2011; Brown & Wynn, 2005; Ladd, 2011; DeAngelis & Presley (2011); Tickle et al., 2011; Wynn et al., 2007).

Chapter Three includes a description of the research methods, including the design and the research questions guiding the study. Next, the study setting is described, including its demographics and the rationale for its selection; the process and rationale for selecting the participants are also explained. The procedures section outlines the steps for conducting the study. Data collection instruments and data analysis methods are detailed later in the chapter. Additionally, this chapter includes a discussion of how trustworthiness is established. Ethical considerations are also addressed, including securing IRB approval, maintaining confidentiality, and obtaining participant consent.

Design

A transcendental phenomenological design was selected for this qualitative research study, whose purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of novice teachers with respect to administrative support in the early years of their careers. A qualitative

research design was consequently chosen, as the intent of a qualitative study is to understand the lived and shared experiences of a heterogeneous group (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological approach to qualitative research, which focuses on describing the lived experiences of individuals as it relates to a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), was applied in this study to generate a comprehensive description of novice teachers' lived experiences of administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools (Moustakas, 1994). The specific phenomenological approach employed was a transcendental approach, in which a phenomenon is interpreted and reported in its entirety in a fresh and new way (Moustakas, 1994). This approach allows the researcher to "describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness" (van Manen, 1990, p. 11).

The essence of novice teachers' lived experiences of administrative support were captured using the four major processes of phenomenology outlined by Moustakas (1994): (a) the epoché process, (b) phenomenological reduction, (c) imaginative variation, and (d) synthesis. A key feature of phenomenology is the epoché process, "process by which the researcher identifies and sets aside any personal experience with the phenomena under study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 78). By bracketing assumptions that may bias the study, the researcher is able to examine the phenomenon from the participants' perspective and to develop a rich, comprehensive description based on this understanding. Phenomenological reduction, the second process, allows the researcher to discover the pure essence of the shared experiences and uncover the underlying meaning units through analysis. By employing imaginative variation, the third process, the researcher seeks possible meaning through varying frames of reference, approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives and alternate roles or positions. Phenomenological research concludes with the synthesis of the derived meanings and essences.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this research study:

RQ1: How do novice teachers describe their administrative support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?

RQ2: How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe administrative emotional and social support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?

RQ3: How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe administrative instructional support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?

Setting

This study was conducted in high-poverty, high-minority school districts in rural South Carolina. The selection criteria were the following: (a) 75% of the students receive either free or reduced-price lunch (high poverty), (b) 75% of students are non-White (high minority), and (c) schools are located more than 5 miles from an urban area (rural). Pseudonyms were assigned to districts and schools participating in the study to ensure confidentiality.

Schools were purposefully selected by the researcher to identify novice teachers teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools across South Carolina. School state report card data were used to identify the initial list of schools. Schools were selected based on school demographic information and free and reduced meal percentages obtained through the South Carolina Department of Education. School administrators or Title I contacts were contacted to verify school demographic data and free and reduced meal percentages for the current year.

Participants

The participants were selected by purposeful sampling from several high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to identify “information-rich cases” that inform the researcher “about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Participants were to have completed 1–3 years of teaching in the same high-poverty, high-minority rural school in South Carolina under the same building principal. Purposeful sampling was used to select 12–15 participants from the potential pool, a number within the suggested parameters for phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013). Participants were selected with the goal of obtaining variation in teacher ethnicity, race, age, and gender (Creswell, 2013). A list of possible schools was obtained from the South Carolina State Department of Education website that match the desired demographics. The researcher reviewed the school report card to eliminate schools in which the principal had served at the school for less than three years to ensure that participants would have taught under the same administrator.

Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, Patton’s (2002) snowball-type procedure for purposeful sampling was employed. The researcher contacted the principals of the remaining rural high-poverty, high-minority schools and provided each principal with information about the study. Cooperating principals were asked to provide a list of all certified teachers who had taught at the school for up to three years.

Procedures

The first phase of this research entailed obtaining approval from the IRB to conduct the study. Upon approval, the purposeful sampling process was initiated to secure the number and type of participants required by Liberty University for a qualitative research study. The initial

pool of prospective participants was sent an email containing a brief introduction of the researcher and a description of the study. The prospective participants were asked to indicate their interest in participating in the study by answering a questionnaire, which was accessed by clicking a link in the email and administered by Survey Monkey. Participants were first required to sign a notice of informed consent (Appendix A). The questionnaire (Appendix B) collected demographic information to ensure a variety of ages, levels of education, and ethnicities. The questionnaire also asked respondents to indicate their willingness and availability to participate in a subsequent interview and online focus group. Interested prospective participants were asked to submit their contact information in the relevant section of the questionnaire. From this initial pool of prospective participants, 12–15 novice teachers were selected for the study. A second informed consent form was emailed to the selected prospective participants who wish to continue on to the structured interview and online focus group to review, sign, and return before taking part in the interviews and focus group.

The participants were purposefully selected using the specified criteria to create a maximum variation sample (Creswell 2013) that is representative of the wide range of novice teachers working in high-poverty, high-minority rural South Carolina schools. Selected participants were assigned a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

The data collection phase consisted of individual interviews (Moustakas, 1994) and an online focus group discussion. Both the individual interviews and focus group session were audio recorded as recommended by Creswell (2013). The focus group session was held via online conferencing software. The interviews and focus group allowed the researcher to obtain descriptions of each participant's experiences with administrative support as a novice teacher (Patton, 2002). Interview questions were reviewed by experts in the field and tested in a pilot

interview with a group of teachers not participating in the study, conducted after obtaining IRB approval. Feedback was used to clarify and adjust the wording of the questions. Data were collected and analyzed as prescribed by Moustakas (1994). The discussion and conclusions were written based on the findings.

Role of Researcher

I served as the human instrument in this qualitative research study by observing behavior and conducting interviews in order to collect data (Creswell, 2013). It is vital that I examine the biases and assumptions that I bring to this study as a principal of a rural high-poverty, high-minority elementary school with a decade of experience both in teaching and leading in schools with disadvantaged, high-poverty students and in working with other school districts in the state to improve teacher quality and novice teacher experience. For the purposes of this study, I suspended my personal understandings and experiences with novice teacher retention and attrition as part of the epoché, or bracketing, process (Moustakas 1994). Bracketing entailed setting aside my beliefs and experiences in order to accurately describe the lived experiences of these novice teachers as they relate to administrative support. I achieved this by being fully present in the interviews and focus sessions and by attending closely to what the participants said. Specifically, I utilized the strategies discussed by Chan, Fun, and Chine (2013) to bracket my own experiences and prejudgments: (a) acknowledge and then set aside my own perceptions and experiences; (b) allow the literature review to ground the research questions that drive the study; (c) use semi-structured interview protocols and open-ended questions to allow the participant response to guide the interview; (d) suspend biases during data-analysis.

Participants selected for this study were teachers from rural high-poverty, high minority schools who teach in school districts other than my own. I, therefore, did not have any previous working experience or relationship with any of the selected participants.

Data Collection

Three different sources of data were used in this study: individual participant interviews, focus groups, and artifact collection. Creswell (2013) states that “qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source” (p. 45). Data triangulation, as described by Creswell (2013), was utilized for these multiple sources of data are collected and examined to increase the study’s trustworthiness and credibility. Creswell (2013) suggested that individual interviews, focus groups, and document analysis are appropriate for a qualitative phenomenological study, as they provide thick, rich data capturing the overall essence of the phenomenon under study. The in-depth interviews served as the primary method of data collection, which is typical of a phenomenological qualitative research methodology (Moustakas, 1994). Participant demographic data collected from the initial questionnaire were also included.

Data collection began with collecting artifacts pertaining to administrative support received by participants: observation feedback, induction support calendars, reflection journals, and mentoring activities. I examined the artifacts prior to conducting interviews to gain insight into the formal and informal support systems in place for novice teachers at each site. The collected information was used to ask follow-up questions during the individual interviews and focus group interview.

The second step in data collection was in the form of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. Moustakas (1994) states, “the long interview is the method through which data is

collected on the topic and questions” (p. 114). One-on-one interviews were conducted prior to the focus group in order to gather individual participants’ descriptions of their lived experiences of administrative support prior to their listening to the experiences of the other participants.

The third data collection method was a focus group interview, which was used to further verify the data from the artifact analysis and one-on-one interviews. Participants were invited to take part in the focus group. The interview was held online and digitally recorded then transcribed. The focus group participants received the transcription within 72 hours for member checking. Creswell (2013) describes focus groups as “advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, [and] when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other” (p. 164).

Artifacts

Document analysis as a method of data collection in qualitative research that requires the researcher to examine and interpret documents to find meaning and increase understanding of the phenomenon studied (Bowen, 2009). The data collected from the analysis can be organized into themes and categories to assist in providing a holistic picture when triangulated with other forms of data. According to Yin (2016), information gathered from documents “corroborate(s) information from other services” (p. 103). Participants in this study were asked to provide samples of relevant documents pertaining to the support they received as novice teachers. These included but were not limited to evaluations, observation feedback, induction support calendars, and other induction documents.

Interviews

Transcendental phenomenological studies seek to provide a comprehensive description of individuals’ lived experiences using interviews to capture the essence of these experiences

(Moustakas, 1994). In the individual interviews, participants were asked a series of questions in relation to their administrative support experiences as novice teachers in a high-poverty, high-minority rural school. Interview questions were designed to obtain a rich description of what support feels for a novice teacher.

Interviews were conducted at a location and time convenient for and agreed upon by the participant. The interviews lasted approximately one to two hours. A digital recording device was used to record the interviews; permission to audio record the interviews was obtained in advance. The recorded interviews were later be transcribed (Creswell, 2013). Note-taking was limited to enable me to be attentive to the participant during the interview, especially to any non-verbal responses. A semi-structured interview protocol was used; however, the questions were open-ended to allow for follow-up questions based on the response to individual questions. The questions were grounded in House's (1981) theory of social support, which describes the role of support relationships between individuals, their peers, and their supervisors and the effects of work-related stress.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself: where you grew up, your family, your background.
2. When and what led you to become a teacher, and how did you come about teaching at (insert name of school)?
3. Describe your first year of teaching.
4. What was your administrator's role in your induction process or orientation?
5. Describe any support that you received specific to teaching students in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?

6. The research indicates that the first years for a teacher are most challenging. Describe the experience you had regarding receiving direct or indirect emotional support from your administrator during your first year(s). How did the support (or lack of support) make you feel?
7. Tell me how you experienced instructional support from your administrator directly or indirectly during your first year(s). How did the support (or lack of support) make you feel?
8. Describe your experiences regarding social support from your peers and colleagues.
9. How do you feel your administrator supported these experiences with peers and colleagues?
10. Describe the type of administrative support that you feel would be beneficial to novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?
11. Overall, how did the support you received from your administrator in terms of providing emotional, instructional, and peer support match what you felt you needed in order to be successful in a high-poverty, high-minority rural school?
12. What else do you think would be important for me to know about how novice teachers experience administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?

Interview Questions 1, 2, and 3 were included to obtain background knowledge of the participants, gather a sense of the participant's personality, and establish rapport (Patton, 2002).

Question 4 asked to the participant to describe the administrator's role in the teacher's induction orientation process, while Question 5 sought to understand the types of support and professional development novice teachers receive specific to teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Research on new teacher induction and orientation programs indicate a

need to examine both the strength of these programs in high-poverty schools as well as streamlining the administrator's role in the induction process (Ingersoll & Strong, 2014; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; NASBE, 2016).

According to House (1987), social support can be defined as the emotional support or concern received by an individual during a stressful event or situation and which is measurable in terms of "perceived psychological sentiments" (p. 137). The level of support a worker receives from a supervisor impacts the employee's mental and physical health (House 1981). Schonfeld (1990) compared levels of stress among teachers, particularly novice teachers, with stress in other occupations. Work-related stress has been found to directly impact teacher career decisions (Hong, 2014; House, 1981; Schonfeld, 1990; Viswesvaran et al., 1999). Question 6 was designed to capture the emotional support experiences received from the administrator in the early years of the teacher's career.

Effective principals create conditions that and provide resources to support novice teachers' professional growth and development (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Grissom, 2011). Staffing challenges in low-income and high-minority schools result in the hiring of high percentages of new and inexperienced teachers, who need a substantial degree of instructional support. Question 7 was intended to gain insight into the experiences of novice teachers regarding administrative instructional support during the first three years.

The literature underscores the importance of informal support networks in building resilience and persistence in the beginning years of teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Tricarico et al., 2013). Questions 8 and 9 invited participants to share how their administrator provided opportunities for peer support and to describe school-based support systems for novice teachers.

These questions are grounded in literature that has found a connection between peer relationships and support systems and work-related stress.

Questions 10 and 11 were designed to capture participants feelings about administrative support across all areas for these novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Responses to this question provided a holistic view of their experiences and defined a starting point for focus group discussions. Finally, Question 12 offered participants the opportunity to impart any additional thoughts or insights.

Focus Group Discussion

The focus group provided an additional opportunity to gain deep understanding about the present study's subject because "the extent to which there is a relatively consistent, shared view or great diversity of views that can be quickly assessed" (Patton, 2002, p. 386). The online conferencing tool GoToMeeting was used to conduct the focus group after all individual interviews had been completed. Participants were asked to grant consent for the audio recording of the focus group discussion. Note-taking was limited to allow me to attend to the participants' discussion. A semi-structured interview protocol was used with open-ended questions to guide the discussion. The semi-structured interview format provides the researcher flexibility to expand and probe the participant's response for a deeper meaning and understanding of their experiences as appropriate for the design (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989).

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions:

1. What has been most challenging about teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?
2. How can administrators better support you in these areas?

3. What has been the most effective support that you have received from your administrator this year that directly impacts your ability to persist in a high-poverty, high-minority rural school?
4. Describe the optimal school-based novice teacher support system that would increase novice teacher retention.
5. What should be the key focus of induction support services for novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?
6. Who should be involved in providing this support?
7. Describe the administrative support experiences that have impacted your decision to remain teaching at your current school.
8. Describe administrative support experiences that have impacted your decision to leave your current school.
9. How do your experiences with administrative support at your current school influence your decision to teach at another high-poverty, high-minority rural school if you were to leave this school?

Support is most effective when supportive actions match the recipient's level and type of stress. When stress matching occurs, supportive actions are appropriate for the demands of the stressor (Cohen, & McKay, 1984; Cohen et al., 2000; Viswesvaran et al., 1999). Each of the focus questions further explored the disconnect between the support provided by administrators and the support desired by novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. The focus group provided an opportunity for participants to share and expand on their experiences with others who had experienced the same phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

The data analysis process identified patterns in the data that generated an understanding of the essence of the phenomenon. The data were analyzed and coded to construct themes based on recurring phrases and significant statements, relying heavily on Moustakas (1994) methods of phenomenological research. Transcribed audio recorded interviews were analyzed to glean the essence of the participants' experiences. The transcripts were read multiple times to identify codes, categories, and themes (Creswell, 2011) using an open coding process. Open coding allows the researcher to label and analyze responses without reference to existing theories. In this process, significant statements are categorized and "clustered" for meaning; from these clusters, statements are developed into themes (Creswell, 2013). This type of coding allows for the incorporation of direct quotes and phrases (Creswell, 2013).

Interviews and Focus Group Discussion

Interview and focus group data were analyzed in accordance with Moustakas's (1994) prescribed method for transcendental phenomenological data analysis. Interviews were transcribed within one week of participant interviews. Verbatim transcripts were produced, which required listening repeatedly to check for errors and clarity of responses. Non-verbal responses captured during the interviews were incorporated into the transcription. Individual interviews were printed for participant review and for subsequent analysis.

Epoché

Data analysis began with epoché, a process by which the researcher intentionally suspends beliefs, experiences, and knowledge about the phenomenon to minimize their influence on the research throughout the study (Moustakas, 1994). This process is used continuously throughout the research study so that phenomena are examined with a fresh perspective.

According to Wertz (2005), shifting back and forth between bracketing one's own assumptions and examining the participants' lived experiences permits the researcher to:

recollect [the researcher's] own experiences and to empathically enter and reflect on the lived world of other persons . . . as they are given to the first-person point of view. The psychologist can investigate his or her own original sphere of experience and has an intersubjective horizon of experience that allows access to the experiences of others. (p. 168)

Phenomenological Reduction

Reduction and elimination determined invariant constituents by removing overlapping and repetitive statements (Moustakas, 1994). During this process, also referred to as horizontalization, "every statement [was] initially treated as having equal value" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97) and each statement was considered for its relevance to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This step in the process is associated with the epoché process of looking at data from a fresh perspective. Moustakas (1994) recommends using the following two questions to test each statement for reduction or elimination: (a) Do the statements contain information that deepens the understanding of the experience? and (b) Should the statement be labeled or categorized? Significant statements related to the phenomenon were lifted from the transcript and recorded separately. This process was followed during data analysis. All non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements were retained as meaning units.

Statements unrelated to the focus of the study or overlapping statements were eliminated leaving only the textual description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The invariant horizons or meaning units were clustered into core themes of the participant's experience. Coding identified meaningful units or themes and synthesized statements that contributed to the

global thematic label as a function of the source of data (i.e., the individual interviews, focus group discussion data, and artifacts provided by the participants). Each piece of evidence provided through the triangulation of data contributed to the analysis and identification of themes.

Textual-Structural Descriptions

Themes and meaning units were synthesized into textual-structural descriptions of the participant's experience. These descriptions included the participant's own words to capture the individual's unique perception of the phenomenon. This process was repeated for every study participant. Common themes were well constructed as a result of analyzing the individual textual-structural descriptions. A structural description provides a "vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience, the themes, and qualities that account for 'how' feelings and thoughts are connected to the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 135). A composite of textual and structural descriptions were synthesized into a composite description of the administrative support experiences of all study participants.

Imaginative Variation and Eidetic Reduction

Wertz (2010) describes imaginative variation as the process through which the researcher examines the data collected through multiple perspectives with respect to "what is possible and impossible regarding an essence" (p. 287). Phenomenological research seeks to reveal the essence of shared lived experiences. Katsirikou and Lin (2017) describe the process of eidetic reduction as "the process to rid the phenomenon of its surface appearances to reveal the 'core' (the word 'eido' means 'idea' or 'form,' which means the 'essence' of things)" (p. 471). According to Lin (2017), imaginative variation and eidetic reduction "complement" each other: while imaginative variation rejects extraneous meanings, eidetic reduction "expands the scope of

inspection to discover the veiled and hidden” (p. 472). The shared experience examined in this study is administrative support.

Trustworthiness

Various measures were employed to safeguard the credibility and trustworthiness of this research. The trustworthiness of a research study is central to appraising its value (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maintaining high credibility and objectivity increases the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. The trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be measured by methods employed to increase credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility was addressed through the use of multiple sources of data, including interviews, focus group discussions, and artifact collection. Triangulation ensured that multiple data points were used to develop accurate textual-structural descriptions of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Peer review also contributed to the credibility of the study: the findings were reviewed by researchers and colleagues experienced in this field to examine the methods and approach in the “spirit” of “interrater reliability” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Member checking allowed the participant an opportunity to review particular aspects of interpretation of the data to determine if the analysis matched their experiences. Creswell (2013) recommends providing the participants with “preliminary analyses consisting of description or themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Participants received a preliminary analysis and were invited to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the interpretation of their experience with the phenomenon. Member checking occurred following analysis of the interviews and the focus group discussion. The practice of member checking throughout the research study increased the credibility and validity of the study’s findings.

Dependability and Confirmability

In a qualitative research study, dependability is defined as the quality of the cohesive data collection process and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). The processes within the research should be documented in detail allowing for replication if needed. Detailed records of data collection and data analysis procedures were maintained to ensure dependability. The use of Moustakas's (1994) prescribed procedures for analyzing phenomenological procedures ensured a logical and well-established process was utilized to interpret the data. Additionally, an audit trail increased the confirmability of this research study.

Triangulation

Triangulating multiple data sources reinforced the dependability of this study and the credibility of its results (Creswell, 2013). The data triangulated in this study were collected from the artifact analysis, individual interviews, and focus group interviews. Analyzing each form of data enabled the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the participants' experiences with administrative support as novice teachers.

Transferability

The transferability of the study (i.e., external validity) was addressed through the use of rich descriptions of the phenomenon central to the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that transferability can be achieved when "enough 'thick description' is available . . . to make a reasoned judgment about the degree of transferability possible" (p. 247). A detailed description of the participants' lived experiences is provided in this study so that the reader can understand the central phenomenon under study. Triangulation of data ensured the findings are transferable to other individuals and similar contexts. Additionally, the selection of participants by maximum

variation sampling increased the odds that the findings represent various perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

IRB approval was obtained before any data were collected or participants were selected. Informed consent obtained from selected participants through a form describing the purpose of the study and stating participants' right to withdraw at any time. Participants were informed at the beginning of the purpose of the study as well as the planned dissemination of the findings. Additionally, the study participants were provided a timeline and overview of data collection procedures.

Participants in this study were teachers who were previously unknown to me and did not work in my current district. Participants were asked to share their lived experiences with administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools and had to feel free to share the details of their experiences. Consequently, precautions were taken to safeguard the identities of the teachers participating in this study. Pseudonyms were used for all participants and identifiable characteristics were withheld to protect the identity of all people and places involved in the study. To avoid interruptions to the instructional day, interviews were conducted before or after school.

Confidentiality was enforced throughout the study. All recordings were filed electronically and password protected. Any written or typed transcripts and data were stored in a cabinet with a secure lock.

Summary

Chapter Three outlined the methods used in the research study. A transcendental phenomenological design was chosen because it allows the researcher to provide a rich description of novice teachers' experiences with administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Data were collected through in-person individual interviews and focus groups, then analyzed following Moustakas' (1994) procedures for analyzing phenomenological data. Analysis of significant statements and themes captured the essence of the participants' lived experiences. The trustworthiness of the results was established through triangulation, member checks, and peer review. Ethical considerations concerning obtaining IRB approval, the use of pseudonyms, data storage, and maintaining confidentiality were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, with respect to administrative support received, of novice teachers who remained teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. The goal of this study was to understand the experiences of these novice teachers and provide insight into how novice teachers' perceptions of administrative support impact career decisions in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. This chapter presents a narrative description of the participants. The findings are an analysis of the participants' lived experiences and perceptions revealed through individual interviews, document analysis, and a focus group discussion. The chapter concludes with a summary.

The data collection process began upon receiving approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board and obtaining signatures of informed consent from each teacher participating in the study. The data collection process was explained to each participant as well as the measures used to maintain confidentiality. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary. All data were reviewed and analyzed using the analysis procedure outlined by the transcendental phenomenological design. The analysis included coding and identifying themes through repeated review of the data.

Participants

Participants consisted of novice teachers who had taught 3 years or less in a high-poverty, high-minority rural school in South Carolina. The rationale for this selection reflects findings that poor, rural schools with large populations of minorities are particularly troubled by elevated rates of novice teacher attrition (Djonko-Moore, 2015; Guarino, Brown, & Wyse, 2011;

Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Participants were selected from several different counties and schools across South Carolina to ensure geographic diversity in the data.

The theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in House's (1981) theory of social support. The theory of social support corroborates research that finds organizational behaviors such as leadership style and feedback help new teachers transition into the profession. More precisely, this study examines the novice teachers' experience with administrative support and how their perception of support frames their career decisions. House's theory supports the idea that the perceived lack of support or unmatched support negatively impacts teachers' career decisions.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure confidentiality. Other identifying information (e.g., names of schools, school districts, and counties) was also eliminated. Many of the experiences shared were sensitive in nature and confidentiality was imperative. The same pseudonym was used in reporting data across all three data sets.

The researcher created a table that identified each participant by several demographic characteristics, including age, years of experience, location, and highest degree earned. The participants' age and career experience were important to note so that the reader may have some context into how the participants perceived administrative support.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Current Grade Level	Region	Years of Experience
Anna	25–30	Fourth Grade	Low Country	2
Bethany	25–30	Pre-Kindergarten	Low Country	2
Carlene	25–30	Kindergarten	Low Country	3
Debra	25–30	Kindergarten	Low Country	3
Evelyn	30–35	Second Grade	Midlands	2
Freda	35–40	Elem. Special Education	Low Country	3
Grace	25–30	First Grade	Low Country	3
Henry	25–30	Middle School	Pee Dee	3
Isabella	25–30	First Grade	Low Country	2
Jason	25–30	Sec. Special Education	Midlands	2
Karen	40–45	Elem. Special Education	Upstate	3
Leanne	40–45	Third Grade	Pee Dee	2
Madison	20–25	Middle School	Low Country	1

Anna

Anna was a second-year 4th-grade teacher with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. Growing up in a military family, Anna attended primarily schools under the administration of the Department of Defense. Anna entered the teaching profession immediately after college. Her love of learning and sharing knowledge led her to become a teacher. She enjoys “trying to get my students excited as I am about different things.” Unable to secure a

teaching position in one of the more affluent coastal districts, Anna moved to a small rural area to begin her career. She believed the small school would be a great fit and somewhere she would receive support. Anna described her first year of teaching as “pure hell.” Although the principal assured Anna that she would personally provide support, Anna describes her principal as having “no emotional warmth.” When asked to describe the support she received from her administrator, Anna said, “She didn’t seem interested in me, could never remember where I was from. I don’t think she ever really remembered my name.”

Throughout the interview, Anna described feeling ill equipped to teach in a high-poverty, rural school. She stated:

I had no idea what I was getting myself into at all. I blindly walked into that situation. I never dealt with any of this kind of poverty in my life before, especially from Nebraska. Northern poverty to Southern poverty: two different animals and cultures. I just could not understand how things got that way. There was just nothing that could’ve prepared me. In college, we had a little course with working with poverty, but that was nothing like this.

Bethany

Bethany grew up less than 20 miles away from where she is currently teaching kindergarten. However, her own private school experiences were markedly different from her current teaching assignment. Very active in her church as a child and teenager, Bethany knew at an early age that she wanted a career that enabled her to work with children every day. After graduating with a degree in early childhood education from one of the state’s flagship universities, Bethany took a long-term substitute position closer to home prior to accepting her first job as a pre-kindergarten teacher the following school year. As a first-year teacher and team leader, Bethany describes her first year as “a lot of trial and error.” Bethany relied heavily on a

friend and colleague who taught down the hall. Recalling the importance of a mentor teacher she stated, “She was who I went to because she'd already been here for a year. She'd dealt with these same kids; she understood their background. That was very beneficial, having a mentor teacher that you already had a relationship with.” As the only pre-kindergarten teacher in the school, Bethany believed that this limited her ability to network and collaborate with teachers. When asked about peer support, she stated, “At the other schools I've been to, there are four teachers on a grade level. Here, there's just one of every grade level. I feel like it [peer support] is severely lacking here, when there's nobody in-house that you can go to and say, ‘As another pre-K teacher, what would you do in this situation?’”

Carlene

As a teacher cadet in high school, Carlene planned to graduate college and become a kindergarten teacher. She chose to move closer to home and teach at a rural school as a requirement of loan forgiveness. Growing up less than 15 minutes from her current school, Carlene understood the challenge she would face teaching in a high-poverty, high-minority rural school. She credited her teacher assistant for helping her through her first year:

The only reason I survived my first year teaching was because of my assistant. She has been in kindergarten, this is like her seventh year, and she just has a high school degree. She has kids, and she has been in kindergarten, and she knows what's expected of them. She is all in, like she is one of the best people I've ever worked with.

Carlene described her principal as providing a high level of emotional support and a low level of instructional support. In her interview, she described emotional support from her administrator as “wonderful.” She recalls, “He could look on my face and tell if I was having a bad day. He would always ask if he could help.” However, her principal was less supportive in matters

concerning instruction and feedback. When asked about administrative instructional support she stated:

He was never in my room, he never did observations. Instructional things, he was never involved in that. He never came in. Even now, I mean he still doesn't observe, and I would like the feedback . . . I've heard other schools' administrators observe, it's just here that doesn't happen. That's the norm here, but my first year, I didn't realize that.

Debra

After one semester in college, Debra, a once aspiring dentist, changed her major to education and became a third-generation teacher. After graduating with a degree in education from one of the state's historically black universities, Debra went on to earn a master's degree in education. As a December graduate, Debra began her first teaching assignment mid-year. Wanting to experience life outside of her small town, she took her first job hours away from home. Debra described her first half-year teaching experience in the sizeable inner-city school as "horrible":

My first-year teaching, I had no idea that there were children who lived the way that they lived in Columbia, I was very shocked, and the culture was totally different, and a lot of people would look at me and say, "Well you're black, why don't you get it?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm black from a small town in the middle of nowhere." I did not grow up in the projects, and I did not know that they really existed.

Debra returned home to her small rural town to officially begin her teaching career the next fall where she describes a principal who helped her unpack and set up her classroom and peers who hold "hugging moments" for stressed colleagues:

We have like hugging moments, like if you need a hug real quick, somebody will come and randomly hug you. It's not even a big deal, if you need a hug, you can get one. And I think that that's, it's just nice, it's just nice to know that if you go out in the hallway and you look irate, that there's probably going to be three to four people that are going to come to your rescue to make sure that you're okay.

Evelyn

Evelyn was a teacher assistant and substitute teacher for 3 years prior to becoming a second-grade teacher. Because of her prior experience in education, Evelyn considers herself “not the average new teacher.” As a mother of two adolescents, she didn't find it difficult to manage classroom behaviors stating, “I had some behavior problems, but nothing I couldn't handle. I'm not mean, but I'm very firm, and I'm strict. The same way I treat my personal children is the way I treat these children, but it wasn't difficult.” Evelyn reports her greatest challenge as a new teacher was managing the amount of “paperwork,” a familiar challenge in the profession (e.g., long-range plans and evaluation documentation), for which she received no support. She reported feeling frustrated with the lack of feedback from administrators and onboarding structures: “We didn't get a tour of the school. Luckily, I knew the school. Small things. We didn't know emergency procedures. I had never had any formal training on Power School, and I still haven't.” She acknowledges the importance of her neighboring teacher's support during the difficult first year: “She and I sometimes we would just go and meet in the bathroom, and both of us would just cry, because there was a lot of things here, the simplest things we did not know, and I know it might seem minor, but those things, I think they should be covered.”

Freda

Freda worked as a part-time caregiver and tutor to disabled homebound children in New Hampshire for 14 years prior to moving to South Carolina as a full-time special education teacher. She commutes over an hour from the city to her small rural school two counties away. She recalls having to adapt to the culture much different from her middle class predominately White hometown. In describing herself, she identifies herself as “extremely adaptable and empathetic” and mentally prepared herself for the level of poverty and cultural differences. Her experiences with administrative support were by far the most positive of all:

I never had been in this type of setting, where I didn't know I was pushing out. So, I was a little overwhelmed, and I did think I cried to her. I wasn't prepared, and she was welcoming, and sympathetic, and understanding, and really there for me. I can't say enough good things about my administration in the building. They make me feel like family, and I feel like, the things that they say to me, they're not just saying it to say it. They truly mean it.

Grace

Grace grew up in a high-minority rural town across the state from where she currently teaches. She attributes her success in the classroom to the administrative support she received beginning on the first day of school: “The administrator is a very hands-on type of person. She is in your classroom making sure you have everything that you need. She says, ‘What do you need to make your job easier? If we don't have the funds, we will try to find the funds to get it.’” Grace describes a school culture cultivated by the principal where everyone is “all in” and does what is best for the children and each other. Grace also underscores the importance of peer support in retaining new teachers in high-poverty, high-minority schools: “By having good

mentors my second year of teaching, really, really, helped me to see it. I wouldn't want to teach any place else, besides a high-poverty area now. I will stay in a high-poverty area until the end of my teaching time."

Henry

Henry, an honors college graduate, moved from the Midwest to teach. He moved to South Carolina in hopes of returning to the beach he visited as a child. He describes his childhood community as "not diverse, whatsoever." He described his first year of teaching middle school as "phenomenal" in part due to the instructional support structures in place at the school. Although he described his principal as "hands-off" in curriculum matters, Henry found instructional support in the embedded professional development provided by the curriculum coach and mentor teachers. He also described his school culture as a "team atmosphere" where everyone is helpful. Henry described his principal as "calming" and "organized." He stated that his principal relieved the stress associated with teacher evaluations and student discipline.

Isabella

Isabella recalled her first year of teaching as a year of "We're not doing that again. You go in thinking everything you learned in your internship is going to work . . . it's not." Isabella feels that the "economy in the area" contributed to what she considers as parental apathy toward education:

It's not something that they're choosing, it's just the way of life here. And so, you know, there might be three jobs, or there might be a household situation, a family situation that doesn't always allow their child's education to come first. Which, it's circumstantial. Although she grew up in the neighboring county, Isabella described going through a "culture shock" during her first year. This shock was coupled with an unsupportive administration that

does not effectively communicate expectations to new teachers, leaving her feeling “unimportant” and “frustrated.” The rural school is 30 miles away from the other schools in the district. Isabella describes feelings of isolation: “I feel like we are a lonely island at this school. We are far away from all the other county schools. We get the word last. We get told what to do last. And then, when it’s not done, they’re looking at us like, ‘Why didn’t you get it done?’”

Jason

Jason teaches emotionally disturbed high-school students in a self-contained classroom model. He is originally from a high-poverty, high-minority rural area in South Carolina, where he grew up in housing projects. He stated that his background lends itself to not needing as much emotional support as his novice teacher colleagues. Coupled with his background, he pointed to a “spiritual connection” to his principal as a primary reason for staying at this current school. According to Jason, the principal sends encouraging messages to the teachers each morning as well as offering support through prayer. It is this connection that Jason says “makes me want to look out for my principal, doing my job and doing what I’m supposed to do. Because I know she has my back.”

Karen

Karen was a third-year special education teacher at a rural elementary school. Although she spent most of her adult life just two hours away, she was “shell-shocked” seeing how poverty impacted “every aspect of a kid’s life.” After working as a special education teaching assistant for four years, she graduated from college and started her career as a professional educator. Karen began teaching special education in a self-contained classroom with nine severe and profoundly disabled students. She described the first year as horrible. “I had nine kids, six wheelchairs, three feeding tubes, and behavior that you would not believe, and it was just, it was

horrible. I cried just about every day,” she recalled. While she described the peer support she received through the induction program as “amazing,” she expressed very negative feelings about the emotional and instructional support she received from her building principal. In terms of emotional support, Karen labels her principal as “distant”: “She’s never actually come to me and ask me if I needed, you know, any support or, ‘how are things going?’ You know, just, ‘If you need anything, come to the office.’ It’s been none of that.” When asked why she stays, she replied, “If it was not for my colleagues and the kids that I’ve been working with, I wouldn’t.”

Leanne

Shortly after starting a family, Leanne finished her four-year degree in early childhood education and began teaching within 30 minutes of her hometown. Leanne completed her degree feeling prepared to teach in a rural high-poverty, high-minority school, as her university is well known for poverty-education coursework and workshops. However, when asked to describe her first year of teaching she stated:

My first year of teaching I had a huge culture shock. I was born and raised in Holly Springs, South Carolina. I felt like I was going through all my internships and everything through Palmetto State University, I felt like I was very involved in the schools. I thought that I had a very good understanding. And then my first job came . . . in Upstate. I had never spent a whole lot of time in Upstate, so I didn’t realize how different Upstate was, but I felt like, well it’s just 30 minutes down the road, I’ll be fine.

Leanne recalled parents using profanity and making threats toward her during her first year. One student threatened to bring a gun to school and shoot her. She described the evening her principal came to her house to console her after that incident:

But there would be days where I would come without any makeup on, my eyes swollen just from crying at home because I felt like I couldn't perform at a level that the university had trained me for. And so, she saw it and so she called me one night and she said, "Leanne, I just want to make sure that you're okay and is there anything that I can do to help you?" And I just lost it on the phone. I just started crying and she said, "Ah, I'm coming to your house right now. Where are you?" And she came over, and she sat on my couch. She's like, "Let's talk. Just tell me what's going on and how I can help you." We had a good talk that night, and then after that I took her advice and I was able to get further with the children after that.

Leanne eventually transferred from Upstate and moved to a new community. She continues to teach at a rural, high-poverty, high-minority school because "those kids need good teachers and good people that they know are more than just their teacher and that they can rely on even after they leave their classroom."

Madison

Originally from the Midwest, Madison followed her parents to South Carolina; they moved to the state three years ago. As a first-year middle school teacher, Madison described her first year as a "culture shock" due to the lack of diversity in her hometown. She described positive experiences with instructional support from her administrators, including school-based support for new teachers and classroom observations with feedback: "They were very clear about their expectations I was given exactly what I needed to improve on and things that I did well. So, I was given a refinement and a reinforcement objective," she recalled. Madison described feelings of anxiety when asking for assistance from administrators for classroom management and discipline:

We were so afraid of our administrators, like we thought that, you know, if we write a referral, that means that we don't have good classroom management. And so, like writing a referral makes us the admin's problem, and it makes us look like we don't know how to manage our class. And we're afraid of being yelled at in front of our students.

Results

The results of this study are presented in two subsections. "Theme Development," the first subsection, includes a description of the themes that emerged through the analysis of the one-on-one interviews and focus group discussion. The second subsection, "Research Question Responses," is a discussion of how each theme addresses the three research questions.

Theme Development

The research process began with individual one-on-one interviews conducted with each participant at a time and location convenient for the participant. Following each interview, the researcher bracketed thoughts and feelings about the content of the interviews to maintain an accurate reflection of the collected data. This prevented the researcher's personal opinions and feelings from biasing the research. A professional transcription company transcribed each of the interviews. The company's transcriptionists each signed confidentiality agreements as part of the contract. Participants were provided the opportunity to review their transcript for accuracy and member checking.

Data condensation. After the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were read multiple times. All identifying information was carefully removed from the interview transcripts to protect the identity of the participants. Words, phrases, thoughts, and ideas that appeared throughout the interviews were highlighted. The other forms of data collected from the

participants, including site-based and district induction support plans were also analyzed. The use of NVivo 12 software facilitated the coding of data and clustering statements into themes based on shared experiences and similarities in the participant responses. Next, the memos and teacher statements were classified into categories using the open coding process described by Creswell (2011). During this process, the interview transcripts were read repeatedly to categorize the phenomena into groups. Codes were created based on the data obtained from this process. Each code, or node, was labeled with a descriptive phrase that indicated a similar perception or meaning of the phenomena. Quotations were lifted from participant interviews and provided in the discussion of the findings. During this step of analysis, codes were merged and split into different codes. After subsequent readings of the interview content, a codebook was created, with 319 data elements were grouped into 15 codes. Themes and supporting subthemes were identified after further review. The table in Appendix D presents the codes that emerged during open coding, the number of participants who contributed data to each code, and the percentage of data elements included in each code. Themes and supporting subthemes were identified after further review.

Data display. During this step in the data analysis, the codes were sorted into categories or themes. In NVivo, each parent code was labeled using a word or phrase that described the meaning or essence of the phenomena. Open-coding nodes were placed under parent nodes when the nodes supported the meaning or essence indicated by the category or theme label. Fifteen codes were grouped into three themes during this step of the analysis. The three themes that emerged with respect to novice teachers' experiences with administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools were the following:

1. Positive adult relationships
2. Instructional support and feedback
3. Supportive principals help manage behavior

Appendix E lists the themes that emerged, the codes that contributed to the themes, and the number of data sources attached to each theme and the percentage of each occurrence within the entire dataset.

Theme 1: Positive adult relationships are essential to novice teachers.

The first and most prominent theme that emerged from the data analysis was the importance of relationships between novice teachers and other adults as a source of emotional and social support. The data suggest that these relationships are as important as the novice teachers' relationship with the building administrator. Social support is understood as the emotional support or concern received by a person during a stressful event or situation and can be measured in terms of "perceived psychological sentiments" (House, 1987, p. 137).

Information from all participants indicated that a healthy relationship with at least one adult in the building was the primary reason they could persist in their first year in the classroom.

The teacher next door. When asked about her experiences with peer support, Evelyn noted, "If it wasn't for the teacher next door, I would have quit.". These feelings were shared by five other participants who commented on the impact that a neighboring teacher support had on their ability to remain teaching after the first year. Anna remembered writing and rewriting resignation letters each day after school until she finally connected with the teacher next door. Anna shared, "It was helpful to have her. If it wasn't for her, I would have quit that first year." These informal support networks were critical for novice teachers in these schools during the first years in the classroom. Evelyn shared that she turned to a veteran teacher who was also new

to the school for emotional supported: “She and I would just go and meet in the bathroom, and both of us would just cry” When assigned to an unsupportive mentor teacher, Henry was drawn to the positivity displayed by a neighboring teacher whom he described as “instrumental in helping me.”

Madison attributed strong peer relationships to the cultural expectations set by the principal. Her principal charged the grade-level teams and team leaders to provide support to the two dozen new teachers on staff. She added:

I saw veteran teachers that seemed, you know, in high spirits, they seemed successful, they seemed confident, and I just started observing all of their behaviors and their routines. And that’s probably what helped me the most, was just reaching out when I needed it, and the staff has definitely been a help. My team leader and then the people that I plan with as well, but the staff at my school has been extremely helpful. And I think it’s just like a family; we’re all going through the same thing, so we’re always willing to help each other out.

Emotional support provided by peers helps to minimize feelings of loneliness and isolation. Several teachers recalled negative relational experiences with their colleagues. Anna mentioned feelings of isolation and loneliness because the small rural community teachers formed “cliques,” often excluding her. To counter feelings of depression, she would drive four hours each weekend to visit family. Freda shared similar feelings: “This is an extremely small town, and there are a lot of people that live in this town, that work in this town. There are a lot of cliques. There’s a lot of gossip, so I try to leave that out of my teaching.” Unlike many other participants, Freda relies heavily on the positive, supportive relationship she has established with their principal more so than her peers.

In some rural areas, school size limits opportunities for collaboration and support from grade-level peers. Bethany summarized this challenge:

You don't really have a lot of chances to collaborate or talk with the people. They're so busy working on their own classroom, and there's nobody else in your grade level, so you don't really have a group that you're automatically placed into.

Many of the participants in this study were the only teacher in the grade level in their school. As a result, several teachers were able to find emotional support in other adults in the school and school district. For example, Isabella credited her first-year survival to her teacher assistant. She says of her teacher assistant: "Bless her. She's an angel. She definitely helped me get through the majority of the issues. There's been tears. There's been days I've been like, 'What did I get myself into?' She's been a life preserver." Likewise, Carlene reflected on the important role her teaching assistant played in her first year in the classroom:

The only reason I survived my first year teaching was because of my assistant. She has been in kindergarten, this is like her seventh year, and she just has a high school degree. She has kids, and she has been in kindergarten, and she knows what's expected of them. She is all in like she is one of the best people I've ever worked with.

Mentors matter. Assigning a building or district-level mentor to new teachers is a common practice among building principals. For the purposes of this study, building mentors are considered part of the administrative support provided to new teachers. Although this form of support is indirect, the building principal assigns the mentor and facilitates the mentor-mentee relationship. Bethany described her mentor as her "go-to person" for questions and concerns. She said, "I think that first year that you kind of don't know what to do in certain situations because

you've never had it come up." Bethany expressed appreciation for her principal in part because of his selection of her mentor: "He led me to the people who he knew were gonna help me . . . he knows I was going to have problems; he knows who could probably help me." Freda experienced both emotional and instructional support from her mentor:

She's fantastic. Anything I needed, I would go into meetings with her to check in. She would say, "What do you need, how do you feel, how are things going, you have such and such due, do you have any questions." So they were really proactive and a big help.

Debra, Anna, and Evelyn reported vastly different experiences with their mentors. Debra described her mentor as overworked and unavailable. She learned quickly to rely on other teachers. Anna's experience with her mentor was similar. Receiving the curriculum guide on a thumb drive was the extent of the support she received from her assigned induction mentor. She resorted to purchasing curriculum online and described her feelings of frustration with the lack of support from her mentor: "I was very frustrated. I wanted to get these kids interested in social studies The curriculum wasn't as detailed or in-depth as was needed for the topic or standard I just tried to find things to cover on my own." Evelyn felt as if she would have received more support from her mentor if her mentor wasn't also the literacy coach: "She helped as much as she could, but by her being out of the classroom and the literacy coach, she had a big hat already. I don't feel that I got as much as I needed."

Relatable principals are viewed as emotionally supportive. The broad concept of emotional support used in this study has been narrowed to the demonstration of concern, appreciation, interest, trust, and respect toward individuals. Out of 13 participants, 12 associated emotional support provided by their administrator with their perceived relatability. Henry felt his

principal provided emotional support by creating a calm and protective “family atmosphere” where all staff felt welcome and valued. Carlene stated that her principal’s strength was his ability to build positive relationships with the staff, which she viewed as emotionally supportive. Bethany summarized her relationship with her administrators by saying, “I feel like I can talk to them They are more like my colleagues than my boss.” She recalled a parent-teacher conference concerning a child with chronic classroom misbehavior in which the principal worked with her and the parent to develop strategies for managing the child’s behavior. She added that having the principal in the parent-teacher conference was comforting and helpful.

Other terms associated with administrative emotional support are *available* and *approachable*. Both Carlene and Freda used the phrase “I feel like I can go to them with any concerns” when asked to describe their experiences with administrative emotional support. When probed to elaborate, Freda shared a time that she was feeling overwhelmed and cried to her administrator, “I wasn’t prepared. She was welcoming, sympathetic, and understanding. She was really there for me. They make me feel like family, I feel like the things they say to me, they are not saying it just to say it. They truly mean it.” Jason stated that his administrator provided emotional support through personal texts, weekly inspirational email messages, and even through prayer. He noted that he feels spiritually connected with his principal and that if she knows that you have professional or personal challenges that she will “shoot you a prayer.”

Conversely, Debra described feeling “picked on” and “isolated” from her principal, who she stated has “cliques.” Many participants echoed this same sentiment. When asked about how she experienced emotional support from her principal, Evelyn described her principal as “not nurturing,” going on to say, “I needed emotional support every day. I was a wreck.” Karen said

that her principal has never shown any care or concern for her and is adamant that her principal's unfriendly nature is the reason why many new teachers are leaving at the end of the year. Karen summarized by stating, "She is not a people person and not very friendly. She's never actually asked me if I needed anything, any support, or asked, how are things going, if you need anything, come to the office. It's been none of that."

Theme 2: Instructional support and feedback.

Teachers were asked to describe their experiences with instructional support. All participants noted that their administrators were not directly involved in instruction. Many of the experiences captured to address the third research question described indirect instructional support by the administrator. Examples of direct instructional support (observation and feedback, curriculum and instruction guidance) were limited. The implications of not receiving direct instructional support were entirely different for each participant.

Principal feedback. One of the terms associated with the building principal is *instructional leader*. Instructional support comprises a myriad of roles and responsibilities related to classroom instruction on the part of the principal. Instructional feedback is used to strengthen pedagogy and build capacity in classroom teachers. Unfortunately, for many of the participants, there was limited instructional feedback from the principal. Madison was the only participant that experienced routine observations and feedback from the principal.

Like many of the participants, Bethany expressed a desire to receive feedback from her principal:

He never did observations, instructional things. He was never involved in that I just couldn't understand at first why he wasn't I was under the impression that, from

what I learned in college, principals would be in your classroom. I was like, I'm waiting . . . He never came in.

Debra expressed frustration that she has never received feedback after her principal's observational visits to her classroom. Other participants reported receiving feedback from assistant principals or instructional coaches, however, not from the principal directly. Evelyn said that while she received feedback from her mentor and assistant principal, she would like feedback from the principal: "I want feedback. I ask for it all the time."

The three special education teachers also reported not receiving instructional feedback from their principal; however, each believed the lack of direct instructional support from their principal is because his or her principals do not have a background in special education. Likewise, Henry stated that his principal is hands-off with instruction in part because the principal lacks teaching experience. When asked about the frequency of instructional observations by her principal during her first 3 years of teaching, Isabella candidly responded, "Principal? Haven't seen him."

Madison was the only participant that experienced regular observations and feedback from her administrators: "I was told when they were coming in, they were clear on their expectations, I was given exactly what I needed to do to improve, and what I did well. I was given a reinforcement and a refinement objective."

During the focus group discussion, participants discussed in greater depth their experiences with instructional feedback from their principal. Evelyn recalled looking for feedback that was never provided: "I think I was annoying her . . . always asking for feedback. You see me asking for help, yet you don't try to help me. My cry for help is not being answered." Henry agreed with the overall sentiment of the group, adding "All I wanted them to

do was to tell me something I could improve on.” Carlene stated that her principal offers praise rather than instructional feedback. Carlene felt that her principal judged her instructional capabilities based on her classroom management. In comments similar to her individual interview she added, “Materials and discipline is his strength, not instruction. I’ve never been observed by my principal. He only comes into my classroom if he is getting a student out.”

During the focus group discussion, Debra stated that she was observed by the principal that same morning and added, “I probably won’t hear any more about it.” Debra told the group shared her experiences of being observed by her principal but not receiving written or verbal feedback about her performance. Surprisingly, the lack of direct instructional feedback from the principal had no bearing on their overall feelings of being supported as novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in relation to decisions to remain teaching at those schools.

Indirect instructional support. Although the majority of participants reported not receiving direct instructional feedback and support from their principal, many of the novice teachers experienced indirect support from their administrators through building mentors and instructional coaches. Bethany said that her school's instructional coach is the primary source of instructional support. She described weekly cluster meetings and professional learning community meetings led by the instructional coach. Feeling that direct instructional support from the principal is one area that could be improved, Carlene spoke about how having an instructional coach to support her as a novice the second year had a significant impact on her development.

Henry attributed his “phenomenal” first-year experiences to the professional development structures at his school. He described his principal as “hands-off” regarding curriculum and that the curriculum coordinator, who “handled all things curriculum” facilitated the weekly cluster

meetings where teachers learned instructional strategies that they later applied in the classroom. Henry said that he believes this instructional support structure reduced the amount of stress associated with learning new content and teaching strategies. Isabella stated that the instructional support provided by the instructional coach made her feel “confident.” Leanne also described positive experiences with instructional support from the school’s literacy coach: “She was amazing. I could go to her for anything, and she would help me out. I could ask her to come in my room and watch me do a lesson and tell me how I could fix it.”

Theme 3: Supportive principals help manage behavior.

Many of the participants associated feelings of emotional support with their perception of the principal’s ability to help novice teachers manage behavior. Bethany described feeling emotionally supported by her principal when he refused to allow a student who chronically misbehaved to return to school until the parents sought professional help for the student: “The student was throwing chairs, tables, and scissors at other students. It got to the point where he met with the parents and was like, ‘He’s not going back in there until something is done.’ That really helped me emotionally. That was my emotional support.” Madison remembered feeling afraid to write discipline referrals for fear of appearing to lack classroom management abilities. She recalled other new teachers being chastised in front of their students for writing discipline referrals, which left her feeling hesitant to ask for assistance with student misbehavior. When presented with the opportunity later in the school year, Madison and her new teacher colleagues confided in the administrators about not feeling supported by administrators when dealing with issues of classroom management and recalled how receptive the administrators were to the feedback:

So, we kind of had to speak to our administrators about that, but we were able to do that in a support meeting. And then, I think the other thing that they've taught us is just to build relationships with the students. So once they figured out that we were having issues . . . or thinking that they weren't being respected, then we were given a lot of opportunities to talk about how we can build relationships with students.

Participants also reported feeling emotionally supported by their building principals in matters dealing with difficult parents. Isabella described her principal as "the first to defend his teachers," further describing the importance of feeling supported by your principal when dealing with a parent as "if you don't have an administration that has your back, you kind of feel like you're between a rock and a hard place." Novice teachers often lack experience conferencing with parents, particularly when the conference could potentially turn hostile. Leanne, Bethany, and Madison recalled times when their principal joined a parent conference. Leanne, who described her principal as very supportive, shared one instance:

She would sit in parent-teacher conferences with me when I felt uncomfortable with certain parents because they're very intimidating and would yell at me and curse at me and different things like that. So, she would sit in with me, and she would make sure that they would act appropriately, and if they didn't, she would be the first one to tell them, 'You know, you can leave and come back later when you decide to act the way you need to.' So, I really appreciated that factor.

Principals were described as unsupportive when the participants felt that the principal failed to support them with difficult parents or students. Several participants shared stories of students throwing objects, chronic disrespect, threatening bodily harm, kicking, screaming and in one instance, starting a fire in the restroom. Many of the participants felt both inadequately

prepared to handle such behaviors and unsupported by their administrators when these behaviors occurred. Henry and Karen shared similar feelings of frustration with how administrators responded to student misbehavior. They both recalled instances in which they asked for assistance with behavior, and the behavior was not addressed until the following day. Henry said, “Our principals took care of referrals every two weeks. So, if I write a referral for a kid, and they walk in that class on Monday, he could very well not be suspended until the following Friday.” Like Madison, who initially felt hesitant to ask for assistance with behavior, Debra expressed feelings of frustration with administrative support with discipline. She recalled being reluctant to ask for assistance for fear of being singled out at the faculty meeting as someone who “needs to handle your business in your own classroom.” Outside of her relationship with her peers and her love for the students, Debra’s frustration with how administration supports new teachers with behavior is a primary factor in her career decisions:

I don’t think there, there’s too much, there’s too many things that will make me stay, because of the behavior. I know that that’s not going to change. And even with my students that I had last year, they’re in first grade now, and they’re still doing the same things. They’re still doing the same exact things, and nobody is helping those first-grade teachers deal with those behavior issues that I told them about last year.

Debra recalled receiving a student who had been previously expelled when she was a first-year teacher. The student began immediately displaying violent behaviors. She recalled crying to her administrators: “They didn’t try to help or assist or send me any type of help.” Leanne attributed her decision not to return to her school after a student threatened bodily harm to not feeling “safe and secure” in her work environment: “I decided that I wasn’t a good fit for them because they didn’t make me feel I was of value.”

Research Question Responses

This section describes how the three themes that emerged from the data—positive adult relationships, instructional support and feedback, and principal support managing behavior—answer the research questions. Each research question is addressed through the analysis of participant quotes, focus group discussion, and submitted artifacts. The first question addressed the participants' overall experience with administrative support in high-poverty, high minority rural schools. RQ2 and RQ3 sought to capture the essence of the participants' experience with emotional, social, and peer support. The novice teachers offered a collection of stories, examples, and experiences with administrative support.

RQ1. *How do novice teachers describe their administrative support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?* Multiple structured interview questions were asked to obtain an understanding of the participants' overall experiences with administrative support. The essence of these experiences was captured in the individual interviews and focus group discussion. All three themes were used to answer this question. Theme 1 was *positive adult relations*. Data grouped under Theme 1 indicate novice teachers thrive in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools when they have positive relationships with other adults in the building. Teachers reported that strong, supportive peer relationships (a) outweighed the importance of having a strong relationship with the principal; (b) enabled them to persist through the first years of teaching; (c) and were the primary source of emotional support during difficult and challenging experiences.

Theme 2 was *instructional support and feedback*. In data grouped under this theme, novice teachers shared experiences with instructional support and feedback from their principals. Participant narratives coded to this theme indicate limited experiences with feedback and

instructional support directly from the principal. Support developing curriculum and refining instructional strategies was provided primarily by an instructional coach. Theme 3 *supportive principals help manage behavior* also addressed RQ2 as it pertains to the participants overall experience with administrative support. Data grouped under this theme point to the importance of the principal's direct involvement in classroom management and effective discipline practices during a novice teacher's first years. The degree to which the participants felt that the principal effectively handled discipline was directly associated with feelings of being supported.

RQ2. *How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe administrative emotional and social support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?* Themes 2 and 3 were used to answer RQ2. Participants cited peer relationships as the primary source of social and emotional support. Many of the novice teachers in this study shared stories of how neighboring teachers, teammates, and other adults in the building provided emotional support during the first 3 years. Findings indicate that positive adult relationships and peer support were major contributors to the novice teachers' decision to remain teaching at these high-poverty, high-minority schools. During the individual interviews and focus group discussion, participants indicated that they continue to teach at their current school mostly because of the relationships built with other adult staff members. The data indicate that the principal–novice teacher relationship is not as important in novice teacher career decisions as peer relationships.

RQ3. *How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe administrative, instructional support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools?* The purpose of this question was to capture specific experiences with feelings of instructional support by their administrator. An additional goal was to learn what types of instructional

support principals provided to the novice teacher and if the participants felt as if they benefitted from these experiences. Data grouped under this theme indicated that novice teachers receive limited instructional feedback or instructional support from their principal. Participants shared feelings of frustration and confusion over the lack of direct feedback from their principal. The lack of direct instructional support and feedback from the principal was perceived negatively by most novice teachers. Participants expressed a desire to receive individual feedback and support directly from their administrator. Some participants felt the principal should assume a more active role in their professional development. Several participants expressed feeling unimportant to their principal due to the lack of instructional observations and feedback on their practice.

Summary

The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study was to capture the essence of novice teachers' experiences with administrative support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. Individual interviews were conducted with 13 novice teachers, a focus group discussion and review of submitted artifacts. Data collected from the interviews and focus group discussion analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) prescribed method for transcendental phenomenological data analysis in obtaining a rich description of how participants experience phenomena. Findings indicate that novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools perceive administrative support experiences as positive when they build positive, supportive relationships with adults throughout the building; receive frequent instructional support and feedback from mentors, principals or instructional support professionals; and receive support managing behaviors. Chapter Five includes interpretations and implications of these findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences, with respect to administrative support, of novice teachers who remain teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. This final chapter consists of a summary of the findings and a discussion of the implications in relation to the literature and theory discussed in the literature review. The methodological and practical implications are also included, followed by an outline of the study limitations as well as recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

This study intended to capture the authentic voice of novice teachers who teach in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. Through individual interviews, a focus group discussion and artifact analysis, participants shared their experiences with administrative support during the first three years of their teaching careers. Moustakas's (1994) methodology for a transcendental phenomenological study was employed in arriving at the findings. Composite textual and structural descriptions were synthesized into composite descriptions of the administrative support experiences of all study participants. The following sections present a summary of the findings according to the themes that emerged as well as answers to the research questions that this study intended to answer.

For the purposes of this study, the term *administrative support* was defined as “assisting teachers with issues such as discipline, instructional methods, curriculum and adjusting to the school environment” (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 380). All participants shared unique descriptions of how they felt supported by their administrators during their first years of teaching. All the teachers, except for Freda, agreed that the support received from the

administrator was a mismatch to the support they felt that they needed early in their career. Many of the participants described receiving minimal direct instructional support from their building administrators. Overall, each participant shared experiences of receiving emotional support from at least one adult in the building that helped in persisting past the first year of teaching.

The second research question asked, *How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools describe emotional and social support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority, rural schools?* Open-ended interview questions allowed the participants to share how they experienced emotional support from their administrator and their peers. Teachers associated their administrators' handling of parent and student discipline issues with feelings of emotional support. Teachers who did not receive support with classroom management, demanding parents, or chronically misbehaving students viewed their principal as emotionally unsupportive. Feelings of being emotionally supported by their administrator were described in anecdotes in which the administrator came to the assistance of the novice teacher struggling with a difficult parent or misbehaving student. Additionally, teachers perceived administrators as emotionally supportive when the administrator was relatable, visible, and approachable. Experiences where principals worked collaboratively with their teachers to solve problems and find solutions were described as emotionally supportive. The need to strengthen support with student behaviors was pervasive across all interviews and during the focus group discussion. Negative experiences with administrative emotional support were directly linked to the lack of student discipline support.

The objective of the second part of RQ2 was to capture how novice teachers experienced social support or peer support. Participants credited positive relationships with peers or other school personnel with helping them adjust to the school environment. Emotional support provided by peers and colleagues helped to minimize feelings of being overwhelmed and

isolated. Participants who experienced positive adult relationships indicated that these relationships were more important than the relationship with their principal. Most teachers attributed returning to the school for the second or third year directly to the support they received from peers and other adults in the building. Likewise, teachers who did not experience positive peer or social support indicated that the lack of positive adult relationships was a factor in their decision to leave the school.

Participants acknowledged the importance of having a mentor teacher to support them both emotionally and instructionally during the first few years. Data collected from the interviews indicated that rural schools have a limited pool of teachers who can serve as mentors. As a result, new teachers were often assigned to mentors who have other responsibilities, such as literacy or instructional coaches; this limited the amount of time, attention, and support the novice teacher received. One participant whose mentor also served as the school's literacy coach noted, "The literacy coach had been out of the classroom for a while . . . She was very, very busy, so if it had not been for the lady who taught beside me, I don't think I would have made it." Another participant shared a similar experience:

Being a literacy coach, she had a big hat already. I just don't feel like I got as much as I needed as a mentor. Because I felt like I should have been able to go to her instead of going to my neighbor to cry and say I don't want to do this no more because it was plenty of days I said that.

Additionally, several of the participants noticed that their mentors were either new to the profession as well or retired teachers, suggesting a lack of qualified mid-career teachers to serve as mentors in rural schools. When assigned mentors presented themselves as uninterested or unavailable, novice teachers turned to other peers or attempted to navigate the first years on their

own.

The support documents did not contain information regarding the role of the principal in the induction process. Several teachers submitted induction support calendars with dates; however, the topics were missing. Some teachers acknowledged receiving an email on the day of the seminar without prior notice. In contrast, Madison provided her school district's induction calendar, which outlined dates, topics, and assignments. Her district required principals to submit a school-based induction plan.

RQ3 examined how novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools experienced instructional support from their administrators. During participant interviews and focus group discussion, it became evident that novice teachers related administrative support with the instructional feedback provided by the principal. When asked about how they experienced instructional support, participants separated instructional support from instructional feedback. Novice teachers in this study associated instructional support as the role of mentors, instructional coaches, or curriculum coordinators.

Novice teachers expected and desired instructional feedback directly from their principal. With the exception of one participant, all others reported not receiving instructional feedback from their administrators. Many of the teachers noted that their principal visited their classroom once or twice during the first year and provided written or verbal instructional feedback. One participant described feelings of frustration: "How can he help me when he is never in my room to see what is going on."

During the individual interviews and focus group discussion, several novice teachers attributed the lack of instructional feedback to the principal's capacity for instructional leadership. The lack of administrative observations and walkthroughs were thought to be a result

of the principals' uninterest in their novice teachers or competing obligations. When speaking about her feelings about not experiencing instructional feedback from her principal, Carlene remarked that instruction "is not his strength," going on to say, "He was never in my room. He never did observations. Instructional things, he was never involved in that." Several others described their principals as "hands-off" regarding curriculum and instruction. Each participant expressed a desire for frequent observations and feedback from the principal and felt that this was an area of support that needed to be improved to retain novice teachers.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand how novice teachers teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural South Carolina schools experience administrative support. This study's findings underscore the importance of positive adult relationships, instructional support, and feedback in the retention of novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural settings. These findings align with House's (1981) theory of social support and Cohen and McKay's (1984) support-matching theory and may provide valuable insight into how novice teachers perceive administrative support and how to best support these teachers in ways that improve rates of retention.

Findings in the Context of Empirical Literature

Existing research links perceived administrative support to novice teacher career decisions; however, minimal research could be found that captured the authentic voice of novice teachers' experiences of support in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Social support is important to a novice teacher's ability to cope with stressors related to teaching, such as classroom management and establishing relationships with colleagues, parents, and administrators (Hong, 2012; Reig et al., 2007; Schonfeld, 2001). Participants linked their ability

to remain teaching in their current school to the quality of support they received from adults in the building, particularly their teacher colleagues. Other researchers have that how novice teachers experience peer support significantly influences career decisions (Almy & Tooley, 2012; Marinell & Coca, 2013; Schonfeld, 2001) While the teachers in this study do not discount the importance of administrative support, their shared experience with peer support had a greater impact on their career decision. Leanne noted:

Peer support, I think, is so much more beneficial than anything else because you can shut the door, you can get real with each other, you know that you both completely, you're in it, you know that you both completely understand what's going on and you can help each other in a relatable manner.

Peer relationships serve as a vital support network to novice teachers and increase their ability to tolerate workplace stressors. The principal's actions influence the culture of collegiality and peer support between career and novice teachers. School leaders should intentionally work to create an environment of collegiality and collaboration that is beneficial to supporting novice teachers and thereby increase novice teacher retention (Clandinin et al., 2015; Cochran-Smith et al., 2013; Marinell & Coca, 2013).

Induction programs and school-based mentors are support systems in place in schools to coach new teachers and assist them in coping with workplace stressors encountered during their first year in the classroom. Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) found that when teachers attended comprehensive induction programs that included seminars, collaborative planning, mentoring, and a reduced teaching load, they were more likely to remain in teaching and less likely to transfer schools. Research on new teacher induction and orientation programs indicate a need to examine both the strength of these programs in high-poverty schools as well as detailing the

administrator's role in the induction process (Ingersoll & Strong, 2014; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; NASBE, 2016). Three of the 13 participants reported positive induction experiences that were designed to meet the needs of novice teachers. Two participants stated that their school's or district's induction program included content on working in a high-poverty, high minority environment. Participants were asked to provide artifacts from their induction experience; only two teachers were able to. Participants were asked if they felt the induction program matched the needs of novice teachers in high-poverty, high minority rural schools; only one participant, Jason, agreed. Jason characterized the induction program as "intense." His program was a hybrid of online coursework and face-to-face meetings. Topics included teaching students of poverty, responsive classroom techniques, and parent communication.

Document analysis and teacher interviews in this study revealed the principal's role in the induction process was inconsistent or infrequent. These findings are similar to those reported by Kutsyruba and Treguna (2017) in document analysis of induction and mentoring programs examining. Only Madison and Jason stated that their principals were visible or active in their induction program. Most participants reported unstructured induction experiences and noted induction programs as an area of improvement. For Anna, induction was "a joke." Bethany characterized her induction program as "dumbed down." Only one district represented in this study requires new teachers to undergo two years of induction support. These findings are consistent with Smith and Ingersoll (2004), who found that only 10% of novice teachers received two years of ongoing professional development as part of a comprehensive induction support program.

Examining novice teacher retention includes exploring teacher concerns with workplace conditions (Ingersoll, 2003). Establishing effective organizational practices and favorable

workplace conditions are integral roles for school administrators. Teachers in high-poverty, high-minority schools, cited as sources of dissatisfaction workplace factors such as a lack of parental involvement, unmotivated students, and student discipline issues (Djonko-Moore, 2016; Goldhaber et al., 2014). Participants' dissatisfaction with their workplace conditions were directly linked to a perceived lack of support concerning issues with student discipline. Debra described how, in her first year, she received two students who had previously been expelled for threats and cried to her colleagues because her administrators would not help her maintain order in the classroom. The discipline issues Leanne encountered during her first year had a direct impact on her decision to transfer at the end of her first year:

I experienced, I think, more in my first of year teaching than what any first-year teacher should have to experience. I had to call DSS two or three times, and I was threatened to be shot with a double barrel shotgun. I had kids disrespect me daily just because they felt like they could, I would have parent-teacher conferences, and the parents would leave, and I would hear them cursing their child out down the hallway and smack them in the back of the head.

Carlene said she received assistance with discipline only after she threatened to quit:

We have some kids that came in and screamed every day when they didn't get their way, or we had a kid that was a runner. If he didn't like what happened, he would run and we would have to send somebody to chase him.

Similarly, Evelyn stated that her pleas for assistance were ignored until she called a meeting with administration:

And that got really overwhelming, and I had to say, hold on. So, I regrouped. I called a meeting with both guidance counselors, all three of my administrators, and I was like,

look, this is not a gripe session. This is not me complaining, but this is to let you know, this is a problem. I can't teach like this. They're not learning, the other kids aren't learning, and I'm not being effective.

Administrative support in dealing with student discipline problems appeared to mitigate the lack of administrative, instructional support, and feedback. Administrative support and student behavior are reliable predictors of teacher attrition in high-minority schools. Marinell and Cocoa (2013) found administrative support to be a strong predictor of teacher turnover in New York City schools, second only to student behavior. Participants spoke favorably of administrators who were perceived as disciplinarians and helped minimize disruptive behaviors. Bethany's principal did not conduct instructional observations. However, she was satisfied overall with work conditions primarily because of the support she received with discipline from her principal: "My second year, last year, I had a student who was very violent. I would be so upset. He would come to get him, or I would call him, he would get him out of my classroom."

Findings in the Context of Theoretical Literature

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in House's (1981) theory of social support, which posits a direct impact of supervisor support on work-related stress (House, 1981). When the perceived support does not appropriately match the level or type of work-related stress, the support is perceived as ineffective or lacking (Cohen & McKay, 1984; House, 1987). Three theoretical perspectives shape House's (1981) theory of social support: (a) supportive actions, (b) social constructionism, and (c) relationships. Participants shared stories of organizational practices and administrative behaviors that were perceived as supportive when the actions or practices reduced or alleviated the stress associated with the phenomena. Participants' experiences with emotional, social, and instructional support were varying and unique. Work-

related stress was attributed to perceptions of unsupportive administrators and colleagues. Unmanaged work-related stress resulted in feelings of dissatisfaction. Participants identified everyday workplace stress associated with novice teachers dealing with misbehavior, learning curriculum, non-instructional duties, and evaluation anxiety. Challenges related to rural poverty compounded the stress. These findings are directly related to previous research on teacher retention that found perceptions of the school administrators are strong predictors of job satisfaction and correlate to teacher retention (Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011). Correlations were found to be stronger in high-poverty, high-minority schools (Reininger, 2012; Whipp & Geronime, 2015).

Cohen and McKay (1984) suggested that supports are most effective when “interpersonal relationships provide the resources for fulfillment of the coping requirements elicited in a particular situation” (p. 264). Participants described interpersonal relationships with adults in the school as a source of emotional, social, or instructional support. Eleven of the 13 participants developed a relationship with a peer during the first year of teaching. These relationships had a significant impact on reducing work-related stress and positively impacted the novice teacher’s decision to remain at the school. This research study contains several examples of participants stories that support the theoretical perspective on the important role of relationships in social support constructs. Participants’ layered and complex stories underscore the importance of positive, supportive adult relationships for lessening the effects of novice teacher stress and aiding transition into the career. Several teachers depended on the “teacher next door” for support and guidance. From their shared experience, supportive peer relationships served as a surrogate for a non-existent relationship with their principal.

Administrators are responsible for developing the organizational practices to support novice teachers as they acclimate to the role of professional educator. These practices can either promote or depress the development of supportive workplace relationships (House, 1981). Debra credited her principal for cultivating a positive work environment that supported novice teachers in her small rural school:

I can truly say that my co-workers are friends. And it's not that many of us, it's about 20 people on staff. It's like a family, and I think that that comes down from my administrator, setting the tone that this is a community and we should be a family here at work.

The importance of the relationship between mentors and novice teachers is suggested by House's (1981) theory of social support. Mentor teachers can be an instrumental source of emotional, social, and instructional support for novice teachers. Participants in this study were assigned mentors by their principal; the three special education teachers in this study were assigned a mentor from their district. Experiences with mentor teacher support were mixed among participants. Several participants noted that their assigned mentor had other job responsibilities that prevented the mentor from providing on-demand support. High rates of teacher turnover in rural high-poverty, high-minority schools diminish the pool of qualified, experienced teachers who can serve as mentors. For example, Carlene's assigned mentor was a third-year novice teacher who had not attended any formal mentor training. Previous research by Smith and Ingersoll (2004) revealed that assigning mentors and providing opportunities to network with peers, as part of a system of comprehensive induction programs, increased novice teacher retention by 50%. Induction programs provide "opportunities for reflection, reduction in

breadth or quantity of teaching load” and support the novice teachers transition from college student to professional teacher (Kelly et al., 2018).

House (1981) defined social support as “the flow of emotional concern, instrumental aid, and/or appraisal between people” (p. 26). He categorized social support behaviors into four specific areas: emotional, instrumental, feedback, and informational. Instructional support is a form of instrumental support provided to novice teachers that can lessen perceived job stress. Job related stress occurs when the perception that work demands “exceed the abilities of the individual” and that support is not available (House, 1980, p. 203).

Participants associated instructional support (coaching, mentoring, professional development) to teacher leaders and other instructional support personnel. Novice teachers expressed feeling unprepared to teach in high-poverty rural schools where most of the students do not perform at grade level and have limited background knowledge or life experiences. Grace conveyed feelings of being inadequately prepared to teach in a high-poverty rural school:

College did not prepare me for that. It prepared me how to be a teacher. It prepared me how to teach the way the ideal atmosphere would be, but it did not prepare me for the type of atmosphere that I ended up in.

Bethany described the instructional support she was provided by the instructional coach as well as school district personnel that helped to alleviate feelings of being overwhelmed:

I don’t even remember the first year of teaching. It was so overwhelming, I feel like nothing I learned in college prepared me for my first year of teaching, I just feel like I needed to be more prepared coming out of college. I had no clue how to teach reading, I had no clue how to teach math. I got that yeah, they need to know how to read, and they

need to know how to do math, but I didn't know how to do it, how to teach it. We've done a lot of professional development through the district.

This support helped to offset the job stress associated with her new role. Instrumental support is a form of social support that allows employees to carry out the essential aspects of their role and can affect job satisfaction. Only one participant did not experience instructional support from school personnel. When asked to recall how she experienced instructional support, she replied:

I do remember getting a little floppy disk, not floppy disk, memory disk with the curriculum guide, but the curriculum guide was just very hastily drawn up . . . so I actually ended up going onto Teachers Pay Teachers, trying to find stuff to add into it.

The perceived lack of support by administrators, according to Cancio et al. (2013), may result from principals "having competing priorities and being unavailable or inattentive" (p. 72) or "so occupied with the daily minutiae of their responsibilities that they cannot look at the big picture" (p. 90). When novice teachers do not receive adequate instructional support, there is an adverse effect on student achievement. Administrators are responsible for developing organizational practices that allow teachers to receive instructional support and professional development. Ensuring that these instructional support practices are implemented for novice teachers is vital to retention and career development and to positive student outcomes.

Implications

The findings of this transcendental phenomenological study have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for educational leaders, including school administrators, district-level leadership, and school leadership program facilitators. This section discusses the various implications as well as provide specific recommendations for principals.

Implications

This study used House's (1981) theory of social support as a lens through which to examine how novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools experience administrative support. House's theory (1987) suggests that organizational practices can affect the ability to develop and maintain supportive relationships at work. This study revealed that novice teachers in the study experienced a minimal degree of direct emotional, instructional, and social support from their administrators. Novice teachers experienced the most considerable amount of support from peers and colleagues. Perceived negative administrative behaviors or ineffective organizational practices did little to dampen collegial support. Career teachers were supportive of the novice teachers regardless of organizational practices or administrative behaviors. Novice teachers sought out supportive colleagues for instructional, emotional, and social support.

The research questions for this study focused on how novice teachers experienced social support in the context of House's understanding of emotional, instrumental, feedback, and informational social support. Participants associated emotional support with the school leader's ability to reduce stress associated with discipline issues as well as the relatability of the principals. Novice teachers who felt that their principal was approachable and cared genuinely about their well-being reported feelings of emotional support. This is consistent with the concept of emotional support as described by House (1988), "emotional caring or concern" (p. 302). For example, Jason viewed his principal's willingness to pray with her staff as a form of emotional support: "It makes me want to stay where I'm at That kind of support keeps the bond tight . . . I feel supported. I just want to look out for my administrator by doing my job because I know I am supported on the back end."

Feedback was the least experienced form of social support reported by the participants. The absence of their administrator in their classrooms for observations and feedback was the norm for many participants. Frequent, brief instructional walkthroughs to observe curriculum implementation and pedagogy provide valuable opportunities for school administrators to provide teachers with informal feedback. Ongoing feedback is essential for novice teachers to facilitate their growth and development and builds a supportive culture. Feedback is viewed as a vehicle to build capacity in novice teachers. Investing in novice teachers' skill development is an essential practice of effective building administrators. Participants in this study expressed feelings of disappointment and frustration with the lack of feedback from their administrator.

Empirical Implications

In addition to discussing the theoretical implications of this study, it is important to consider empirical implications based on the review of literature in Chapter Two. This section addresses the empirical implications for novice teacher retention high-poverty, high-minority rural schools, administrators' roles in supporting new teachers, and organizational practices related to novice teacher support.

Novice teacher retention in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Rural schools with large populations of poor minority students are experiencing increasing rates of turnover. Consequently, school administrators are in search of teachers to fill vacated positions each year. Compounded by their isolated location, rural schools serving poor minority students have difficulty attracting career teachers and are often forced to employ new teachers each year. These inexperienced teachers often face difficulty acclimating to the school environment if they are relocating from an area with dissimilar demographics. Highly effective supports are needed to retain novice teachers in these schools.

Discussions surrounding teacher retention should expand to consider rural and poor communities serving minority students. Current studies on the topic are focused primarily on large urban communities. Local and state policymakers must examine the attrition rates in their rural, high-poverty, high-minority schools and make concerted efforts to address turnover rates. Elevated rates of teacher turnover are directly related to poor student performance, which will lead to higher dropout rates and higher unemployment rates in these communities. Novice teacher attrition in poor, high-minority areas can have lasting effects on communities, but it will take more than school administrators to address the issue.

Organizational practices related to novice teachers support. School leaders would benefit from developing a comprehensive systematic approach to supporting novice teachers. Effective mentors are well trained, proven, experienced career teachers who understand how to support novice teachers facing the challenges of teaching children in poverty. School personnel familiar with the community and building can help to orient the novice teacher to the school and community. Being unfamiliar with the school and non-instructional routines was a noted stressor for the participants. Evelyn suggested:

A welcoming type committee . . . like this is how we go to lunch, or this is what you need to do for a field trip. That kind of thing. Having to deal with a lot of the small things, and figuring out on your own. That can be stressful on top of being a first-year teacher.

Induction programs should provide relevant professional development on topics applicable to teaching in high-poverty communities; this would provide novice teachers with an understanding of how poverty affects learners. Districts should provide training for administrators on how to adequately support new teachers and develop intentional practices that facilitate the development of novice teachers. It is ultimately the building principal's responsibility to support and retain

teachers. However, principals need additional training on the organizational practices and administrative behaviors that are appropriately support novice teachers in these schools.

Administrators' role in providing support to novice teachers. School administrators should understand the importance of their role in supporting novice teachers in a manner that increases retention. Taking personal interest and responsibility in the development of these teachers would ensure that the supports provided meet the needs of novice teachers. Delegating the responsibility of supporting these fragile teachers during the early years should be discouraged by district-level administrators. The role of the building principal is critical to supporting the implementation of induction and mentoring programs. Principals should understand that for many of these novice teachers, this is their first encounter with rural poverty. In the words of Anna, "This is an animal, unlike anything I've ever encountered before. It's extremely different trying to understand where these kids are coming from, especially when you find out some of your kids are living in hotels."

Practical Implications

Participants reported feeling unvalued or unappreciated by their principal due to the lack of personal relationship, direct feedback, and support. Novice teachers need to see the principal, receive frequent feedback, and have opportunities for personal dialogue. Frequent visits to the classroom to check in or for informal observations with feedback are considered administrative support. When principals are visibly absent, teachers feel frustration. Isabella bemoaned:

I think it is because when the principal walks into my classroom and has no idea what's going on, it's . . . it's hard . . . We need you to come in and look what we're going through. We need you to come in and step in on these conferences and hear what we're

being accused of and hear about the outside issues, that we have no control over. And I don't think they hear that. At least it doesn't feel like that to a teacher.

Administrators are not formally trained on how to support novice teachers in ways that positively impact retention. Surrounding novice teachers with positive, supportive adults in the building buffers stress and strengthens relationships that aid in novice teacher retention.

Administrators would do well to purposefully place novice teachers on teams with positive, supportive teachers who can share their experiences with their new colleagues and encourage collegiality. Mentors need to be carefully selected and adequately trained. Administrators should ensure novice teachers have structured opportunities and time to discuss their experiences, reflect, and grow (Kelly et al., 2018).

Delimitations and Limitations

The researcher implemented several delimitations to guide the scope of the research. The study included teachers with 1–3 years of teaching experience who are currently teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. The term *novice teacher* is widely accepted in the field of education to represent teachers with less than 3 years of teaching experience (Knight & Moore, 2012). Participants were working in the same school in which they first began teaching and had worked for only one principal. This delimitation allowed for teachers to share experiences related to similar phenomena.

Another equally important delimitation was the inclusion of teachers across all grade levels. Experiences of elementary, middle, and high school teachers were represented in this study. Three of the teachers were special education teachers. Participants were either Caucasian or African American. The choice to include participants from each level and special education supported the need to capture the perspectives of more than one group of novice teachers.

There are several limitations to the study. I, the researcher, am an African American female, so a cultural dichotomy was present for more than half of the interviews. Seven of the study participants were Caucasian, all working for African American principals. As the race and ethnicity of their administrators were not discussed in the context of the interviews or focus group, it was not possible to account for any cultural or racial bias. Additionally, utilizing a small, purposeful sample provided an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of a small number of individuals but inherently limits its generalizability to other populations of novice teachers (Creswell, 2013).

Recommendations for Future Research

The intent of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of novice teachers' lived experiences with administrative support in rural schools with a predominately poor and minority student population. Though additional research on this phenomenon is necessary, this study adds to the body of research focusing on administrative support in relation to retaining novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Three themes emerged from analysis of 13 individual interviews and focus group discussion:

1. Positive adult relationships
2. Instructional support and feedback
3. Supportive principals help manage behavior

In the participants' stories of their shared experiences, the importance of peer and adult relationships as a source of support for novice teachers was found to be a common thread across all 13 interviews. This finding indicated that positive, supportive relationships with building adults are as vitally important as the relationship with administrators in novice teacher career

decisions. Many of the novice teachers experienced a lack of instructional feedback from their principals and expressed a range of associated feelings ranging from frustration to confusion. Finally, principals who are firm disciplinarians and assist with disruptive students are viewed as supportive.

Future phenomenological studies should examine the experiences of career teachers who have taught in the same high-poverty, high minority rural schools to identify what support experiences are most effective. Research findings could result in changes to principal preparation and leadership development programs. Equipping school leaders with strategies for effectively supporting novice teachers could be a proactive approach to retaining teachers in schools plagued with high rates of turnover.

Interviews with school administrators were not included in this study. This qualitative study should be replicated with school administrators to understand better their perceptions regarding their role in supporting novice teachers. The findings of this study indicate that school leaders might lack the necessary training to implement effective novice teacher supports. Novice teacher retention data should be included and compared to assist with the identification of high effective novice teacher support practices.

Additionally, case studies of teachers who persist in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools would provide insight into other factors that impact a teacher's ability to persist in schools serving poor minority students. Case studies would allow researchers to assess the teacher's background, personality, family dynamics, college, and in-service experiences and the way these experiences have influenced their ability to remain teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools.

Summary

Novice teacher attrition is a challenge facing high-poverty, high-minority rural schools. Poor, rural schools with large populations of minorities are particularly troubled by elevated rates of novice teacher attrition (Djonko-Moore, 2015; Guarino, Brown, & Wyse, 2011; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Coupled with the challenge of recruiting experienced teaching staff, high-poverty, high-minority rural schools feel the immediate effects of teacher turnover on staff morale and, most importantly, student achievement. Throughout the literature, administrative leadership and support have been linked to teacher retention in both new and experienced teachers (Boyd et al., 2011; Cancio et al., 2013; Ian, 2015).

This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of novice teachers who remain teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina in relation to the administrative support the teachers receive. The research questions guiding this study asked participants to describe their experiences with administrative support—emotional, instructional, and social. House's (1981) definition of social support served as a context for this study as participants described experiences with administrative support in their own words. The collective viewpoints and shared experiences of 13 novice teachers were analyzed, coded, and cataloged by theme.

Participants defined administrative support in terms of adult relationships, instructional support, feedback, and principals' responses to discipline. Novice teacher support experiences revolved around relationships and how those relationships eliminated or minimized stress. The importance of supportive personal relationships with colleagues and administrators was highlighted throughout participants' descriptions. Novice teachers expressed the need to know that they were surrounded by adults who cared about their emotional well-being and professional

development. They each expressed the desire, if given the appropriate support, to remain teaching in schools whose students most need qualified, effective teachers.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

A Transcendental Phenomenological Study of Novice Teacher Administrative Support
Experiences in High-Poverty, High-Minority Rural South Carolina Schools
Celestine LaVan
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of new teacher administrative support experiences in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina. You were selected as a possible participant because of your years of experience in a high-poverty, high-minority rural school in South Carolina. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Celestine LaVan, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of novice teachers who remain teaching in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina in relation to the administrative support they received. The central question guiding this research is: How do novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools perceive and describe administrative support? This study intends to capture the authentic voice of novice teachers who teach in high-poverty, high-minority rural schools in South Carolina.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an initial questionnaire to collect demographic information about each participant. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in individual interviews. Interviews will be held in a mutually agreeable location and should last approximately one hour. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis.
3. Participate in an online focus group discussion. The focus group discussion will be held after the individual interviews are concluded and should last no more than two hours.

Risks and Benefits of Participation: There are minimal risks involved in this study. Participants may experience discomfort describing negative experiences. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Participation in this study is expected to result in benefits to the literature on novice teacher experiences with administrative support, specific to novice teachers in high-poverty, high-minority schools

Compensation: Participants not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- While all focus group participants will be asked to respect the confidence of the group discussion, I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. Pseudonyms will be used for all districts, schools and participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Celestine LaVan. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at cmlavan@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. David Benders at dsbenders@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX B: INITIAL TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE
(ADMINSTERED THROUGH SURVEY MONKEY)

1. What gender do you identify with?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. How old are you?
 - a. Under 25
 - b. 25-29
 - c. 30-30
 - d. 40-49
 - e. 50+
3. Indicate your race/ethnicity.
4. What is your employment status as a teacher for this current school term?
 - a. Full-time
 - b. Part-time
5. What is your current contract level?
 - a. Induction I
 - b. Induction II
 - c. Annual Formal
 - d. Annual Summative
 - e. Continuing Contract
 - f. Letter of Agreement
6. What year of teaching are you in at your current school?
 - a. 1st year
 - b. 2nd year
 - c. 3rd year
 - d. 4th year
7. List the colleges you attended and the degrees earned to date (e.g. B.S. of Education from University of South Carolina).

APPENDIX C: OPEN CODING RESULTS

Open coding results for One-on-One interviews and Focus Group Discussion

Code	Number of sources contributing to theme (N=14)	Number of data elements in code	% of data elements included in theme (N=228)
support with behavior	2	3	1.31%
frustrated with discipline	6	11	4.8%
support with difficult parents	4	6	2.6%
staying for the students	5	6	2.6%
direct emotional support from principal	6	14	6.1%
feelings emotionally unsupported	6	11	4.8%
lack of feedback	9	23	10%
instructional support	16	26	11%
positive peer support	12	35	15.3%
negative peer support experiences	7	12	5.2%
feeling unprepared to teach	6	8	3.5%
lack of poverty training	3	4	1.7%
induction training	5	8	3.5%

suggestions for administrators	14	51	22.3%
unclear expectations	5	10	4.4%

Note. “Number of sources contributing to theme (N=14)” includes one focus group discussion and 13 one on-one interview participants.

APPENDIX D: THEME FORMATION RESULTS

Data Display/Theme Formation Results

Theme (in bold) or code contributing to theme (in <i>italics</i>)	Number of sources contributing to theme (N=14)	Number of data elements included in theme	% of data elements included in theme (N=157)
Theme 1: Positive adult relationships <i>The teacher next door</i> <i>Mentors Matter</i> <i>Relatable principals are viewed as emotionally supportive</i>	14	59	37%
Theme 2: Instructional support and feedback <i>Principal feedback</i> <i>Indirect instructional support</i>	14	48	30%
Theme 3: Supportive principals help manage behavior	14	50	32%

Note. “Number of sources contributing to theme (N=14)” includes one focus group discussion and 13 one-on-one interview participants.