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# A Quantitative Study of Factors Contributing to Early Career Teachers Leaving Their Positions in Rural, Central Minnesota

Patrick Sutlief

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**A Quantitative Study of Factors Contributing to Early Career Teachers Leaving Their  
Positions in Rural, Central Minnesota**

by

Patrick J. Sutlief

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in Educational Administration and Leadership

December, 2019

Dissertation Committee:  
Roger Worner, Chairperson  
Kay Worner  
James Johnson  
John Eller

## Abstract

The nationwide trend of novice teachers leaving schools at a disproportionately high rate comes at a time when schools strive to develop a staff of experienced, effective educators to increase student achievement. The price of novice teacher attrition includes financial costs like recruitment and hiring as well as lost professional development young teachers take with them when they leave. Intangible costs include the negative impact on schools as organizations resulting from high turnover as well as inconsistent instruction from an ever-changing teaching staff. Ultimately, student achievement pays the price of high rates of novice teacher attrition. McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca (2005) described the concern regarding teacher attrition, “We find the attrition of great numbers of talented teachers distressful, especially because of the devastating loss to the profession of the potential of these teachers and to the students whose lives they would affect” (p. 64).

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the causal factors, other than performance, of novice teachers’ attrition as perceived by responding school administrators and examine the impact of grit and resiliency on those novice teachers who resigned from their positions within the first years of teaching as perceived by the responding school administrators. A review of the literature found several factors that contributed to young teachers leaving their positions. Those factors included salary, student discipline concerns, lack of collegial support, lack of parental support, the decrease of professional prestige, lack of readiness to teach, and working conditions. A review of the literature also found that grit and resiliency can be mitigating, internal factors for novice teachers who are considering leaving their positions. In 2013, Angela Duckworth won the MacArthur Grant for her work with “Grit.” Grit builds on resiliency and is defined as the perseverance and passion to achieve long-term goals.

Results of the study indicated that some of the findings were consistent with the literature in that they had a significant impact on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their positions while other findings were found to be less influential than the literature suggested. Salary, student discipline concerns, lack of parental support, lack of readiness to teach, and a lack of respect for the field of education were found to be consistent with the literature as significant factors that impact novice teachers’ decisions to leave their teaching positions. The factors of working conditions, lack of collegial support, and a mentorship program were not found to be as compelling as the literature suggested. The impact of the internal factor of grit was inconclusive according to the findings from the study.

The loss of a single novice teacher is costly for schools and students. If any of the factors that contribute to teachers leaving their positions within the first five years can be reduced or eliminated, schools and students will benefit.

### **Acknowledgment**

The journey of the dissertation process is ambitious and can only be completed with the help of others. First, foremost, and above all, I thank God and my family. Nothing is possible without them. My wife and children provided encouragement and patience throughout the protracted process of completing the dissertation.

I want to thank my fourth-grade teacher. He gave me a paperback dictionary as a reward for completing an assignment on the structure of a tooth. Inside the cover were the handwritten words, “Persistence is the key” in bright, red ink. Many years later, my fourth-grade teacher became a fellow doctoral candidate and his phone calls and encouragement reminded me of his message from 1978. In distracted times when quitting and leaving the dissertation behind was a strong possibility, his encouragement was invaluable. Thank you, Dr. James Lehman.

A special thank you to my committee chairperson, Dr. Roger Worner and committee member Dr. Kay Worner. Their guidance through the dissertation process was remarkable. Equally remarkable was the value of their coursework in the Educational Leadership program at St. Cloud State University. It shaped my practice and understanding of my role as a school leader. I am better for attending the program.

I want to thank my committee members Dr. John Eller and Dr. James Johnson. Dr. Eller led our cohort and was instrumental in my doctoral candidacy. Dr. James Johnson was a fellow doctoral candidate and an inspiration. I am not sure he was aware, but when he spoke in our meetings, I paid close attention and admired his leadership in education.

To my fellow doctoral candidates at St. Cloud State University, I thank you for your support and cooperation. It was a dynamic and enthusiastic group and I was fortunate to be a part of it.

### **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to the devoted educators who choose to teach and the administrators who choose to guide them. Several stress factors appear to drive young teachers to a crossroads where leaving the field of education is a strong possibility. Schools can ill-afford to have its promising, novice teachers leaving for any reason.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Each year, early career or novice teachers in the United States public schools leave their profession at a higher rate than comparable professions including lawyers, engineers, professors and pharmacists (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) wrote, “A number of studies have found that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into the occupation” (p. 682).

The high rate of attrition comes at a time when assembling a staff of experienced, effective teachers is a significant focus of schools in order to meet the demand of increasing student achievement. Pogodzinski, Youngs, Frank, and Beltman (2012) stated, “Administrators and teachers have come under increasing pressure to raise student achievement to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, at the same time that many districts across the country are facing serious declines in resources” (p. 1). Further research indicated that assembling a quality staff of teachers is important to increasing student achievement. As Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) noted, “Experienced teachers are, on average, more effective at raising student performance than those in their early years of teaching” (p. 77).

Developing a strong, experienced staff is an important challenge for school administrators. However, research suggests that the major challenge is not locating and hiring experienced, effective teachers. Rather, the challenge is retaining those experienced, effective teachers. Patterson, Collins, and Abbott (2004) contended, “Until recently, few scholars have recognized that the problem is not recruitment but retention” (p. 3). Gonzales, Brown, and Slate (2008) concurred, “It is time to take a serious look at retention and attrition and the reasons behind this phenomenon rather than continue to concentrate on the shortage problem” (p. 2). It is not enough to recruit bright, talented, determined, young teachers; schools must retain those

teachers on staff as they grow professionally into effective and seasoned teachers. The challenge, therefore, is keeping young teachers long enough to keep them developing into effective, experienced teachers.

When teachers leave teaching, their school districts incur costs (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Levy, Joy, Ellis, Jablonski, & Karelitz, 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). These costs are both financial, and non-financial. With most school districts reporting limited resources, they can ill-afford to incur additional costs. Research suggested it is difficult to estimate the exact costs of a teacher leaving a school because of the multiple variables involved, like cost of retraining, lost professional development, and the cost of hiring processes. Estimates range from \$3,400 to \$7,000 per teacher leaving a school (Levy et al., 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). Intangible costs include lost curricular consistency, negative effects of constant overturning staff on schools' cultures, and the negative impact of teacher turnover on student achievement. Routinely high occurrences of teacher turnover can "Impede a school's efforts to coordinate curriculum, to track and share important information about students as they move from grade to grade, and to maintain productive relationships with parents and the local community" (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011, p. 48).

At a time when schools must focus on increasing student achievement, they also face the challenge of assembling an experienced staff of teachers to optimize student achievement outcomes. As a result, the retention of young teachers, in order to nurture them into experienced teachers, is critical to meet student and achievement expectations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The cost of replacing teachers can be substantial, both financially and non-financially (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). When young teachers leave, they take with them the investment of professional development and their early years of classroom experience. In addition, “Constant changes in the staff interrupt the planning and implementation of a coherent, comprehensive, and unified curriculum” (Brill & McCartney, 2008, p. 752). A review of the literature yielded limited information regarding aggravating and mitigating factors contributing to novice teachers in rural Minnesota leaving their school within the first 5 years.

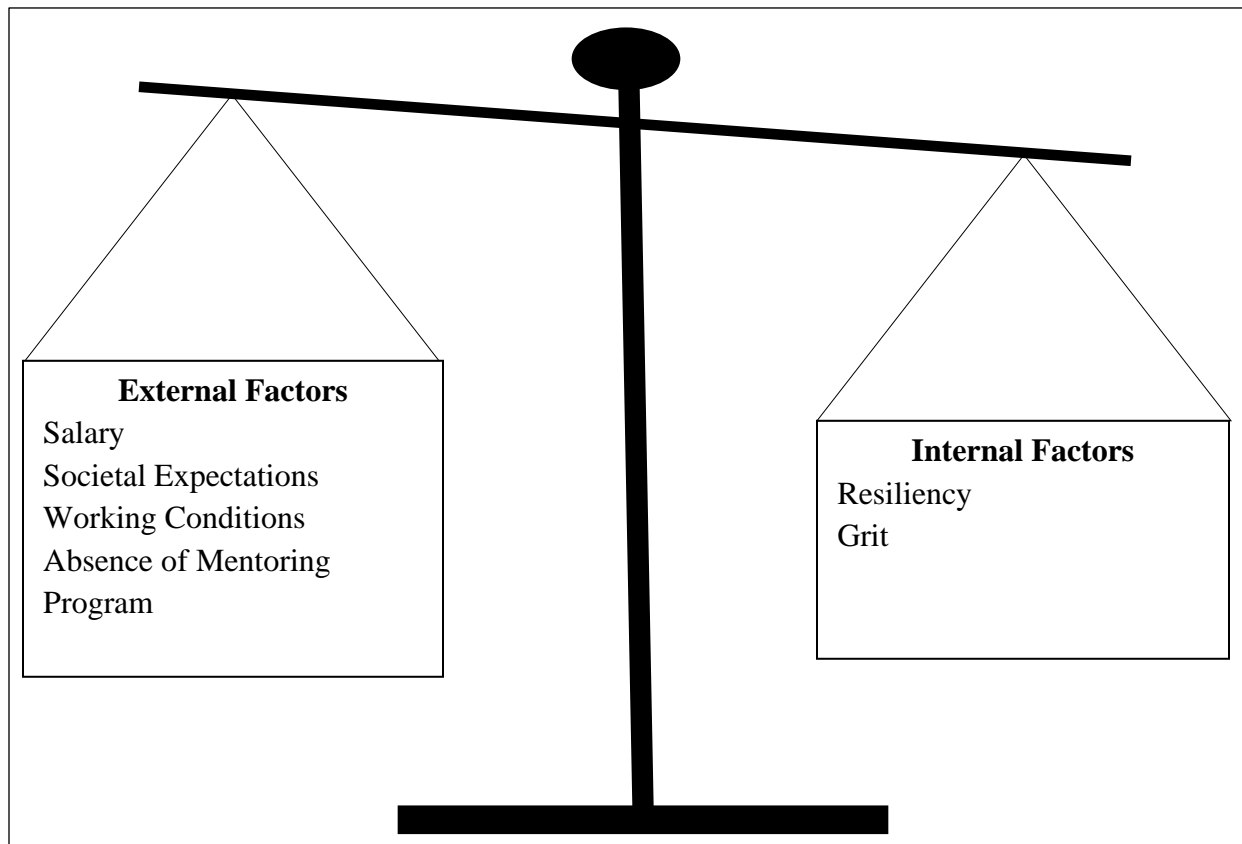
The study investigated those factors that caused novice teachers to leave their teaching positions as perceived by their respective school administrators. The study employed the use of a survey of rural, central Minnesota school administrators, and was designed to gather data to provide an understanding of the influences seven external factors and two internal factors had on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their positions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was: to ascertain the causal factors, other than performance, of novice teachers’ leaving their positions as perceived by responding school administrators in rural, central Minnesota schools; to determine if the presence of mentorship programs affected school administrators’ perceptions of factors in novice teachers leaving their positions; and to examine the perceived impact on novice teachers’ grit and resiliency. The study findings identified factors that responding school administrators believed contributed to novice teachers leaving their respective schools which may assist practitioners in better understanding the precipitating, seven external factors that challenged novice teachers to remain in their positions,

and two mitigating, personal, internal assets needed to encourage them to remain in their teaching positions.

### Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1.* External factors vs. internal factors.

In a review of the literature, several studies were located that identified the causes of teacher turnover and attrition. The reported causes of teacher attrition can be conceptualized as both external and internal factors. For example, salary was often noted as an external factor leading to novice teachers leaving the profession. Sheila Ruhland (2001) investigated instructors in Minnesota Technical colleges and found that 75% of teachers who were leaving noted salary as a factor. Lack of administrative support and student discipline concerns were also frequently cited as external factors in teachers' decisions to leave. Borman and Dowling (2008) noted that,

“schools that provided teachers with more autonomy and administrative support appeared to have lower levels of teacher attrition and migration” (p. 371). Compounding these unique challenges for novice teachers are the noted decline in teacher autonomy and a general decline in the social prestige of the profession of teaching.

Countering the negative impact of the aggravating external factors that challenge novice teachers to remain in the profession, mitigating, internal assets can help novice teachers remain in the profession. Teacher resilience and grit are internal factors of teacher attrition (Hong, 2012). Resiliency Theory was initially formed in the field of psychology but has developed as an applied construct in the field of education over the past decade. “Resilience theory addresses the strengths that people and systems demonstrate that enable them to rise above adversity” (Van Breda, 2001, p. 1). Novice teachers face unique challenges, especially in their first few years in the profession (Tait, 2008). Teacher resilience is a character trait that assists novice teachers in public schools to overcome adversity and challenges like those identified as external factors that cause some novice teachers to leave the profession (Tait, 2008).

In 2013, Angela Duckworth won the MacArthur Grant for her work with “Grit.” Grit is defined as the perseverance and passion to achieve long-term goals. Grit, as a theory, builds on the construct of resilience to overcome challenges with tenacity and determination to achieve long-term objectives (Perkins-Gough & Duckworth, 2013). All individuals possess each of these traits in varying degrees and can be developed over time (Perkins-Gough & Duckworth, 2013). Duckworth related grit with Carol Dweck’s growth mind-set, suggesting that a person’s grit level can change (Perkins-Gough & Duckworth, 2013). The growth mind-set is stronger for some individuals than for others but can be developed in everyone to create grittier individuals capable of accomplishing long-term goals (Perkins-Gough & Duckworth, 2013).



### **Assumptions of the Study**

It was assumed participants in the study answered survey questions honestly, and that their answers accurately reflected their professional opinions.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are the boundaries of the study controlled by the researcher (Mauch & Birch, 1998). The purpose of the study was the identification of factors contributing to rural, central Minnesota novice teachers leaving their teaching positions within the first 5 years of their careers. The following delimitations were implemented to ensure the study remained focused on its purpose.

- A select sample of school administrators from rural, public, Minnesota schools were surveyed.
- The study sample was limited to administrators who were willing to participate in the study.
- The study was conducted between August 2018 and October 2018.
- Administrator participants in the study included those who had experienced the loss of novice teachers from their rural, central Minnesota school district within those teachers first 5 years or less of employment. The teachers left the profession of their own volition from August 2013 to August 2018.
- The participants were purposefully selected to achieve a representative sample based on grade level, school size.

### **Research Questions**

The research investigated three questions:

1. What did school administrators who participated in the study perceive as the factors, other than performance, that led novice teachers in their respective schools to leave their teaching positions?
2. What did select rural, central Minnesota school administrators identify as differences the existence of mentorship programs had on factors affecting novice teachers leaving their positions?
3. According to perceptions of the school administrators who participated in the study, to what extent were grit and resiliency factors in novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions?

### **Definition of Terms**

*External Factors*—Factors outside of the teacher (Hong, 2012; Hughes, 2012). For the purposes of the study, these factors included salary, working conditions, readiness to teach, respect of the position, collegial support, mentorship, student discipline, and parental support.

*Internal Factors*—Characteristics within individual teachers that are related to their overcoming adversity and continuing to strive for long-term goals (Hong, 2012). For the purposes of the study, these factors were grit and resiliency.

*Novice Teacher*—For the purpose of the study, a novice teacher is a teacher with 5 years or less of teaching experience. Novice Teacher and Early Career Teacher are used synonymously.

*Teacher Turnover*—The situation of being employed by a particular school as a licensed teacher for a year, but not in the following year (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007).

*Teacher Attrition*—Teacher attrition is synonymous with teacher turnover (Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 1999). Teacher attrition often included teachers changing specialties,

transferring to another school, or leaving the profession. For the purpose of the study, teacher attrition was defined as teachers leaving the profession.

*Early Career Teacher*—For the purpose of the study, an early career teacher is a public school teacher with five years of teaching experience or less.

*Teacher Retention*—For the purpose of the study, this means teachers who remain in their respective schools as teachers from one school year to the next school year.

*Teacher Stayer*—A teacher who chooses to remain in the profession from one school year to the next school year, contributing to the teacher retention rate (Curtis, 2012; Hong, 2012).

*Teacher Leaver*—A teacher who chooses to leave the teaching profession, contributing to the teacher attrition rate (Curtis, 2012; Kaiser, 2011; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

*Resilience*—Internal, personal traits and social interrelations that allow an individual to encounter, overcome, and be strengthened by adversity (Grotberg, 1997; Hong, 2012).

*Grit*—Internal asset of perseverance and passion resulting in achieving long-term goals (Robertson-Craft & Duckworth, 2014).

*Rural*—The subjects selected to participate in the study were employed as school administrators in school districts identified by the Minnesota Rural Education Association (2018) as rural school districts. Minnesota Rural Education Association is an organization founded in 1985 to advocate on behalf of rural public schools in Minnesota.

### **Summary**

Teacher attrition among novice teachers is a concern in the United States. Each year, novice teachers in the United States leave their schools at a higher rate than in comparable professions such as lawyers, engineers, professors and pharmacists (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010).

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) wrote, “A number of studies have found that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into the occupation” (p. 682).

A review of the literature showed an agreement among authors that teachers leaving their positions has a negative impact on schools. The high rate of attrition has a negative impact on schools both financially and non-financially (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011).

Teacher resilience is an internal factor that empowers young teachers to overcome the adversities and determinants studies identified as reasons for leaving the profession (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007). Grit is a construct that includes responding resiliently to adversity, but also includes perseverance to achieving long-term goals (Perkins-Gough & Duckworth, 2013). Teacher grit would be the drive to become an experienced, effective teacher. The combination of resilience and grit mitigate the determinants that research suggested compelled novice teachers to leave the profession (Robertson-Craft & Duckworth, 2014).

The quantitative study employed a survey conducted with rural, central Minnesota school administrators and was designed to determine their perceptions of the challenges encountered and perceived level of grit among teachers who left the occupation within their first 5 years of teaching.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introduction to the study, the background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, delimitation, and definition of salient terms of the study.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review and examines the costs of teacher attrition, teachers' reasons for leaving their positions (or the profession), development of teacher resilience, and principals' perceptions of why teachers leave.

Chapter 3 consists of the methodology of the study. This includes an introduction, participants, human subject approval, instruments for data collection and analysis, research design, treatment of data, procedures and timeline, and a summary.

Chapter 4 includes research findings, the results of the quantitative and/or qualitative research for each research question, and a summary.

Chapter 5 provides conclusions and discussion of the results, limitations of the study, and recommendations for professional practice and further research to be conducted.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

Each year, early career, or novice, teachers in the United States public schools leave their profession at a higher rate than comparable professions including lawyers, engineers, professors and pharmacists (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) wrote, “A number of studies have found that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into the occupation” (p. 682).

The high rate of attrition comes at a time when assembling a staff of experienced, effective teachers is a significant focus of schools in order to meet the demand of increasing student achievement. Pogodzinski et al. (2012) stated, “Administrators and teachers have come under increasing pressure to raise student achievement to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, at the same time that many districts across the country are facing serious declines in resources” (p. 1). Further research indicated that assembling a quality staff of teachers is important to increasing student achievement. As Rivkin et al. (2005) noted, “Experienced teachers are, on average, more effective at raising student performance than those in their early years of teaching” (p. 77).

Developing a strong, experienced staff is an important challenge for school administrators. However, research suggests that the major challenge is not locating and hiring experienced, effective teachers. Rather, the challenge is retaining those experienced, effective teachers. Patterson et al. (2004) contended, “Until recently, few scholars have recognized that the problem is not recruitment but retention” (p. 3). Gonzales et al. (2008) concurred, “It is time to take a serious look at retention and attrition and the reasons behind this phenomenon rather than

continue to concentrate on the shortage problem” (p. 2). It is not enough to recruit bright, talented, determined, young teachers; schools must retain those teachers on staff as they grow professionally into effective and seasoned teachers. The challenge, therefore, is keeping young teachers long enough to keep them developing into effective, experienced teachers.

When teachers leave teaching, the district incurs costs (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Levy et al., 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). These costs are both financial, and non-financial. With most districts reporting limited resources, districts can ill-afford to incur additional costs. Research suggested it is difficult to estimate the exact costs of a teacher leaving a school because of the multiple variables involved, like cost of retraining, lost professional development, and the cost of hiring processes. Estimates range from \$3,400 to \$7,000 per teacher leaving a school (Levy et al., 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). Intangible costs include lost curricular consistency, negative effects of constant overturning staff on schools’ cultures, and the negative impact of teacher turnover on student achievement. Routinely high occurrences of teacher turnover can “Impede a school’s efforts to coordinate curriculum, to track and share important information about students as they move from grade to grade, and to maintain productive relationships with parents and the local community” (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011, p. 48).

At a time when schools must focus on increasing student achievement, they also face the challenge of assembling an experienced staff of teachers to optimize student achievement outcomes. As a result, the retention of young teachers, in order to nurture them into experienced teachers, is critical to meet student and achievement expectations.

There were six main themes found in the review of literature on the topic of teacher attrition and factors affecting novice teachers’ decisions to leave their positions. Those factors

were salary, societal expectations and a decline in professional prestige, working conditions, student discipline concerns, a lack of collegial and administrative support, and an absence of an induction and mentorship program. In addition, two themes of mitigating factors were also found. Those factors were teacher resilience and grit.

The review of literature chapter is divided into four main sections: teacher attrition which includes financial, costs, relationships within the organization and professional development; reasons for leaving including salary, expectations/accountability, working conditions, and absence of mentorship programs; development of teacher resilience (grit); and principals' perceptions.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Teacher Attrition**

Teacher attrition is the reduction of teachers from a school, usually from resignation, retirement, or transferring to another school. Teacher attrition, teacher turnover, and “teacher leavers” all refer to teachers leaving their schools. Some leave the profession entirely.

Retirement accounts for a large percentage of teacher attrition, but the trend of teachers leaving follows a U-shaped curve (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). “Younger teachers have very high rates of departure, these rates decline through the mid-career period and then rise again in the retirement years” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 5). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) contended the trend of novice teachers leaving their schools, or the profession entirely has caused a great deal of alarm and attention from public school leaders around the nation.

“Steep attrition in the first few years of teaching is a long-standing problem. About one-third of new teachers leave the profession within five years” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, para.9). Studies have shown that between 40% and 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first 5



years (Ingersoll, 2003). “The uphill climb to staff our schools with qualified teachers becomes steeper when teachers leave in large numbers” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, para.7). McCann et al. (2005) described the concern regarding teacher attrition, “We find the attrition of great numbers of talented teachers distressful, especially because of the devastating loss to the profession of the potential of these teachers and to the students whose lives they would affect” (p. 64).

Over the past two decades, school leaders have come under increased pressure to improve student achievement to meet the requirements established by the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002, while at the same time, facing declines in resources (Pogodzinski et al., 2012). With the increased attention on public education, school leaders have faced the challenge of assembling a qualified school workforce capable of meeting those ends. According to Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014), the overall effectiveness of a teacher, “is the single most important in-school influence on student progress” (p. 3). Research supports the rationale for the attention spent on attaining effective, skilled teachers. “The difference in student performance in a single academic year from having a good as opposed to having a bad teacher can be more than one full year of standardized achievement” (Hanushek, 1992, p. 113). As Brill and McCartney (2008) reported, “Retaining a teacher with two years’ experience is far more productive than hiring a new teacher to replace him or her” (p. 752). As a result, maintaining an experienced, quality staff of educators is critical for schools. But according to the literature, keeping novice teachers in the schools long enough to grow professionally into experienced, quality educators is not easy.

“Though there is widespread consensus that teachers matter, finding and retaining quality teachers are constant challenges for schools” (Torres, 2012, p. 118). This undertaking is exacerbated by the perception of a shortage of qualified teachers to staff schools in the United

States. “Severe teacher shortages, it is widely believed, are confronting our elementary and secondary schools” (Ingersoll, 2003 p. 5). Data indicate that a perceived teacher shortage is, in part, due to the Baby Boomer generation reaching retirement age. “Between 2004 and 2008 more than 300,000 veteran teachers left the workforce for retirement” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2010, p. 4). However, according to Richard Ingersoll (2001), “Large numbers of teachers leave for reasons other than retirement” (p. 499). Ingersoll (2001) continued, “Moreover, the data show that the amount of turnover accounted for by retirement is relatively minor when compared to that associated with other factors, such as teacher job dissatisfaction and teachers pursuing other jobs” (p. 499).

The challenge of ensuring quality teachers in classrooms is not rooted in a teacher shortage developed by a glut of retirements. The problem is more related to retaining and developing novice teachers into experienced, quality educators. Linda Darling-Hammond (2003) asserted, “The problem does not lie in the numbers of teachers available; we produce many more qualified teachers than we hire. The hard part is keeping the teachers we prepare” (p. 1). In order to create a staff of quality educators in order to raise student performance, schools must keep their novice teachers in the profession in order to develop them into experienced educators (Hanushek, Rivkin, & Kain, 2004). Richard Ingersoll (2003) concurred,

The data show that the demand for new teachers and subsequent staffing difficulties are not primarily due to student enrollment and teacher retirement increases, as widely believed, but these are largely due to teacher turnover-teachers moving from or leaving their teaching jobs-and most of this turnover has little to do with a graying workforce. (2003, p. 9)

“As an occupation, teaching has higher turnover rates than a number of higher-status professions (such as professors and scientific professionals), about the same as other traditionally female occupations (such as nurses) and less turnover than some low-status, lower skill

occupations (such as clerical workers)” (Ingersoll, 2007, p. 5). Over the past 20 years, research and attention has been invested in the area of teacher retention and the ever-growing concern over the high level of teacher attrition. This review of the literature includes: the cost of the elevated attrition rates among teachers; a review of several studies that have been conducted nationally that investigate the issue of teacher retention and attrition especially among novice teachers; and a number of studies that investigate teacher resilience as a possible factor in attrition.

“The teaching occupation suffers from chronic and relatively high annual turnover compared with many other occupations” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 31). Keep in mind that not all occupational attrition, or turnover, is detrimental to a profession. There are some benefits to individuals leaving a profession. According to former Microsoft executive, Robert Herbold (2011), “When a chronic poor performer leaves, frankly that is good news. Sometimes that exit is voluntary, and sometimes it is involuntary; you ask them to leave. In either case, it is good news”. Other professions, such as law enforcement and nursing, have also shown benefits from attrition (Sanders, 2008; Sprinks, 2014). Even within the teaching profession, there are some benefits to attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Levy et al., 2012). “If those who are leaving the schools are the worst teachers, then attrition may be deemed as a healthy and potentially beneficial outcome” (Borman & Dowling, 2008). However, further research suggests that the best and brightest are leaving teaching at higher rates. “High-ability college graduates are less likely to teach in public schools and, if they do, are more likely to leave after a few years” (Podgursky, Monroe, & Watson, 2004, p. 514). “As school leaders know all too well, while teacher attrition may provide some positive outcomes (e.g., the loss of incompetent teachers), it can also be costly” (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011).

## **Costs of Teacher Attrition**

Donaldson and Johnson (2011) asserted, “When teachers leave their schools after only a few years, those schools incur substantial costs. Most importantly, students are likely to suffer” (p. 48). These costs of teacher attrition include both financial costs and intangible costs that are more difficult to quantify. In reference to teacher attrition, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2010) wrote, “It is draining resources, diminishing teaching quality, and undermining our ability to close the student achievement gap” (p. 1).

**Financial.** Minarik, Thornton, and Perreault (2003) noted, “Recruitment and replacement of quality teachers are costly annual events that take money away from other important needs such as classroom supplies, teacher pay and facilities” (p. 203). McCann et al. (2005) concurred that teacher attrition is a significant concern, “Teacher attrition is a serious problem. Schools endure a fiscal cost when they lose a teacher” (p. 4). Barnes et al. (2007) agreed, “It is clear that thousands of dollars walk out the door each time a teacher leaves” (p. 5). Only recently have researchers calculated the financial costs associated with teacher turnover (Barne et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2012). Nationally, estimates of the price of teachers leaving schools range from \$4.9 billion to \$7 billion annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; National Council on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007). The exact cost of teachers moving from one school to another, or leaving the profession altogether differ from region to region, and district to district (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Levy et al., 2012; Texas Center for Education Research, 2000). Furthermore, the research indicates a debate among researchers about the actual calculation of costs of teacher attrition (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; Barnes et al., 2007; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). There are many common components to be considered when quantifying the cost of teacher attrition.

Those components are separation costs that may include exit interviews, payroll notifications and notification of insurance companies; the hiring process that included advertising, recruiting, application processing, interviewing, and orientation of new teachers; and the un-recouped professional development invested in new teachers that leave. (Barnes et al., 2007; Cuddapah, Beaty-O'Ferrall, Masci, & Hetrick, 2011; Levy et al., 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007).

A study conducted by the Texas Center for Educational Research (2000) reviewed industry models for estimating the financial cost of a teacher leaving a school district. This study also estimated that the cost of a teacher leaving a district would be approximately 20% of the leaving teacher's salary (Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000, p. 16). The average salary for a first-year teacher in the United States is \$36,141.00 in the 2012-2013 school year (Ryan, Cooper, & Bolick, 2016). Using the Texas Center for Educational Research's (2000) estimates, it would cost a school district over \$7,000.00 for a first-year teacher to leave the district.

Milanowski and Odden (2007) also conducted a study that calculated separation costs, hiring costs, and training costs. Unlike previous studies, the Milanowski and Odden (2007) study implemented a model that also factored the net replacement costs, which consider the cost savings of a lower salaried novice teacher replacing a higher salaried senior teacher, as well as the loss of productivity (pp. 12-13). "Productivity loss was estimated based on the difference in productivity between a new, inexperienced teacher and a teacher with six or more years of experience, using estimates of the effect size of this contrast from three large-scale studies" (Milanowski & Odden, 2007, p. 13). As a result of their study, Milanowski and Odden (2007) reported, "The costs estimated here are substantially higher than the \$3,400-\$5,200 estimates

from the Texas study, but that study did not include severance pay and included only one year of training costs and costs for more limited induction activities” (p. 18).

Levy et al. (2012) conducted a study in 2007 in the Boston, Massachusetts area schools to estimate the financial price paid by schools and districts when a teacher leaves. A result of this study estimated the cost of teacher turnover of at least \$12,110,102, or 2% of Boston’s total annual budget for the 2006-2007 school year, not including savings from the salary difference. Levy et al. (2012) concluded that the financial price, “May be about \$3,400 for each teacher’s departure” (p. 126).

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future conducted a study that employed the Teacher Turnover Cost Calculator to quantify the costs of teacher turnover on districts and schools in the spring of 2005. The authors suggested that their study would be calculated differently than prior studies by using actual cost data from districts (Barnes et al., 2007, p. 1). As Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007) explained, “Instead the previous studies relied on turnover formulas derived from industry to estimate turnover costs in education (p. 4). The results of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future study indicated that the cost of teacher turnover was significant. “In a small rural district such as Jemez Valley, New Mexico, the cost per teacher leaver is \$4,366. In Milwaukee, the average cost per teacher leaver was \$15,325” (Barnes et al., 2007, pp. 4-5).

**Intangible costs and student achievement.** The price schools incur from teacher turnover is not limited to finances. As Cuddapah et al. (2011) explained, “The indirect costs in terms of student learning gaps from having frequent substitutes or multiple teachers in a year cannot be calculated” (p. 174). Notable intangible costs associated with high numbers of teachers

leaving are the negative impact on student achievement, strained working relationships within an organization, and interrupted professional development.

“The continual loss of teachers had a negative impact on the momentum of instruction at the school” (Guin, 2004, p. 11). “Substantial research evidence suggests that well-prepared, capable teachers have the largest impact on student learning” (Darling Hammond, 2003, para.6). Therefore, “It stands to reason that student achievement will suffer when students are continually faced with a parade of inexperienced teachers” (Barnes et al., 2007, p. 8). Milanowski and Odden (2007) described this effect as a productivity cost. Productivity cost is the difference between an experienced teacher and a replacement, “This difference is typically a loss and thus a cost when the replacement worker has a lower skill level or needs to learn the job in order to reach the level of productivity of the original worker” (Milanowski & Odden, 2007, p. 6). Although productivity is easier to quantify in private industry with measurable outputs, in education, it equates to student achievement, specifically value-added student achievement. According to Hanushek et al. (2004), student achievement declines when there is a high frequency of teacher turnover.

Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wycoff (2013) conducted studies in New York City schools to measure the impact of high teacher turnover on student achievement. They reported, “Results suggest that teacher turnover has a significant and negative impact on student achievement in both math and ELA” (p. 30). These authors further suggested that in schools with high teacher turnover, the achievement measures of students whose teachers stayed indicated that those students were also affected (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). “Thus, turnover must have an impact beyond simply whether incoming teachers are better than those they replaced - even the teachers outside of this redistribution are somehow harmed by it” (Ronfeldt et al., 2013, p. 31).

**Relationships within the organization.** Another intangible cost reported as difficult to measure relates to the impact of high teacher turnover on morale and working relationships within an organization. “A rapid teacher turnover erodes public confidence in schools. Both schools and learners experience a lack of continuity” (McCann et al., 2005, p. 5) Ingersoll (2003) noted that high rates of teacher turnover, “Can be disruptive in and of themselves, for the quality of school community and performance” (p. 13).

Bryk and Schneider (2003) explained, “For a school community to work well, it must achieve agreement in each role relationship in terms of the understandings held about these personal obligations and expectations of others.” When elements, specifically teachers, of this relational trust within a school leave at high rates. the relational trust of that school erodes. “Relational trust fosters the necessary social exchanges among school professionals as they learn from one another. Talking honestly with colleagues about what’s working and what’s not means exposing your own ignorance and making yourself vulnerable” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 43). High collegial trust within an organization leads to better instruction for students. “When school professionals trust one another and sense support from parents. they feel safe to experiment with new practices” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 41). Without relational trust within the school organization, instruction suffers. “Schools with high rates of turnover do face serious organizational challenges, including the failure to establish a coherent instructional program and a lack of trust among teachers” (Guin, 2004, p. 21).

**Professional development.** Although difficult to measure, professional development tends to have a positive effect on student achievement (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Young teachers who leave take the professional development investment with them. As



Donaldson and Johnson (2011) described, “When effective teachers leave, schools also lose their investment in formal and informal professional development” (p. 48).

High rates of teacher turnover reduce the effectiveness of professional development for the entire staff, including the teachers who stay. Kacey Guin (2004) noted that professional development for the teachers who stay suffers from high teacher turnover by forcing schools to repeat professional development and by causing inconsistent teacher training and a lack of a sense of teamwork. Guin (2004) conducted case studies in an urban, west coast school district to assess the impact of high teacher turnover on urban school climate as well as, “Its ability to function as an organization” (p. 2). One of the schools in the case study reported frustration with the interrupted and repeated professional development efforts. “For teachers who remained in the school, the idea of repeating the same professional development was viewed as a waste of their time, and therefore often skipped” (Guin, 2004, p. 11). The results of the study indicated that schools with perpetual turnover have disrupted instructional programming, a lack of trust among colleagues, and a piecemeal approach to professional development (Guin, 2004, pp. 19-20).

### **Reasons for Leaving**

Several studies were found in the review of literature on the costs associated with early teacher attrition, both financial and intangible. These studies were dedicated to determining the root causes of the large number of teachers leaving. However, the specific results of these studies vary. As Hughes (2012) explained, “The teacher retention literature indicates that this is a multifaceted issue with many contributing factors” (p. 248). Several studies were reviewed to describe the contributing factors that lead to early teacher attrition. As a result of a review of these studies, recurring themes emerged from the literature. One theme is external to the novice

teachers themselves, including salary, high levels of accountability, and working conditions. The other theme involves factors internal to the novice teacher, specifically teacher resiliency, or grit.

**Salary.** The CPA Journal (2004) reported on a study conducted by Ajilon Office that suggested the top five reasons people leave their jobs were, “More money, better benefits, more opportunity for career growth, less stress or pressure, and wanting a change of pace” (Tracy, 2004, p. 17). Conversely, two of the top five reasons people stay at their jobs included being paid well and having good benefits (Tracy, 2004). “One of the primary motivations of any job is salary” (Hughes, 2012, p. 247). The research suggests that in the case of young, novice teachers, their salary may not be sufficient to keep them in the profession. “Though they enter the profession with high hopes and plan to stay, they find that with their limited earnings and the great pressures of the job, they simply can’t afford to teach” (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005, p. 2). It can be concluded that dissatisfaction with salary would be a significant factor in a teacher’s decision to stay or leave the profession.

In a study conducted by Wynn et al. (2007) in an urban school district in the southeastern United States, they found that 30% of first and second year teachers planned to remain in teaching less than 5 years. When those teachers were then asked to identify the reasons for leaving, 82% selected salary as a reason for leaving (Wynn et al., 2007). A study conducted by Hughes (2012) also found salary to be a statistically significant factor in teachers remaining in the profession until retirement. “Teachers’ reported level of satisfaction with salary was related to retention, with more satisfied teachers almost twice as likely to remain in teaching” (p. 254).

A study of Master of Arts in Teaching students on the east coast of the United States was conducted by Cuddapah et al. (2011) on the east coast of the United States to determine reasons for novice teachers to either leave the profession or consider leaving the profession. The issue of

salary was reported as a factor, but it was included in a more general heading, “Career Reasons” (p. 121). The heading of “Career Reasons” also included, “Pursued education position other than K-12,” and, “Affected by involuntary staffing action” (Cuddapah et al., 2011, p. 122). Outside this general heading, salary was specifically noted. The results of this study indicated 24% of the respondents reported dissatisfaction with teaching as a career (Cuddapah et al., 2011). However, Cuddapah et al. (2011) added that 21% pointedly reported salary as a reason for leaving.

In the spring of 2000, Tye and O’Brien (2002) conducted a survey of California teachers and found that salary was the highest ranked reason for teachers who considered leaving the profession (p.4). Tye and O’Brien (2002) noted, however, that it may not be as clear-cut as it sounds. “It would be interesting to explore whether this finding means that they feel that only higher pay could compensate for the stress and alienation they are experiencing or if there is some other reason why they place salary issues at the top of the list” (p. 4).

Cha and Cohen-Vogel (2011) used nationwide data from the Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999-2000 and the Teacher Follow-Up Survey, 2000-2001 to determine the relationship between salary, working conditions and professional development on teachers’ overall job satisfaction and retention decisions. In reporting the results of their study, Cha and Cohen-Vogel (2011) reported, “Having compared the relative influences of salary, working conditions, and professional development experiences, we find working conditions to be the strongest predictor among the three” (p. 384). However, Cha and Cohen-Vogel (2011) noted in their findings that although working conditions appeared to be nine times more influential on job satisfaction than salary, working conditions were only twice as influential on career switching decisions. “Salary, it seems, is an important, if secondary, influence on teachers’ job satisfaction and decisions to stay” (p. 386).

**Societal expectations/accountability/lack of prestige.** Not all challenges to novice teachers relate to the objective, fiscal issue of salary. Less research was found involving non-pecuniary stressors. However, in several articles, studies, and journals, the issue of the decline of prestige in the teaching profession was indicated as a reason for considering leaving teaching. Keogh, Garvis, Pendergast, and Diamond (2012) reported non-monetary stressors included, “Greater societal expectations but lower societal recognition, greater accountability to policy makers, continual pedagogical and curriculum change, an increased need for technological competence, an ever-increasing diversity of students, and an intensification of the workload, including the burden of administration” (p. 47).

Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) recommended the promotion of, “personal satisfaction through campaigns to augment the prestige of the teaching profession” as a way to promote teacher retention (p. 176). Wynn et al. (2007) conducted a study of teachers who indicated they considered leaving the profession. Of the teachers in the survey, 31% listed a lack of professional prestige as a reason for leaving. Johnson et al. (2010) also noted the decline in respect to the teaching profession, “As teachers’ work has continued to expand and increase in complexity, the public profile and standing of the profession has fallen” (p. 1). The concern with lower professional prestige for education is not a new issue. Lortie (1975) used the term, “Semi-profession” to describe the lower perception of the teaching profession. Johnson and Birekland (2003) concurred and reasoned,

Until the 1950s, teaching was short-term, itinerant work taken up by men on their way to a ‘real’ profession and by women before marrying or having children. Teaching also holds low status in the occupational hierarchy because it is likened to child care. (p. 583)

Ingersoll and Merrill (2011) noted a study from the United States Census Bureau indicating that although the professional prestige of teaching has improved over the years, almost all schools lack or fall short on many of the key characteristics associated with professionalization. Clearly, teaching continues to be treated like, at best, a “semi-profession” (p. 194).

In a study conducted by Thornton (2013), she reported that the more constraints and mandates were compelled by state and districts to meet testing requirements, “the more they thought about leaving the profession” (pp. 7-8).

**Working conditions.** Linda Darling Hammond (2003) noted that salary concerns were a significant issue for novice teachers, while working conditions were significant to more experienced teachers (p. 3). A Los Angeles teacher reported, “How teachers are paid was a part of it, but overwhelmingly the things that would destroy the morale of teachers who wanted to leave were the working conditions...working in poor facilities, having to pay for supplies, and so on” (Darling Hammond, 2003, p. 1). Mihans (2008) concurred, “We must address poor working conditions if we are to retain high quality teachers, particularly in challenging settings” (p. 764). However, the term “working conditions” has proven to be nebulous in the literature reviewed. Hanushek et al. (2004) described the complexity of the subject, “Admittedly, working conditions is a broad concept that can cover everything from class size to discipline problems to student achievement levels” (p. 78).

Boyd et al. (2011) summarized the relationship between administrative climate and teacher retention decisions in a study of teachers on the east coast of the United States, “Teachers who have less positive perceptions of their school administrators are more likely to transfer to another school and to leave teaching in New York City” (p. 323).

**Student discipline concerns.** Wynn et al. (2007) surveyed 217 first- and second-year teachers in a southeastern United States, urban school district. They examined several working condition factors individually and found that student discipline was second only to salary as a factor contributing to a first- or second-year teacher considering leaving the profession. Furthermore, Wynn et al. (2007) noted administrative support and lack of parental involvement were third and fourth, respectively.

Similarly, Donaldson and Johnson (2011) conducted a survey of new teachers in the nationwide Teach for America program. Teach for America was created in 1990 to try to reduce achievement gaps by recruiting high-achieving graduates to teach for two years in low-income schools across the nation (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). In their survey of Teach For America participants, Donaldson and Johnson (2011) cited that poor administrative leadership, a lack of collaboration, discipline concerns and general dissatisfaction with the job responsibilities, factors often associated with working conditions, as reasons reported by nearly 18% of participants in the Teach For America program who chose to leave the profession (p. 50). Cuddapah et al. (2011) found similar results in that 24.2% of the participants “intending to leave” or “undecided” listed poor administrative support as a reason for leaving teaching (p. 122).

Beginning in 2002, the North Carolina Educational Research Data Center conducted surveys of students, teachers, and administrators that specifically address working conditions for teachers and administrators. Ladd (2011) conducted a review of the data collected in the North Carolina surveys and found, “Teachers’ perceptions of working conditions at the school level are highly predictive of an individual teacher’s intentions to leave a school, with the perceived quality of school leadership the most salient factor” (p. 251). After further analysis, Ladd (2011) found a strong correlation between school leadership and teacher retention. “The models show

that for all three levels of schooling, the higher the perceived quality of school leadership, the less likely teachers are either to plan to leave or actually to leave the school” (p. 256).

**Lack of collegial and administrative support.** The work of Gonzales et al. (2008) found similar results in their qualitative study of certified teachers in Texas who left after 1 year of teaching. Of the eight teachers interviewed, “Seven respondents agreed that administration was one of the biggest influential factors in not returning to the profession” (p. 6). Reports of disrespectful and unprofessional actions taken by administrators were reported by some of the respondents in the study. Even when all eight of the respondents in the study spoke of student discipline concerns, it was often a reflection of the school’s administration. “Administration does not want to deal with any behavior problems, so they remain the educator’s problem and when parents are called in for a conference,...it continues to be the teacher’s problem” (Gonzales et al., 2008, p. 7).

Conversely, Brown and Wynn (2009) conducted a qualitative study of principals in a southeastern United States school district to inquire about how the principals work to support and retain teachers. Of the 12 participants, all reported being strong supporters for novice teachers. Brown and Wynn (2009) further reported that all twelve participants saw support as their primary role in retaining new teachers. According to the participants, support for new teachers included informal interactions in which principals were encouraging, guiding, and more visible. The participants in the study also noted the importance of material support for new teachers, like generous allocation of supplies and financial support for professional development opportunities (Brown & Wynn, 2009).

Pogodzinski et al. (2012) conducted a study in Michigan and Indiana in 2007-2008 to investigate the relationship between the novice teachers’ perceptions of the administrative

climate and their reported desire to remain teaching in their present school. The results of the study also indicated a strong correlation between perceived administration-teacher relationships and the desire to remain in their current teaching assignment. Pogodzinski et al. (2012) reported the impact of administrator-teacher relationships and teachers' intent to remain in their respectively current schools was stronger than other factors that are often associated as working conditions. As Pogodzinski et al. wrote,

The findings are of particular interest in that the measure of perceptions of the quality of administrator-teacher relations emerged as a stronger predictor of intent to remain teaching in a particular school than teachers' report of having adequate resources, the extent of their administrative duties, or the manageability of their workload...This highlights the importance of the quality of the relationships between teachers and administrators in shaping the work environment, thus influencing individuals' desire to remain teaching in that environment. (p. 267)

Pogodzinski et al. (2012) noted that all teachers were affected by the administrative climate, but novice teachers were more sensitive to the impact of perceived administrative climate. "It makes intuitive sense that teachers would prefer to teach in a school where they perceive a positive administrative climate" (p. 270). It was noted that administrators provide more than a positive climate within the school. "Additionally, administrators further influence support and resources that novices receive through establishing mentoring relationships and providing novice teachers with opportunities to collaborate with other teachers (e.g., by establishing curricular teams)" (Pogodzinski et al., 2012, p. 254).

**Absence of induction and mentoring program.** Concern regarding the traditional novice teachers' early career orientation was noted in 1966, when Lortie coined the term "Robinson Crusoe Effect" for new teachers who were hired and left to fend for themselves in their classroom (as cited in Keogh, Garvis, & Pendergast, 2010, p. 18). Smith and Ingersoll



(2004) similarly contended that a lack of early teacher induction and mentorship programs often left novice teachers isolated and alone. “Indeed, critics have long assailed teaching as an occupation that ‘cannibalizes its young’ and in which the initiation of new teachers is akin to a ‘sink or swim,’ ‘trial by fire,’ or ‘boot camp’ experience” (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, p. 682). The literature also indicated that an early teaching career can be uniquely stressful, “Teaching is one of the few professions in which beginners have as much responsibility as their experienced colleagues. New teachers carry full teaching loads and handle just as many other duties...as their higher paid co-workers” (Tait, 2008, p. 58).

Wynn et al. (2007) noted that the need for an effective mentorship program for novice teachers would be beneficial, “Recent trends indicate that educators and administrators are aware of the ineffectiveness of the traditional induction, or lack thereof, teachers receive when entering the profession” (p. 213). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) conducted a study that utilized nationwide data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to determine the relationship between induction and mentorship programs on teacher turnover. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) clearly asserted from the results of the study, “The most salient factors were having a mentor from the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject or collaboration with other teachers on instruction, and being part of an external network of teachers” (p. 706).

Several studies and analyses were conducted to determine the effectiveness of induction and mentorship programs on novice teachers. For example, in a meta-analytic study, Borman and Dowling (2008) found that, “When more formal organizational mechanisms are put in place to provide novice teachers with support networks and mentoring opportunities, these efforts are associated with decreased attrition rates” (p. 397). Brill and McCartney (2008) concurred, “Out

of every strategy aimed at increasing teacher retention, induction and mentoring programs are the most consistently successful” (p. 766).

In the late 1990s, Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon, and Stottlemeyer conducted a study of the effects of pre-service induction and mentorship programs on teachers with three or less years of experience. The authors of this study concluded that, “Ninety percent of teachers in their first year of teaching who have a mentor plan to continue teaching while only sixty-one percent of those without a mentor plan to continue” (Eberhard, Reinhardt-Mondragon, & Stottlemeyer, 2000, p. 51). For second year teachers with a mentor, 78% of the teachers indicated that they planned to continue teaching, while 63% without a mentor indicated the intention to continue teaching (Eberhard et al., 2000, p. 51). But by the third year, the response rate was about the same between teachers with a mentor and teachers without (p. 51). This study also indicated that when teachers met with their mentors for at least an hour per week, they reported higher intentions to continue teaching. The authors contended the importance of developing an “authentic and effective mentor program” as a foundation for new teachers (Eberhard et al., 2000, p. 57).

In 1999, the state of Texas implemented a statewide support system for new teachers called the Texas Beginning Educator Support System. In a study conducted by the State Board for Educator Certification and the University of Texas at Austin, the effectiveness of the Texas Beginning Educator Support System was evaluated (as cited by Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). The study used data collected across the state, and the results were clear, “The study found program participation had positive effects on beginning teachers’ retention (p. 14).

In 2007 and 2008, the National Center for Educational Statistics sponsored the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study to better understand the career paths of beginning

teachers in the United States. One of the key findings of the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study was that of the beginning teachers in the 2007-2008 school year who were assigned a mentor, eight percent were no longer teaching the following year, and ten percent were no longer teaching 2 years later (Kaiser, 2011). In contrast, of the beginning teachers in the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study who were not assigned a mentor, approximately 16% were no longer teaching the following year, and 23% were no longer teaching 2 years later (Kaiser, 2011).

Hong (2012) conducted a qualitative study in the southeastern United States of teachers with less than 5 years of experience. Half of the participants had left the teaching profession within their first 5 years, while the other half expressed no interest in leaving (Hong, 2012). As a result of the study, Hong (2012) noted that, “It would be also helpful for pre-service and beginning teachers to receive feedback and mentoring from experienced teachers who have successfully gone through this early stage of development” (p. 433). But Hong (2012) further reported that mentoring often refers to instructional strategies, curriculum, and classroom management, but misses the emotional and personal development of professional teachers.

The existing research has generally sought to explain teacher attrition from an organizational perspective with the emphasis on external factors. However, such explanations are limited in fully explaining this phenomenon. This is because decision-making and particular career practices are deeply intertwined with an individual’s meaning-making process and internal value system, which cannot be completely explained by external variables alone. Under the same working conditions, individual teachers react in different ways and make different decisions. Some teachers cope well despite adverse conditions, while others are much more vulnerable to the stressful circumstances. What enables some teachers to survive and be more competent? Why and how do stayers and leavers make different career decisions? (pp. 418-419)

Although a review of the research indicates that external conditions of the teaching profession have a significant and direct impact on novice teachers’ decisions to continue to stay in their positions, there appears to be a need for the development of teachers as individuals. Hong (2012)

wrote, “It is important to recognize the value of mentoring for the identity development process” (p. 433).

### **Development of Teacher Resilience**

Keogh et al. (2010) stress the importance of addressing teacher attrition through mentorship and professional growth, “To date, extensive research has concentrated on the process of teacher induction, focusing mainly on the importance of effective mentorship and professional development programs for novice teachers” (p. 17). However, Keogh et al. (2010) proposed looking beyond professional mentorship and suggested the importance of developing personal traits within individual teachers in an effort to increase retention. Johnson et al. (2010) made a similar observation contending that solving problems external to novice teachers is insufficient in preparing them for the profession,

The frequently proposed ‘solution’ to such teacher shortages is to ‘fix’ the problems that bedevil early career teachers and lead them to leave the profession. However, such a beguiling and simplistic response has not worked in the past and is unlikely to be effective in the future because it adopts a deficits perspective by focussing on problematic behaviour rather than enabling behavior. (p. 2)

Johnson et al. (2010) noted that resilience is a significant factor in the retention of novice teachers, “We believe that resilience affords a new lens through which to examine the complex issues of retention of beginning teachers and new teachers’ learning” (p. 2).

Resilience theory has transitioned in the past century from the field of psychiatry and developmental psychology to an application in the field of pre-service teacher training and development. Early in the formation of resilience theory, Emmy E. Werner (1992) conducted a longitudinal study of under-privileged children in Kauai, Hawaii to measure personal traits that enabled them to overcome adversities in their developmental years. Twenty-five years later, there was a shift in the study of personal resiliency from a focus on personal deficits to a focus

on personal assets necessary to overcome challenges. As Gu and Day (2007) described, “The decade of 1980s marked the paradigmatic change to the concept of resilience which, whilst recognizing the pain, struggle and suffering involved in the adaptation process in the face of adversity, focused more on positive qualities and strengths” (p. 1304). Recognizing that the teaching profession provides unique challenges for novice teachers, the application of the study of teacher resilience seemed appropriate, “The apparent applicability of the conceptual frameworks found in studies of resilient families and resilient adults in other occupations is irresistible” (Tait, 2008, p. 59).

The profession of teaching presents unique stressors that challenge novices in the field. Considering the multidimensional nature of resilience, a clear definition is difficult to ascertain. Grotberg (1997) defined resilience in terms of individual characteristics, “Resilience is the human capacity to face, overcome, and even be it strengthened by experiences of adversity” Hong (2012) compiled a definition, “Resilience refers to the process of, capacity for or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging circumstances” (p. 419). Van Breda (2001) wrote, “Resilience theory is a multifaceted field of study...In short, resilience theory addresses the strengths that people and systems demonstrate that enable them to rise above adversity” (p. 1).

On the other hand, Judith Jordan (2013) suggested that since resilience involves social connections as protective factors, it lends to merging the definition of relational-resilience theory with Relational Cultural Theory. Judith Jordan’s (2013) model of relational resilience has its foundation in Jean Baker Miller’s Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT), where the core of Miller’s RCT is that psychological growth, strength, and ultimately resilience, draws from interpersonal relationships for individuals. Le Cornu (2009) argued that, “Jordan’s key concepts of mutual

empathy, empowerment and the development of courage are integral to the learning communities model of professional experience” (p. 717).

Gu and Day (2007) asserted that the definition of resilience contains two constructs. The first construct is psychological and includes personal characteristics like Grotberg’s (1997), Hong’s (2012), and Van Berda’s (2001) definitions of resilience. The first construct involves personal traits that individuals possess to help them overcome adverse situations; positive self-esteem, and positive emotions like joy and contentment.

Gu and Day’s (2010) second construct described resilience as a social entity. They described it, “as multidimensional and multi-determined and is best understood as a dynamic within a social system of interrelationships” (p. 1305). Despite the difficulty in defining the entirety of elements in resilience theory, many agreed that novice teachers benefit greatly from well-developed resilience processes.

The application of resilience theory has not transitioned to the field of education without some controversy. “‘Teacher resilience’ is a primarily academic concept, with the term ‘resilience’ being misappropriated from the field of psychology” (Margolis & Alexandrou, 2014, p. 413).

Margolis, Hodge, and Alexandrou (2014) warned that too much reliance is placed on young teachers’ abilities to overcome stressors of teaching with, “‘heroic’ levels of morality so that teachers ‘keep going,’ even when intense and unmitigated challenges impact on individual teacher well-being” (p. 396). Margolis et al. (2014) contended, “A focus on resilience or morality in teaching disproportionately puts the blame for ‘failure’ (for example, teacher attrition) on teachers themselves rather than the systems within they work” (p. 413).

In contrast to Margolis et al.'s (2014) concerns, Gu and Day (2007) explained that, "The nature of resilience is determined by the interaction between the internal assets of the individual and the external environments in which the individual lives and grows (or does not grow)" (p. 1314). The controversy between Margolis et al. (2014) and Gu and Day (2014) is indicative of the complexity of challenges novice teachers face and the assets they need to overcome those challenges. Both the stressors external to the young teachers and the resilience traits within the young teachers must be addressed and developed. Resiliency theory has been applied to constructs outside of psychology to fields such as education, with several studies specifically conducted to measure resiliency in novice teachers.

A study conducted by Pretsch, Flunger, and Schmitt (2012) sought to, "Examine the importance of resilience for the prediction of different aspects of well-being in teachers and non-teaching employees" (p. 322). The rationale for examining the importance of resilience in teachers versus other occupations was that teaching involves a, "wide range of stressors, such as high workload and large class sizes, conflicting demands, lack of recognition,...and lack of decision-making power" (Pretsch et al., 2012, p. 323). The challenges of teaching-related stressors expand to other areas. The authors continued, "Moreover, teaching involves high emotional demands such as student misbehavior and dealing with students from disadvantaged, abusive, or neglectful backgrounds" (p. 323). The results of the study indicated that resilience contributed more to the well-being of teachers than to other occupations (Pretsch et al., 2012).

Keogh et al. (2012) conducted a study using electronic records of emails and entries of first year teachers as they progressed through the five theoretical phases of the first year of teaching; anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection (Moir, 2007). The authors followed the electronic records of the young teachers, who were able to electronically

post comments and respond to each other during their first year of teaching. The young teachers sympathized, empathized and shared stories of their experiences in their first year of teaching. Keogh et al. (2012) concluded that the young teachers were able to develop a stronger sense of agency and self-efficacy, largely due to the support from the other new teachers in their conversations. Keogh et al. (2012) reported, “This further developed their feelings of self-efficacy, consolidating their resilience without fear of appearing weak or meriting official retribution” (p. 61).

Johnson et al. (2010) conducted a critical inquiry study in West and South Australia to examine, “how early career teachers negotiate and deal with challenges to their personal and professional wellbeing during their first years of teaching” (p. 1). Johnson et al. (2010) determined five dominant themes, or domains, resulting from their study; school culture, teachers’ work, system policies and practices, school culture, and relationships. The researchers concluded that novice teachers’ resilience is enhanced when supportive relationships are developed, a positive school culture exists, a teacher identity is created, an understanding of the complexity of teachers’ work exists, and a system of policies and practices is in place to support the teachers and the school (Johnson et al., 2010).

Hong (2012) conducted a study under the teacher resilience construct that focused on resilience as a process, rather than a set of protective factors and personality traits. In her study, Hong (2012) utilized a qualitative approach to study both teacher leavers and teacher stayers. “Recognizing and understanding how stayers’ and leavers’ internal psychological constructs (e.g., self-efficacy, beliefs, value and emotions) interact differently or similarly with the external environment will provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers’ resilience and career



decision-making” (p. 420). Hong (2012) concluded from her study that there were differences between leavers and stayers when facing adversity.

For example, stayers who had better support from school administrators developed stronger self-efficacy beliefs than leavers. Also, teachers who experienced emotional burnout and stress contributed the sources of negative emotions to the immediate classroom context, such as students’ disruptive behaviours and difficulty of classroom management. (p. 432)

In short, Hong (2012) reasoned that, “teachers’ resilience can be developed and nurtured, if the right kind of environment and support are provided” (p. 432). Like Johnson et al. (2010), Hong (2012) insisted that the development of a strong teacher identity from their early drive to become a teacher is important for novices. Much like Keogh et al. (2012), Hong (2012) also emphasized the importance of developing self-efficacy within the novice teacher in order to build a stronger sense of ownership and effectiveness within the school community. Support and mentorship of beginning teachers has been shown to be vital in helping novice teachers in teaching (Borman & Dowling, 2008, Brill & McCartney, 2008, Darling-Hammond, 2003; Eberhard et al., 2000; Hong, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kaiser, 2011; Keogh et al., 2010; Pogodzinski et al., 2012; Wynn et al., 2007). When viewed through the resiliency construct, it is clear that mentorship is most effective in developing resilience when it is done in a supportive school environment. Aspinwall and Staudinger (2003) described the ability to use resources to overcome adversity in a similar fashion, but added a goal-oriented element to the construct of human strength, “it seems that human strengths may primarily lie in the ability to flexibly apply as many different resources and skills as necessary to solve a problem or work toward a goal” (p. 13).

**Grit.** Persistence to achieve has been the subject of psychological inquiry for over a century. Guy Fernald (1912) conducted a study that was, “applied to 116 Reformatory prisoners and to 12 members of the senior class in the Rindge Manual Training School of Cambridge,

Mass.” (p. 334). Fernald’s study employed a physical test of endurance that measured desire for achievement among prisoners. As it was explained to the participants, “This test is to show me and show you, too, whether you are a quitter or a stayer” (Fernald, 1912, p. 334). In the study, the subjects were instructed to stand with their heels off the ground for as long as they could. Once the heel lowers, whether voluntarily or from fatigue, it would press a switch stopping the timer. Fernald (1912) reported that, “The average score of the normal group is, then, more than twice that of the group of prisoners” (p. 334). Fernald (1912) concluded that the seniors, on average, exhibited more mental persistence for the sake of achievement than did the prisoners, especially when taking into account the fact that the prisoners were superior in physical strength and endurance.

“The term ‘grit’ appeared in the research literature as a viable topic of study in education only as recently as 2007” (Shechtman, DeBarger, Dornsife, Rosier, & Yarnall, 2013, p. 9). Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly (2007) coined the term in reference to the characteristic of tenacity in achieving long-term goals. As a result, Angela Duckworth was the winner of the 2013 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship Grant, commonly called the genius grant, for her work with grit. “Duckworth’s research is heir to the work of Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck on mindsets. Believing that we can succeed even after suffering repeated setbacks (what Dweck calls a ‘growth mindset’) can actually re-wire our brains -- and rewrite our fortunes” (Hirsch, 2014). As Duckworth suggested in a National Public Radio (2013) interview, “the qualities, or you could call them character skills—I think that's maybe the best way to phrase it—of self-control and of grit are also teachable.”

Most of Dweck’s (2014) work on the growth mindset has focused on student’s mindsets. She concluded students with a fixed mindset believe either they have the ability to achieve at a

high level, or they do not. Students with a growth mindset focus more on learning. “Their main goal in school is to learn, they put in the effort and the strategies needed to acquire knowledge, and they stick to difficult tasks, learning from their mistakes and setbacks. They have more grit” (Dweck, 2014, p. 10). Dweck also reported that research has been conducted on teachers’ mindsets about students’ abilities. Teachers with a fixed mindset tend to, “create more self-fulfilling prophecies when it comes to student achievement” (p. 11). Dweck continued, “In contrast, low-achieving students often blossom in the care of teachers with a growth mindset” (p. 11).

Although similar to teacher resilience, Robertson-Craft and Duckworth (2014) differentiated character quality of grit from resilience by asserting that grit involves long-term tenacity in achieving goals, versus overcoming difficulty and obstacles. As Robertson-Craft and Duckworth (2014) described,

While popular measures of resilience often include perseverance as a component, they tend to include other elements as well, such as equanimity and a balanced perspective on life. Moreover, grit entails consistency of interests and goals over time, whereas the construct of resilience is agnostic on the stability of an individual’s interests. (p. 7)

When applied to the profession of teaching, grit is important for an individual in achieving the long-term goal of growing into an effective teacher applying a deliberate practice. Duckworth’s operational definition of grit is more closely associated with long-term achievement, versus overcoming adversity, like resilience. In an interview in *Educational Leadership*, Duckworth summarized the relationship between resilience theory and grit, “Grit is related because part of what it means to be gritty is to be resilient in the face of failure or adversity. But that’s not the only trait you need to be gritty” (Perkins-Gough & Duckworth, 2013, p. 14).

Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014) conducted two studies of first- and second- year teachers assigned to schools in low-income districts. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship of grit on teacher effectiveness and retention. The results of the first study found that, “teachers with evidence of sustained passion and perseverance in activities prior to entering teaching were more likely to be retained through the school year and to improve their students’ academic performance” (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014, p. 19). Furthermore, the results of the second study were in agreement with the first study regarding teacher effectiveness, as evidenced by student achievement outcomes. Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014) also concluded from the second study that, “academic credentials (i.e., SAT score and college GPA), interview ratings of leadership potential, and demographics failed to predict retention or effectiveness outcomes in either study” (p. 14). In short, Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014) asserted that grit was the strongest predictor of teacher retention in their two studies.

Duckworth and Quinn (2009) developed and validated a tool to determine grit called the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S). The Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) was an eight-item assessment, and an improved version of an earlier, 12-item, self-report measure of grit (Grit-O). Duckworth and Quinn (2009) conducted a study of West Point cadets using the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) in order to determine the validity of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S). It was concluded from the study that cadets who were one standard deviation above in the grit measure had sixty-two percent higher odds of remaining in West Point in the long-term (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Eskreis-Winkler, Schulman, Beal, and Duckworth (2014) conducted four separate studies using Grit-S. The first was a study of 677 United States Army soldiers enrolled in a challenging, 24-day, Army Special Operations Force (ASOF) selection course to determine the relationship of grit and retention in the program. The study involved grit as one of three factors, and the results

were reported to be significant. “Notably, the effect of grit on retention held when controlling for general intelligence and physical fitness, the army’s traditional predictors of retention” (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014, p. 3).

Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) conducted another study using elements from Grit-S to examine the predictive ability of grit on Chicago Public Schools students. The study involved high school juniors who completed a survey administered by the Chicago Consortium on School Research, and tracked the graduation rate of those students. The results of the study concluded that, “the effect of grit on retention held when controlling for academic conscientiousness, school motivation, situational factors, standardized achievement tests scores, and demographic variables” (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014, p. 8). In short, gritty high school juniors were more likely to graduate.

A third study conducted by Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) involved married subjects to examine the association between grit and the likelihood to remain married. Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) found that grit and conscientiousness correlated with men, but not women.

In their fourth study, Eskreis-Winkler et al. conducted a study using Grit-S to examine whether grit predicts retention among sales representatives. Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) reported, “Overall, the results indicated that gritty sales representatives were more likely to remain at their jobs long-term” (p. 4).

Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) noted from their four studies using Grit-S, “Taken together, these findings take the first step toward establishing the association between grit and persistence across a range of life contexts” (p.10). Furthermore, the results of the four studies indicated that, “grit is associated with retention not only in high-achieving populations but also among sales representatives, and juniors in the Chicago Public Schools” (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014, p. 10).

## **Principals' Perceptions**

A perception of stressful conditions and circumstances for novice teachers is a vital obligation of school administrators who wish to retain teachers and build a strong staff of experienced educators. Will (2018) asserted, "How principals engage their teachers matters in terms of whether they will stick around" (p. 20). Will further added, "Principals in rural school districts often face an extra challenge retaining teachers" (p. 25). A study of administrators and principals conducted in public and non-public schools in Nebraska concluded in issues regarding stress factors in novice teachers, "The beginning teachers and principals in this study agreed on several issues" (Brock & Grady, 1998, p. 182). Youngs (2007) concurred that it is important for administrators to understand the needs of their respective teachers, "Principals influence new teachers through direct and indirect actions and that their actions are informed by their professional backgrounds" (p. 105).

Bredeson (2000) contended principals strive to help teachers with their professional development. However, Bredeson pointed out that the needs of teachers are not limited to professional development. "Stressed out teachers, for example, may need a break to recharge their personal and professional batteries. Principals are sensitive to these needs because they ultimately affect teachers' growth and practice" (p. 396).

## **Summary**

Teacher attrition among novice teachers is a concern in the United States. Each year, novice teachers leave their schools at very high rates. A review of the literature found several studies estimated the costs of novice teacher attrition. Those costs included financial factors like advertising, interviewing, orientation of new teachers, and professional development leaving teachers take with them when they leave. The costs also included intangible prices like the

negative impact on relationships within the school, interrupted professional development, and gaps in curriculum development

A review of the literature also revealed stress factors that compelled novice teachers to leave their schools. Among these factors were salary, a lack of professional prestige, working conditions, student discipline concerns, a lack of collegial or administrative support, absence of a mentoring program, and absence of an induction program to help ready novice teachers for the classroom.

The literature indicated that Grit is a personal characteristic that includes resiliency and tenacity to accomplish long-term objectives and can mitigate the negative impact of stress factors on novice teachers.

The literature also revealed school principals' perceptions of stressful conditions for novice teachers is an important part of their responsibilities in the school.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

Each year, early career, or novice, teachers in the United States' public schools leave their profession at a higher rate than comparable professions including lawyers, engineers, professors and pharmacists (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) wrote, "A number of studies have found that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into the occupation" (p. 682).

The high rate of attrition occurs at a time when assembling a staff of experienced, effective teachers is a significant focus of schools in order to meet the demand to increase student achievement. Pogodzinski et al. (2012) stated, "Administrators and teachers have come under increasing pressure to raise student achievement to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, at the same time that many districts across the country are facing serious declines in resources" (p. 1). Further research indicated that assembling a quality staff of teachers is important to increasing student achievement. As Rivkin et al. (2005) noted, "Experienced teachers are, on average, more effective at raising student performance than those in their early years of teaching" (p. 77).

Developing a strong, experienced staff is an important challenge for school administrators. However, research suggests that the major challenge is not locating and hiring experienced, effective teachers. Rather, the challenge is in retaining those experienced, effective teachers. Patterson et al. (2004) contended, "Until recently, few scholars have recognized that the problem is not recruitment but retention" (p. 3). Gonzales et al. (2008) concurred, "It is time to take a serious look at retention and attrition and the reasons behind this phenomenon rather than



continue to concentrate on the shortage problem” (p. 2). It is not enough to recruit bright, talented, determined, young teachers; schools must retain those teachers on staff as they grow professionally into effective and seasoned teachers. The challenge, therefore, is keeping young teachers long enough to develop them into effective, experienced teachers.

At a time when schools must focus on increasing student achievement, they also experience the challenge of assembling an experienced staff of teachers to optimize student achievement outcomes. As a result, the retention of young teachers in order to nurture them into experienced teachers is critical to meet student and achievement expectations.

The cost of replacing teachers who leave a school district can be substantial, both financially and non-financially (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). When young teachers leave education, they take with them a school district’s investment in their professional development in them and their early years of classroom experience. In addition, “Constant changes in the staff interrupt the planning and implementation of a coherent, comprehensive, and unified curriculum” (Brill & Cartney, 2008, p. 752).

The study investigated the perceptions of school administrators in rural Minnesota schools on those factors that had caused novice teachers to leave their teaching positions during their first five years of employment. A review of the literature yielded limited information regarding aggravating and mitigating factors that contribute to novice teachers in rural Minnesota leaving their school districts within the first 5 years of their employment.

The investigation employed a survey of rural, central Minnesota school administrators. The survey instrument was created from a review of the literature and designed to gather data about factors that contributed to novice teachers leaving their teaching position within the first 5 years of their employment. The study was conducted in 2018 and included surveying school

administrators who had novice teachers leave their schools within the first 5 years of their employment. The study participants were selected from small, rural school districts in central Minnesota.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was: to ascertain the causal factors, other than performance, of novice teachers' leaving their positions as perceived by responding school administrators in rural, central Minnesota schools; to determine if the presence of mentorship programs affected school administrators' perceptions of factors in novice teachers leaving their positions; and to examine the perceived impact on novice teachers' grit and resiliency. The study findings identified factors that responding school administrators believed contributed to novice teachers leaving their respective schools which may assist practitioners in better understanding the precipitating, seven external factors that challenged novice teachers to remain in their positions, and two mitigating, personal, internal assets needed to encourage them to remain in their teaching positions.

### **Research Questions**

The research investigated the following three questions:

1. What did school administrators who participated in the study perceive as the factors, other than performance, that led novice teachers in their respective schools to leave their teaching positions?
2. What did select rural, central Minnesota school administrators identify as differences the existence of mentorship programs had on factors affecting novice teachers leaving their positions?

3. According to perceptions of the school administrators who participated in the study, to what extent were grit and resiliency factors in novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions?

### **Research Design**

A study was conducted in 2018 to ascertain the impact select external and internal factors had on rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave their teaching positions as perceived by their school administrators. The study incorporated a quantitative research methodology involving an online survey of school administrators in rural, public, Minnesota schools. A quantitative approach consists of surveys, close-ended questions, and numerical data (Creswell, 2014).

Quantitative research is “a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study; asks specific, narrow, questions; collects quantifiable data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics; and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner” (Bauer & Brazer, 2012, p. 211).

With the assistance of the St. Cloud State University Statistical Consulting and Research Center, survey data were gathered were organized to answer the research questions. The web-based survey tool Survey Monkey was employed to administer the survey and ensure anonymity of the participants.

### **Instrument for Data Collection and Analysis**

A review of the literature revealed several common elements suggested by researchers as being aggravating factors contributing to attrition of novice teachers. The literature also revealed that there are mitigating internal factors allowing novice teachers to remain resilient during the challenges of novice teachers in the early years of their careers in rural, public, Minnesota

schools. The study instrument was developed with the purpose of identifying the aggravating factors frequently identified in the literature as compelling novice teachers to leave their positions and the mitigating factors of a mentorship program and the personal characteristic of grit.

The survey was piloted by a selected group of graduate students in the education department at St. Cloud State University. From this pilot, survey questions were adjusted for clarity and readability.

The survey developed by the researcher consisted of four sections. The first section collected demographic information that included size of school, grade levels within the school, years of administrative experience, and whether there was a formal mentorship program in their respective schools. The second section asked the participant to rate the impact of seven aggravating, external stress factors on their novice teachers using a four-point, incremental Likert scale. The Likert scale choices were (1) no impact, (2) small impact, (3) moderate impact, and (4) large impact. The last section collected information on the mitigating, internal factor of grit using a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale choices were (1) not gritty at all, (2) slightly gritty, (3) somewhat gritty, (4) very gritty, and (5) extremely gritty.

### **Participants**

Participants of the study were school administrators from rural, public, Minnesota schools. The subjects selected to participate in the study are employed as school administrators in school districts identified by the Minnesota Rural Education Association as rural school districts. Participants of the study were school administrators from rural, public, Minnesota schools who had novice teachers leave their schools within their first 5 years of teaching. School administrators were selected to participate in the study of factors surrounding novice teacher

attrition in rural, central Minnesota public schools because, as Bennis (2003) asserted, it is important for leaders to have awareness of the needs of the people with whom they work.

In addition, school administrators from rural, public, Minnesota schools were selected as the subjects of the study because understanding factors that contribute to novice teacher attrition is the responsibility of principals (Bredeson, 2009).

Participants of the study were a sample of convenience. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) describes convenience sampling as, “a sample that suits the purpose of the study and that is convenient” (p. 175).

### **Data Collection/Procedures and Timelines**

An invitation to participate in the research study was emailed to 146 school administrators who were employed at school districts identified as rural districts by Minnesota Rural Education Association along with an informed consent form and link to the SurveyMonkey survey. The email soliciting selected administrators to participate in the survey was sent in September of 2018. Two follow-up emails were sent over the next month until enough responses were collected. The results of the survey were then compiled and organized with the assistance of the St. Cloud State University Statistical Consulting and Research Center. Analysis of the survey results was conducted by the researcher and data findings were reported and presented to the dissertation committee members in September 2019

### **Human Subject Approval-Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

The researcher submitted a request for approval of the study and instruments by the Institutional/Review Board (IRB) of Saint Cloud State University. The request was approved. The study’s respondents were informed that they were at liberty to withdraw from involvement in the study at any time, the results of the study survey are confidential, and the participants not

be asked to provide identifiable information. All data was entered in an electronic database ensuring the researcher was unable to access responses from any specific respondent.

Chapter 3 described the study methodology; Chapter 4 describes the findings of the study and Chapter 5 details the study conclusions, discussion, limitations and recommendations for future studies and professional practice.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Introduction**

Chapter 4 is organized by describing the sample of the study and reporting the findings in tables 1 and 2. Tables 3 through 9 relate to research question one. Tables 10 through 17 relate to research question 2 and table 18 relates to research question 3.

Each year, early career or novice teachers in the United States' public schools leave their profession at a higher rate than comparable professions including lawyers, engineers, professors and pharmacists (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) wrote, "A number of studies have found that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into the occupation" (p. 682).

The high rate of attrition occurs at a time when assembling a staff of experienced, effective teachers is a significant focus of schools in order to meet the demand to increase student achievement. Pogodzinski et al. (2012) stated, "Administrators and teachers have come under increasing pressure to raise student achievement to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, at the same time that many districts across the country are facing serious declines in resources" (p. 1). Further research indicated that assembling a quality staff of teachers is important to increasing student achievement. As Rivkin et al. (2005) noted, "Experienced teachers are, on average, more effective at raising student performance than those in their early years of teaching" (p. 77).

Developing a strong, experienced staff is an important challenge for school administrators. However, research suggests that the major challenge is not locating and hiring experienced, effective teachers. Rather, the challenge is in retaining those experienced, effective

teachers. Patterson et al. (2004) contended, “Until recently, few scholars have recognized that the problem is not recruitment but retention” (p. 3). Gonzales et al. (2008) concurred, “It is time to take a serious look at retention and attrition and the reasons behind this phenomenon rather than continue to concentrate on the shortage problem” (p. 2). It is not enough to recruit bright, talented, determined, young teachers; schools must retain those teachers on staff as they grow professionally into effective and seasoned teachers. The challenge, therefore, is retaining young teachers long enough to develop them into effective, experienced teachers.

When teachers leave teaching, districts incur costs (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Levy et al., 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). These costs are both financial and non-financial. With most school districts reporting limited resources, they can ill-afford to incur additional costs. Research suggested it is difficult to estimate the exact costs of a teacher leaving a school district because of the multiple variables involved, including the cost of retraining, the loss of the value of professional development, and the costs of the hiring process. Estimates range from \$3,400 to \$7,000 for each teacher leaving a school district (Levy et al., 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). Intangible costs include the loss of curricular consistency, the negative effects of a constant turnover of staff on schools’ cultures, and the negative impact of teacher turnover on student achievement. Routinely high occurrences of teacher turnover can “Impede a school’s efforts to coordinate curriculum, to track and share important information about students as they move from grade to grade, and to maintain productive relationships with parents and the local community” (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011, p. 48).

At a time when schools must focus on increasing student achievement, they also experience the challenge of assembling an experienced staff of teachers to optimize student



achievement outcomes. As a result, the retention of young teachers in order to nurture them into experienced teachers is critical to meet student and achievement expectations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The cost of replacing teachers who leave a school district can be substantial, both financially and non-financially (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). When young teachers leave their positions, they take with them a school district's investment in their professional development in them and their early years of classroom experience. In addition, "Constant changes in the staff interrupt the planning and implementation of a coherent, comprehensive, and unified curriculum" (Brill, 2008, p. 752).

The study investigated the perceptions of school administrators in rural Minnesota schools on those factors that had caused novice teachers to leave their teaching positions during their first 5 years of employment. A review of the literature yielded limited information regarding aggravating and mitigating factors that contribute to novice teachers in rural Minnesota leaving their school districts within the first 5 years of their employment.

The investigation employed a survey of rural, central Minnesota school administrators. The survey instrument was created from a review of the literature and designed to gather data about factors that contributed to novice teachers leaving their teaching positions within the first 5 years of their employment. The study was conducted in 2018 and included surveying school administrators who had novice teachers leave their schools within the first 5 years of their employment.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was: to ascertain the causal factors, other than performance, of novice teachers' leaving their positions as perceived by responding school administrators in

rural, central Minnesota schools; to determine if the presence of mentorship programs affected school administrators' perceptions of factors in novice teachers leaving their positions; and to examine the perceived impact on novice teachers' grit and resiliency. The study findings identified factors that responding school administrators believed contributed to novice teachers leaving their respective schools which may assist practitioners in better understanding the precipitating, seven external factors that challenged novice teachers to remain in their positions, and two mitigating, personal, internal assets needed to encourage them to remain in their teaching positions.

### **Research Questions**

The research study investigated the following three questions:

1. What did select rural, central Minnesota school administrators identify as differences the existence of mentorship programs had on factors affecting novice teachers leaving their positions?
2. What did school administrators who participated in the study perceive as the factors, other than performance, that led novice teachers in their respective schools to leave their teaching positions?
3. According to perceptions of the school administrators who participated in the study, to what extent were grit and resiliency factors in novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions?

### **Research Design**

A study was conducted in 2018 to ascertain the perceptions of participating school administrators on the impact select external and internal factors had on rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave their teaching positions. The study incorporated a

quantitative research methodology involving an online survey of school administrators in rural central, Minnesota schools.

A quantitative approach consists of surveys, close-ended questions, and numerical data (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research is “a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study; asks specific, narrow, questions; collects quantifiable data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics; and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner” (Bauer & Brazer, 2012, p. 211).

### **Description of the Sample**

The subjects selected to participate in the study were employed as school administrators in school districts identified by the Minnesota Rural Education Association as rural school districts. An invitation to participate in the study was distributed through electronic mail to 146 Minnesota public school administrators employed in rural school districts. Of the 146 administrators who received invitations to participate in the study, 55 respondents or 37.8% agreed to participate, while 92 respondents or 62.8% did not respond to the survey. The findings of the survey are presented, evaluated, and summarized below.

Select demographics of the study respondents are represented in Tables 1-3 below. The grade levels of the school in which the respondents served are reported in Table 1. Of the school administrators responding to the survey, 22 respondents or 40.0% reported serving their school districts in secondary schools. Eighteen respondents or 32.7% reported serving in K-12 schools, and 15 respondents or 27.3% reported administering elementary schools.

Table 1

*School Levels of the Responding Administrators (n=55)*

Grade Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary	15	27.3%
Secondary	22	40.0%
K-12	18	32.7%
Total	55	100.0%

The number of years of experience reported by the study respondents is represented in Table 2. Twenty-one of the responding administrators or 38.2% reported having 10 or more years of experience in school administration. Eighteen of the responding administrators or 32.7% reported having 5-10 years of school administration experience. Fourteen respondents or 25.5% reported having 1-4 years of experience in school administration while 2 respondents or 3.6% reported having less than 1 year of experience in school administration.

Table 2

*Number of Years of School Administration Experience (n=55)*

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	2	3.6%
1-4 years	14	25.5%
5-10 years	18	32.7%
10 or more years	21	38.2%
Total	55	100.0%

The perceptions of the impact of student behavior on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions is reflected in Table 3. When asked to rate their perceptions of the impact of select factors on novice teacher attrition, six or 11.1% of responding school administrators

reported they believed that student behavior had a large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions, while 20 or 37.0% of the responding school administrators perceived student behavior had a moderate impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions. Nineteen or 35.2% of responding school administrators perceived student behavior had a small impact and 9 or 16.7% of responding school administrators perceived student behavior had no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions within the first 5 years of their employment.

Table 3

*Respondents' Perceived Impact of Student Behavior on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave (n=54)*

Impact Level	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	6	11.1%
Moderate Impact	20	37.0%
Small Impact	19	35.2%
No Impact	9	16.7%
Total	54	100.0

Frequencies of responses related to respondents' perceptions of a lack of parental support impacting novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions are reported in Table 4. When asked to rate the impact of a lack of parental support on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions, 19 or 35.2% of responding school administrators perceived a lack of parental support had a moderate or large impact. Nearly two of three responding school administrators, 35 of 54 or 64.8%, perceived that a lack of parental support had a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Table 4

*Perceived Impact of Lack of Parental Support on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave (n=54)*

Impact Level	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	4	7.4%
Moderate Impact	15	27.8%
Small Impact	23	42.6%
No Impact	12	22.2%
Total	54	100.0%

Findings regarding professional prestige's impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions are detailed in Table 5. In response to the survey item regarding the impact of a lack of professional prestige or respect for the field of education, 19 or 35.2% of respondents perceived this factor had a large or moderate impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. Thirty-five or 64.8% of responding school administrators perceived that a lack of professional prestige had a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. Thus, nearly 2 of every 3 responding school administrators believe that a lack of prestige or respect for the field of education had little to no bearing on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Table 5

*Perceived Impact of Lack of Prestige, or Respect for the Field of Education on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave (n=54)*

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	4	7.4%
Moderate Impact	15	27.8%
Small Impact	20	37.0%
No Impact	15	27.8%
Total	54	100.0%

Findings regarding the perceived impact of a lack of collegial support on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions are reported in Table 6. When responding to the survey item on collegial support, 11 or 20.0 % of respondents perceived that a lack of collegial support had a large or moderate impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. Conversely, the responding school administrators who perceived a lack of collegial support as having a small or no impact at all totaled 43 or 79.6%. Thus, only 1 in 5 respondents perceived a lack of collegial support was a major factor that caused novice teachers to leave their positions.

Table 6

*Perceived Impact on Lack of Collegial Support on Novice Teachers' Decision to Leave (n=54)*

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	1	1.9%
Moderate Impact	10	18.5%
Small Impact	24	44.4%
No Impact	19	35.2%
Total	54	100.0%

Findings regarding the perceived impact of a lack of readiness to teach on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions are reported in Table 7. When asked to rate their perceptions of the impact of lack of readiness to teach on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, 25 or 46.3% of respondents believed a lack of readiness to teach had a large or moderate impact. Twenty-nine or 53.7% of responding school administrators believed a lack of readiness to teach had either a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Table 7

*Perceived Impact of Lack of Readiness to Teach on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave (n=54)*

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	6	11.1%
Moderate Impact	19	35.2%
Small Impact	22	40.7%
No Impact	7	13.0%
Total	54	100.0%

Findings regarding the perceived impact of working conditions on novice teachers' leaving their positions are reported on Table 8. Six or 11.3% of responding school administrators believed working conditions had either a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave, while 47 or 88.7% of responding school administrators believed working conditions had either a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions or no impact at all. In short, nearly 9 out of 10 respondents perceived that working conditions had either a small impact or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions.



Table 8

*Perceived Impact of Working Conditions on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave (n=53)*

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	1	1.9%
Moderate Impact	5	9.4%
Small Impact	29	54.7%
No Impact	18	34.0%
Total	53	100.0%

Findings regarding the perceived impact of salary on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions are detailed in Table 9. When asked to rate the impact of salary on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions, 29 of 52 or 55.8% of responding school administrators believed salary had either a moderate or large impact. Conversely, 23 of 52 or 44.2% of respondents believed salary had either a small impact or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. In short, greater than 1 in 2 responding school administrators believed salary had either a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Table 9

*Perceived Impact of Salary on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave (n=52)*

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	10	19.2%
Moderate Impact	19	36.6%
Small Impact	18	34.6%
No Impact	5	9.6%
Total	52	100.0%

Table 10 provides the participants' responses regarding whether or not formal mentorship programs were provided in their schools. Several studies found in the literature agreed that mentoring programs in schools increased teacher retention throughout the nation. Regarding mentorship programs, 40 or 72.7% of the responding school administrators reported implementing formal mentorship programs in their schools. Conversely, 15 or 27.3% reported not providing formal mentorship programs in their schools.

Table 10

*Number of Administrators Reporting a Formal Mentorship Program in Their Schools (n=55)*

Yes / No	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	72.7%
No	15	27.3%
Total	55	100.0%

Research suggests there is a significant connection between mentorship programs and retaining novice teachers. When data from the study survey were disaggregated by those administrators who reported their schools provided formal mentorship programs and those administrators who reported their schools did not provide formal mentorship programs, a comparison of the perceived impact of factors on novice teachers' decisions to leave their respective schools was able to be ascertained.

The frequency of school administrator perceptions disaggregated by schools with formal mentorship programs and schools without formal mentorship programs on the impact of student behavior on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions are represented in Table 11.

When asked to rate the impact of student behavior on novice teacher attrition, 18 or 46.1% of responding school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs

perceived student behavior had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 8 or 53.4% of responding school administrators from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived student behavior had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Twenty-one or 53.8% of responding school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived student behavior as having either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave teaching, while 7 or 46.6% of responding school administrators from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived student behavior had either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

It should be noted that regardless of whether or not the respondents were employed in districts which did or did not offer mentorship programs for novice teachers, 26 of 54 or 48.1% of respondents or nearly one in two perceived that student behavior had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers leaving their teaching positions.

Table 11

*Frequency Findings of the Impact of Student Behavior on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave Schools with Formal Mentorship Programs and Without Formal Mentorship Programs (n=54)*

	Formal Mentorship Program: Yes		Formal Mentorship Program: No	
Impact	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	5	12.8%	1	6.7%
Moderate Impact	13	33.3%	7	46.6%
Small Impact	16	41.1%	3	20.0%
No Impact	5	12.8%	4	26.7%
Total	39	100.0%	15	100.0%

Table 12 presents school administrators' perceptions of the impact of a lack of parental support in school districts where mentorship programs were or were not provided to novice teachers.

When the responses of school administrators from schools which provided formal mentorship programs were compared to respondents in schools that did not offer formal mentorship programs, 11 or 28.2% of school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived that a lack of parental support had either a moderate or a large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 8 or 43.3% of respondents from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived that a lack of parental support had either a moderate or a large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave. Twenty-eight or 71.8% of school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived that lack of parental support had either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 7 or 46.7% of responding school administrators in schools with no formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of parental support had either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Regardless of whether the responding school administrators were employed in school districts which did or did not offer formal mentorship programs for novice teachers, 35 of 54 respondents or 64.8% perceived that a lack of parental support had either a small impact or no impact on the novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Table 12

*Frequency Findings of the Impact of a Lack of Parental Support on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave Schools with Formal Mentorship Programs and Without Formal Mentorship Programs (n=54)*

	Formal Mentorship Program: Yes		Formal Mentorship Program: No	
Impact	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	2	5.1%	2	13.3%
Moderate Impact	9	23.1%	6	40.0%
Small Impact	20	51.3%	3	20.0%
No Impact	8	20.5%	4	26.7%
Total	39	100.0%	15	100.0%

School administrators' perceptions of the impact of a lack of professional prestige on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions in schools where formal mentorship programs are offered or not offered are presented in Table 13.

When responses from school administrators whose schools provided formal mentorship programs were compared to responses from schools administrators whose schools did not provide formal mentorship programs, 15 or 38.5% of school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived that a lack of professional prestige had either a moderate or a large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 4 or 26.7% of responding school administrators employed in school districts without formal mentorship programs for novice teachers perceived a lack of professional prestige had a moderate or a large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave.

Twenty-four or 61.5% of school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived that a lack of professional prestige had either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 11 or 73.3% of responding school

administrators from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of professional prestige had either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Table 13

*Frequency Findings of the Perceived Impact of a Lack of Professional Prestige on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave Schools with Formal Mentorship Programs and Without Formal Mentorship Programs (n=54)*

	Formal Mentorship Program: Yes		Formal Mentorship Program: No	
Impact	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	3	7.7%	1	06.7%
Moderate Impact	12	30.8%	3	20.0%
Small Impact	14	35.9%	6	40.0%
No Impact	10	25.6%	5	33.3%
Total	39	100.0%	15	100.0%

Table 14 presents school administrators' perceptions of the impact a lack of collegial support had on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions where mentorship programs were or were not provided to novice teachers.

When asked to rate the impact of a lack of collegial support on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, 7 or 17.9% of responding school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of collegial support as having either a moderate or a large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave, while 4 or 26.6% of responding school administrators from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of collegial support as having a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave.

Thirty-two or 82.1% of responding school administrators from school districts with formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of collegial support as having either no impact or a

small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 11 or 73.4% of school administrators in school districts without formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of collegial support as having either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave.

Whether the responding school administrators were employed in districts with or without formal mentorship programs for novice teachers, 43 of 54 respondents or 79.6% perceived a lack of collegial support as having either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Table 14

*Frequency Findings of the Perceived Impact of a Lack of Collegial Support on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave Schools with Formal Mentorship Programs and Without Formal Mentorship Programs (n=54)*

	Formal Mentorship Program: Yes		Formal Mentorship Program: No	
Impact	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	0	0.0%	1	6.6%
Moderate Impact	7	17.9%	3	20.0%
Small Impact	17	43.6%	7	46.7%
No Impact	15	38.5%	4	26.7%
Total	39	100.0%	15	100.0%

School administrators' perceptions of the impact of a lack of readiness to teach on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions in schools where formal mentorship programs are offered or not offered are presented in Table 15.

Eighteen or 46.1% of school administrators whose schools provided formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of readiness to teach as a moderate or large factor in novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. Seven or 46.7% of responding school administrators from

schools that did not provide formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of readiness to teach as a factor in novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Twenty-one or 53.9% of school administrators in schools with formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of readiness to teach had either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 8 or 53.4% of school administrators from schools that did not have formal mentorship programs perceived a lack of readiness to teach as having either no impact or little impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave.

Irrespective of whether or not school administrators were employed in schools with formal mentorship programs or without formal mentorship programs, 25 or 46.3% perceived a lack of readiness to teach had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions, whereas 29 or 53.7% of respondents perceived a lack of readiness to teach had little or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave.

Table 15

*Frequency Findings of the Perceived Impact of a Lack of Readiness to Teach on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave Schools with Formal Mentorship Programs and Without Formal Mentorship Programs (n=54)*

	Formal Mentorship Program: Yes		Formal Mentorship Program: No	
Impact	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	6	15.4%	0	0.0%
Moderate Impact	12	30.7%	7	46.7%
Small Impact	15	38.5%	7	46.7%
No Impact	6	15.4%	1	6.6%
Total	39	100.0%	15	100.0%



School administrators' perceptions of the impact of working conditions on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions in schools where formal mentorship programs were offered or not offered are presented in Table 16.

Three or 7.9% of school administrator respondents from schools that provided formal mentorship programs perceived working conditions had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 3 or 20.0% of responding school administrators from schools with no formal mentorship programs perceived working conditions had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. No respondents from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived working conditions had a large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Thirty-five or 92.1% of respondents from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived working conditions as either having a small impact or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 12 or 80.0% of respondents from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived working conditions had either a small impact or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions.

Regardless of whether or not the responding school administrators were employed in schools with formal mentorship programs or without formal mentorship programs, six or 11.3% perceived working conditions had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, which 47 or 88.7% of responding school administrators perceived working conditions had either a small impact or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions.

Table 16

*Frequency Findings of the Perceived Impact of Working Conditions on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave Schools with Formal Mentorship Programs and Without Formal Mentorship Programs (n=53)*

	Formal Mentorship Program: Yes		Formal Mentorship Program: No	
Impact	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	1	2.6%	0	0.0%
Moderate Impact	2	5.3%	3	20.0%
Small Impact	20	52.6%	9	60.0%
No Impact	15	39.5%	3	20.0%
Total	38	100.0%	15	100.0%

The frequency of school administrator responses disaggregated by schools with formal mentorship programs and schools without formal mentorship programs relating to perceptions that salary impacted novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions are represented in Table 17.

When asked to rate the impact of salary on novice teacher attrition, 22 or 59.5% of responding school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived salary had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while seven or 46.7% of responding school administrators from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived salary had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Fifteen or 40.5% of responding school administrators from schools with formal mentorship programs perceived salary had either no impact or a small impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave, while eight or 53.3% of responding school administrators from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived salary had a small impact on novice teachers'

decisions to leave their positions and no responding school administrators from schools without formal mentorship programs perceived salary had no impact.

It should be noted that regardless of whether or not the respondents were employed in school districts which did or did not offer mentorship programs for novice teachers, 29 of 53 or 54.7% of respondents perceived that salary had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers leaving their teaching positions.

Table 17

*Frequency Findings of the Perceived Impact of Salary on Novice Teachers' Decisions to Leave Schools with Formal Mentorship Programs and Without Formal Mentorship Programs (n=52)*

	Formal Mentorship Program: Yes		Formal Mentorship Program: No	
Impact	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Large Impact	7	18.9%	3	20.0%
Moderate Impact	15	40.6%	4	26.7%
Small Impact	10	27.0%	8	53.3%
No Impact	5	13.5%	0	0.0%
	37	100.0%	15	100.0%

Research suggests that the more grit a novice teacher has, the more likely it is that teacher will remain in his or her respective teaching position (Duckworth et al., 2007). The frequency of school administrator perceptions of the level of grit of novice teachers who left their positions are reported in Table 18.

When asked to evaluate the level of grit of novice teachers who left their teaching positions, 30 out of 53 or 56.6% of responding school administrators believed the novice teachers who left their schools were slightly gritty or not at all gritty. Conversely, 23 of 53 or

43.3% of responding school administrators believed the novice teachers who left their positions were either somewhat gritty or very gritty.

Table 18

*School Administrators Perceptions of the Level of Grit of Novice Teachers Who Left Their Teaching Positions (n=53)*

Level of Grit	Frequency	Percentage
Very Gritty	2	3.7%
Somewhat Gritty	21	39.6%
Slightly Gritty	29	54.7%
Not at All Gritty	1	1.9%
Total	53	100.0%

### Summary

A study was conducted in 2018 to investigate the demographic characteristics of the schools from which responding rural Minnesota school administrators were selected; ascertain the causal factors, other than performance, of novice teachers' attrition as perceived by the responding school administrators, and examine the impact of grit and resiliency on those novice teachers who resigned from their positions within the first five years of teaching as perceived by the responding school administrators.

The survey consisted of four questions for ascertaining demographic information from the responding school administrators. Those questions inquired about the grade levels of their schools, number of years in school administration, and sizes of their schools. The survey also included seven questions to examine causal factors—extracted from the research—that contributed to novice teachers leaving their positions, and one question to determine the perceived level of grit of novice teachers who left their teaching positions.

Among the findings reported in the chapter were that 29 of 54 or 53.7% of responding school administrators believed a lack of readiness to teach had either a small impact or no impact on novice teachers who left their positions and nearly nine of 10 of responding school administrators believed working conditions had either a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. Conversely, one in two responding school administrators believed student behavior had either a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave the profession, and greater than one in two school administrators believed salary had either a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

It should also be noted that 40 of 55 responding school administrators reported the presence of formal mentorship programs in their schools, whereas 15 of 55 or 27.3% reported the absence of formal mentorship programs in their schools.

Chapter five examines the relationship between the results and research in the literature and reports the conclusions of the study. Chapter five will also review limitations to the study and present recommendations for future research and for the teaching profession.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions, Discussion, Limitations, Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

Each year, early career or novice teachers in the United States' public schools leave their profession at a higher rate than comparable professions including lawyers, engineers, professors and pharmacists (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Smith and Ingersoll wrote, "A number of studies have found that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into the occupation" (2004, p. 682).

The high rate of attrition occurs at a time when assembling a staff of experienced, effective teachers is a significant focus of schools in order to meet the demand to increase student achievement. Pogodzinski et al. (2012) stated, "Administrators and teachers have come under increasing pressure to raise student achievement to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, at the same time that many districts across the country are facing serious declines in resources" (p. 1). Further research indicated that assembling a quality staff of teachers is important to increasing student achievement. As Rivkin et al. (2005) noted, "Experienced teachers are, on average, more effective at raising student performance than those in their early years of teaching" (p. 77).

Developing a strong, experienced staff is an important challenge for school administrators. However, research suggests that the major challenge is not locating and hiring experienced, effective teachers. Rather, the challenge is in retaining those experienced, effective teachers. Patterson et al. (2004) contended, "Until recently, few scholars have recognized that the problem is not recruitment but retention" (p. 3). Gonzales et al. (2008) concurred, "It is time to take a serious look at retention and attrition and the reasons behind this phenomenon rather than

continue to concentrate on the shortage problem” (p. 2). It is not enough to recruit bright, talented, determined, young teachers; schools must retain those teachers on staff as they grow professionally into effective and seasoned teachers. The challenge, therefore, is retaining young teachers long enough to develop them into effective, experienced teachers.

When teachers leave teaching, districts incur costs (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011; Levy et al., 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). These costs are both financial and non-financial. With most school districts reporting limited resources, they can ill-afford to incur additional costs. Research suggested it is difficult to estimate the exact costs of a teacher leaving a school district because of the multiple variables involved, including the cost of retraining, the loss of the value of professional development, and the costs of the hiring process. Estimates range from \$3,400 to \$7,000 for each teacher leaving a school district (Levy et al., 2012; Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000). Intangible costs include the loss of curricular consistency, the negative effects of a constant turnover of staff on schools’ cultures, and the negative impact of teacher turnover on student achievement. Routinely high occurrences of teacher turnover can “Impede a school’s efforts to coordinate curriculum, to track and share important information about students as they move from grade to grade, and to maintain productive relationships with parents and the local community” (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011, p. 48).

At a time when schools must focus on increasing student achievement, they also experience the challenge of assembling an experienced staff of teachers to optimize student achievement outcomes. As a result, the retention of young teachers in order to nurture them into experienced teachers is critical to meet student and achievement expectations.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The cost of replacing teachers who leave a school district can be substantial, both financially and non-financially (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). When young teachers leave their positions, they take with them a school district's investment in their professional development in them and their early years of classroom experience. In addition, "Constant changes in the staff interrupt the planning and implementation of a coherent, comprehensive, and unified curriculum" (Brill & McCartney, 2008, p. 752).

The study investigated the perceptions of school administrators in rural, central Minnesota schools on those factors that had caused novice teachers to leave their teaching positions during their first 5 years of employment. A review of the literature yielded limited information regarding aggravating and mitigating factors that contribute to novice teachers in rural, central Minnesota leaving their school districts within the first 5 years of their employment.

The investigation employed a survey of rural, central Minnesota school administrators. The survey instrument was created from a review of the literature and designed to gather data about factors that contributed to novice teachers leaving their teaching positions within the first 5 years of their employment. The study was conducted in 2018 and included surveying school administrators who had novice teachers leave their schools within the first 5 years of their employment.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was: to ascertain the causal factors, other than performance, of novice teachers' leaving their positions as perceived by responding school administrators in rural, central Minnesota schools; to determine if the presence of mentorship programs affected



school administrators' perceptions of factors in novice teachers leaving their positions; and to examine the perceived impact on novice teachers' grit and resiliency. The study findings identified factors that responding school administrators believed contributed to novice teachers leaving their respective schools which may assist practitioners in better understanding the precipitating, seven external factors that challenged novice teachers to remain in their positions, and two mitigating, personal, internal assets needed to encourage them to remain in their teaching positions.

### **Research Questions**

The research study investigated the following three questions:

1. What did school administrators who participated in the study perceive as the factors, other than performance, that led novice teachers in their respective schools to leave their teaching positions?
2. What did select rural, central Minnesota school administrators identify as differences the existence of mentorship programs had on factors affecting novice teachers leaving their positions?
3. According to perceptions of the school administrators who participated in the study, to what extent were grit and resiliency factors in novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions?

### **Research Design**

A study was conducted in 2018 to ascertain the perceptions of participating school administrators on the impact select external and internal factors had on rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave their teaching positions. The study incorporated a

quantitative research methodology involving an online survey of school administrators in rural, central Minnesota schools.

A quantitative approach consists of surveys, close-ended questions, and numerical data (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research is “a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study; asks specific, narrow, questions; collects quantifiable data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics; and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner” (Bauer & Brazer, 2012, p. 211).

The structure of Chapter 5 includes a review the conclusions and discussion of the study. The results of the study revealed findings that were consistent with studies found in a review of the literature including the impact of salary, lack of readiness to enter teaching, and a formal mentorship program for novice teachers. The study also found factors that were not consistent with characteristics found in a review of the literature, including working conditions, lack of parental support, and a lack of respect for the field of teaching. Chapter 5 also presents limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research and applications to the field of teaching.

### **Conclusions and Discussion**

Employing a study of school administrators in rural, central Minnesota public schools, the researcher intended to ascertain the causal factors, other than performance, of novice teachers’ attrition as perceived by responding school administrators and examine the impact of grit and resiliency on the novice teachers who resigned from their positions within the first five years of teaching as perceived by these responding school administrators.

### Research Question

What were select demographic characteristics of the rural, central Minnesota schools from which responding school administrators were selected?

A review of the literature revealed that similar studies that had been conducted in the United States including Texas, California, North Carolina, New Mexico, Michigan, and Indiana, though only one study, conducted in 2001, was found that included participants from Minnesota (Ruhland, 2001).

The researcher conducted the study of rural, central Minnesota public schools in order to compare study findings with the findings from national studies.

The participants in the study were distributed between elementary, secondary, and K-12 schools with 27.3% of participants having reported being employed in elementary schools, 40.0% of participants having been employed in secondary schools, and 32.7% having been employed in K-12 schools. Seven in 10 of the participants in the study (39 of 55; 70.9%) reported having 5 or more years of experience in school administration, while 16 of 55, or 29.1% of respondents had less than 5 years of administrative experience.

What did select rural, central Minnesota school administrators perceive as the factors—other than performance—that resulted in novice teachers in their school districts leaving their positions?

The study produced noteworthy results that appeared consistent with previous studies found in the literature and, also, results that were not consistent with findings from studies in the literature.

**Student behavior.** When asked to rate their perceptions of the impact of student behavior on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, 26 of 54 or 48.1% of responding school

administrators believed challenging student behavior had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave. These results were similar to those found in the literature. In a study conducted by Wynn et al. (2007), student discipline concerns were rated as the second largest factor contributing to first- or second-year teachers considering leaving the profession. The largest factor in the study by Wynn et al. (2007) was salary.

**Salary.** The literature revealed that salary was found to be an important factor that impacted novice teacher attrition in the literature. In a study of teachers in California in 2000, Tye and O'Brien (2002) ascertained that salary was the highest ranked reason teachers considered leaving the profession (p. 4). In a study conducted by Wynn et al. (2007), 82% of teachers who reported they planned to leave the profession within the first 5 years of teaching cited salary as the reason for leaving. Study data revealed the 29 of 52 or 55.7% of responding school administrators believed salary had either a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. Thus, the results of the study agreed with findings in other studies that salary has a significant impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their teaching positions.

**Working conditions.** When referring to factors that compel teachers to leave the profession, a Los Angeles teacher reported, "How teachers are paid was a part of it, but overwhelmingly the things that would destroy the morale of teachers who wanted to leave were the working conditions... working in poor facilities, having to pay for supplies, and so on" (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 1). The literature provided an array of results related to the influence of working conditions on novice teachers' decisions to leave the profession. In a study of Teach for America instructors, participants revealed that nearly 18% of teachers who chose to leave the profession reported factors often associated with working conditions. In a qualitative

study conducted in Texas, it was determined that seven of eight respondents reported the school's climate, specifically administrative climate, was the biggest influential factors for not returning to the profession (Gonzales et al., 2008).

In the study, only six of 53 or 11.3% of responding school administrators believed working conditions had either a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 47 of 53 or 88.7% of responding school administrators believed working conditions had a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. According to study findings, working conditions did not have as compelling an impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions as either salary or student behavior.

**Lack of parental support.** In the study, 19 of 54 or 35.2% of responding school administrators believed a lack of parental support had a moderate or large impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 35 of 54 or 64.8% of responding school administrators believed a lack of parental support had a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. Although the findings of the study on parental support were perceived to have an impact on teachers' decisions to leave, it was not as significant an impact as salary or student behavior issues. The study's results are similar to those found in the literature. Tye and O'Brien (2002) reported several factors that created stress for novice teachers with salary and accountability rated highest. A lack of parental support did appear on the list as a stressor that compelled teachers to consider leaving the profession at a slightly higher level than a lack of prestige for the profession.

**Lack of prestige or respect for the field of education.** In the study, 19 of 54 or 35.2% of responding school administrators believed a lack of prestige for the profession had either a large or moderate impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 35 of 54 or

64.8% of respondents believed a lack of prestige for the profession had a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. The study's results were similar to those found in the literature. In a study conducted by Wynn, Carboni, and Patall (2007) in the southeastern United States, it was determined that 31% of participants who considered leaving the profession cited a lack of professional prestige as a reason.

**Lack of collegial support.** Guin (2004) reported, "Schools with high rates of turnover do face serious organizational challenges, including the failure to establish a coherent instructional program and a lack of trust among teachers" (pp. 21-22). Findings from the study indicated that a lack of collegial support had a lesser impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. In the study, 11 of 54 or 20.4% of responding school administrators believed a lack of collegial support had either a large or moderate impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, while 43 of 54 or 79.6% of respondents believed a lack of collegial support had either a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. The results of the study indicate that a lack of collegial support for novice teachers had the second smallest impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

**Lack of readiness to teach.** Study data revealed that 25 of 54 or 46.3% of the responding school administrators believed a lack of readiness to teach had a large or moderate impact on novice teachers who left their positions. Twenty-nine of 54 or 53.7% of respondents believed a lack of readiness to teach had a small or no impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions. Thus, study data indicated that a lack of readiness had a significant impact on novice teachers' departure from their positions.

**Formal mentorship program.** Smith and Ingersoll (2004) studied nation-wide data from the Schools Staffing Survey (SASS), administered by the National Center for Education

Statistics (NCES). They found that having a mentor from the same discipline and common planning time had a significant impact on minimizing novice teacher turnover. Brill and McCartney (2008) concurred, “Out of every strategy aimed at increasing teacher retention, induction and mentoring programs are the most consistently successful” (p. 766). Despite the research suggesting mentorship has a very strong impact on novice teachers’ decisions to leave, the study did not produce similar results.

The data from the study survey were disaggregated by those administrators who reported their schools provided formal mentorship programs and those administrators who reported their schools did not provide formal mentorship programs. Disaggregation of the data allowed for a comparison between the two groups in order to determine whether or not the presence of a formal mentorship program mitigated or exacerbated the stress factors believed to contribute to the decisions of novice teachers to leave their positions.

The results of the study indicated that larger percentages of administrators from schools that provided formal mentorship programs believed that salary and a lack of prestige for the profession of education had either moderate or large impacts on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their positions than administrators from schools that did not provide formal mentorship programs. Higher percentages of school administrators in schools that did not provide formal mentorship programs believed student behavior, parental support, collegial support, lack of readiness to teach, and working conditions had greater impacts on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their positions than did school administrators in schools that provided formal mentorship programs.

The largest difference found between respondents in schools providing formal mentorship programs and those in schools that did not provide formal mentorship programs was

related to lack of parental support. School administrators in schools that provided formal mentorship programs who believed a lack of parental support had a large or moderate impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave totaled 28.2%, while 53.3% of school administrators in schools that did not provide formal mentorship programs believed a lack of parental support had a large or moderate impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Although it appears having a formal mentorship program had a smaller impact on novice teachers' decisions to leave their positions, the impact was not as strong as reported in the literature.

**Grit.** Duckworth et al. (2007) suggested the more grit a novice teacher displayed, the more likely it was that a teacher would remain in his or her respective teaching position. The results of the study indicated 30 of 53 or 56.6% of school administrators believed the novice teachers who left their schools were either slightly gritty or not gritty at all. Conversely, 23 of 53 or 43.4% of responding school administrators believed the novice teachers who left their positions were either somewhat gritty or very gritty. The results of the study revealed that a larger number of novice teachers who left their positions displayed little or no grit qualities. Though there was only a slight difference between those novice teachers who were either somewhat gritty or very gritty and those novice teachers who were slightly gritty or not gritty at all. The results of the study would appear inconclusive on whether or not there is a relationship between grit level of novice teachers and their tendencies to remain in their teaching positions.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are factors that affected the research but were out of the control of the researcher. The following were study limitations:



The research design was modified from a qualitative study in which teachers who left the teaching profession within the first 5 years of their employment were to be individually interviewed to a quantitative study in which school administrators were asked to rate their perceptions of the reasons novice teachers resigned their positions in their first 5 years of employment. The change from a qualitative to a quantitative methodology was due to an inability to locate those novice teachers who left the profession in select school districts.

In modifying the study from interviewing novice teachers who elected to leave their positions within their first 5 years of employment to surveying administrators of those novice teachers about the causal factors they perceived compelled the teachers to leave, the potential for examining a lack of administrative support as a factor in novice teachers leaving their teaching positions was eliminated. Asking the participants in the study a question related to the possibility of their own lack of administrative support could have produced inaccurate results.

Study findings may have been impacted by the honesty or accuracy of the perceptions of administrator respondents.

Study findings may have been impacted by the limited sample size. Invitations to participate in the study were distributed to an estimated 140 rural, central Minnesota public school administrators. The final number of participants totaled 54.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Listed below are recommendations for further research.

1. It is recommended that the study be replicated to include rural schools in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Iowa.

2. It is recommended that a replicated study be expanded to include Minnesota rural, suburban, and urban school districts to ascertain similarities and differences in study findings on the basis of school and school district sizes and geographic locations.
3. It is recommended that a longitudinal study of new teachers be undertaken to examine the stressors they encountered that compelled them to consider leaving the profession. A subsequent follow-up study would be designed to ascertain the number and circumstances that caused select teachers to leave the profession and others to remain in the profession.
4. It is recommended that a case study be undertaken of novice teachers who chose to leave the profession within their first 5 years of teaching. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) suggested, “Perhaps the best way to discover why employees depart from jobs is to ask them.”

### **Recommendations for Practice**

After reviewing the results of the study, the following are recommendations proposed to the field of education to mitigate novice teacher attrition.

1. It is recommended that a formal mentorship program be implemented in school districts to assist novice teachers in remaining in their positions and the profession. It is further recommended that mentorship programs begin with a comprehensive orientation in which resources available for teachers regarding classroom management, grading, discipline, and instructional practice are explained.

2. It is recommended that novice teachers and mentors share common preparation and lunch periods. The common time will facilitate increased dialogue and interaction between these novice teachers and the more experienced mentors.
3. It is recommended school administrators avoid overloading novice teachers with the most challenging assignments because of their lower seniorities. “Teaching is one of the few professions in which beginners have as much responsibility as their experienced colleagues. New teachers carry full teaching loads and handle just as many other duties... as their higher paid co-workers” (Tait, 2008, p. 58).
4. It is recommended that universities emphasize the coursework for graduate students in school administration the importance of their role in guiding and directing novice teachers in their inaugural years of teaching. In states that have administrative competencies (e.g., Minnesota, Idaho, and New Hampshire), it would be valuable to include competencies on mentorship and novice teacher induction into school administration preparation programs.
5. It is recommended that college and university teacher preparation programs place greater emphasis on preparation and induction programs for aspiring teachers, including more direct involvement and guidance regarding parent communication and student discipline.

### **Summary**

Teacher attrition among novice teachers is a concern in the United States. Each year, novice teachers leave their schools at a higher rate than in such comparable professions such as lawyers, engineers, professors and pharmacists (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Smith and Ingersoll

(2004) wrote, “A number of studies have found that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of entry into the occupation” (p. 682). When a school experiences the loss of even a single new teacher, it incurs losses that are both financial and non-financial. As a consequence, schools need to address these factors to mitigate costly novice teacher attrition.

The study was conducted to investigate the demographic characteristics of the schools from which rural, central Minnesota responding school administrators were selected; ascertain the causal factors, other than performance, of novice teachers’ attrition during the first five years of their teaching as perceived by the responding school administrators, and determine the grit and resiliency of those novice teachers as perceived by the responding school administrators.

The findings of the study concluded there were factors identified in the literature which have had significant impacts on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their positions that also were perceived by rural, central Minnesota school administrators to have impacted novice teachers’ decisions. Consistent with the literature findings, salary, student behavior, and a lack of readiness to teach were determined to have the most significant impacts on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their teaching positions.

The study also concluded there were factors identified in the literature which had significant impacts on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their positions that were perceived by study participants to have had less of an impact on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their positions in rural, central Minnesota public schools. Those factors were lack of parental support, lack of collegial support, lack of prestige for the profession, and a lack of grit. Although those factors did not have as significant an impact on novice teachers’ decisions to leave their teaching positions as the literature suggested, study results indicate they had an impact on a compelling and serious number of novice teachers. When the loss of even one novice teacher has a negative

and costly burden on a school, it warrants the attention of school administrators to address the uniquely stressful experiences and the specific needs of novice teachers.

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## Appendix A: Study Survey via Survey Monkey

9/2/2019

Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Professi...

### Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Profession

#### Implied Consent

- \* 1. You are invited to participate in a research study on novice teacher attrition in rural, central Minnesota. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an administrator in a rural, central Minnesota public school. The study utilizes administrators because understanding factors that contribute to novice teacher attrition is the responsibility of administrators.

This research project is being conducted by Patrick J. Sutlief, principal investigator, to satisfy the requirements of a Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration and Leadership at St. Cloud State University.

#### Background Information and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the role select external factors had on selected, rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave the teaching profession. Further, the study will investigate the level of grit within the novice teachers who left the profession.

#### Study Procedures

A study will be conducted in 2018 to develop an understanding of the impact select external and internal factors had on rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave the teaching profession. The study incorporated a quantitative research methodology involving an online survey of school administrators in rural, public, Minnesota schools.

#### Risks

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

#### Benefits

The results of this study will be published to better support and retain novice teachers in rural school settings.

#### Confidentiality

Your interview will be transcribed into a word processed format, with your name and the name

9/2/2019 Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Professi...  
 The results of this study will be published to better support and retain novice teachers in rural school settings.

#### Confidentiality

Your interview will be transcribed into a word processed format, with your name and the name of your school being changed so that identification of a specific individual will be protected.

#### ]Research Results

Upon completion, the researcher's dissertation will be electronically available for you to review the results.

#### Contact Information

If you have any additional questions, please contact the researcher, Patrick J. Sutlief at [supa1301@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:supa1301@stcloudstate.edu) or the advisor, Dr. Kay Worner, at [ktworner@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ktworner@stcloudstate.edu).

#### Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University or the researcher. If you decide to participate in this study, and you are uncomfortable with any questions, you do not need to answer it. Please remember that the interview and any of its records will be kept confidential and is designed to provide improved support of novice teachers. If you choose to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

#### Acceptance to Participate

To participate in the survey, the subjects of the study will click "Next" to continue with the survey. If they choose not to participate, they will exit the browser. The statement below will connect the individual subjects to the survey.

"By Clicking "NEXT", you acknowledge participation in this research study and agree to participate. If you do not wish to participate, simply close this browser window. Thank you."

☐ NEXT

Next

9/2/2019

Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Professi...

## Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Profession

### Demographics

\* 2. Please indicate the size of your school

☐ 0-200 students

☐ 401 or more students

☐ 201-400 students

\* 3. What best describes the grade levels taught in your school?

☐ Primary Grades

☐ Secondary Grades

☐ K-12

\* 4. How many years have you served as a school administrator?

☐ Less than 1 year

☐ 5-10 years

☐ 1-4 years

☐ More than 10 years

\* 5. Does your school have a formal teacher mentorship program?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Prev

Next

## Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Profession

- \* 6. Please rate the impact of the following factors that you perceive caused novice teachers to leave their positions during the first five years of employment in your school or district.

	No Impact	Small Impact	Moderate Impact	Large Impact
Salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of parental support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of professional prestige, or respect for the field of education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of collegial support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of readiness to teach	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working Conditions (Facilities, classroom resources, personal safety)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[Prev](#)
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9/2/2019

Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Professi...

## Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Profession

\* 7. In 2013, Angela Duckworth won the MacArthur Grant for her work with "Grit." Grit is defined as the perseverance and passion to achieve long term goals. Rate the level of grit of the teachers who elected to leave your school/district.

☐ Not At All Gritty☐ Very Gritty☐ Slightly Gritty☐ Extremely Gritty☒ Somewhat Gritty[Prev](#)[Next](#)

9/2/2019 Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Professi...

## Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the Role of Grit in the Teachers Who Elect to Leave the Profession

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Prev

Done

## **Appendix B: IRB Implied Consent**

### **Study of novice teacher attrition factors in rural central Minnesota, and the role of grit in the teachers who elect to leave the profession.**

#### **Implied Consent**

You are invited to participate in a research study on novice teacher attrition in rural, central Minnesota. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an administrator in a rural, central Minnesota public school. The study utilizes administrators because understanding factors that contribute to novice teacher attrition is the responsibility of administrators.

This research project is being conducted by Patrick J. Sutlief, principal investigator, to satisfy the requirements of a Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration and Leadership at St. Cloud State University.

#### **Background Information and Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the role select external factors had on selected, rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave the teaching profession. Further, the study will investigate the level of grit within the novice teachers who left the profession.

#### **Study Procedures**

A study will be conducted in 2018 to develop an understanding of the impact select external and internal factors had on rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave the teaching profession. The study incorporated a quantitative research methodology involving an online survey of school administrators in rural, public, Minnesota schools.

#### **Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

#### **Benefits**

The results of this study will be published to better support and retain novice teachers in rural school settings.

#### **Confidentiality**

Your interview will be transcribed into a word processed format, with your name and the name of your school being changed so that identification of a specific individual will be protected.

#### **Research Results**

Upon completion, the researcher's dissertation will be electronically available for you to review the results.

#### **Contact Information**

If you have any additional questions, please contact the researcher, Patrick J. Sutlief at [supa1301@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:supa1301@stcloudstate.edu) or the advisor, Dr. Kay Worner, at [ktworner@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ktworner@stcloudstate.edu).

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal**

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University or the researcher. If you decide to participate in this study, and you are uncomfortable with any questions, you do not need to answer it. Please remember that the interview and any of its records will be kept confidential and is designed to provide improved support of novice teachers. If you choose to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

**Acceptance to Participate**

To participate in the survey, the subjects of the study will click “Next” to continue with the survey. If they choose not to participate, they will exit the browser. The statement below will connect the individual subjects to the survey.

“By Clicking “NEXT”, you acknowledge participation in this research study and agree to participate. If you do not wish to participate, simply close this browser window. Thank you.”



## **Appendix C: IRB Cover Letter**

### **Dear School Administrator;**

You are invited to participate in a research study on novice teacher attrition in rural, central Minnesota. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an administrator in a rural, central Minnesota public school. The study utilizes administrators because understanding factors that contribute to novice teacher attrition is the responsibility of administrators.

This research project is being conducted by Patrick J. Sutlief, principal investigator, to satisfy the requirements of a Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration and Leadership at St. Cloud State University.

### **Background Information and Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the role select external factors had on selected, rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave the teaching profession. Further, the study will investigate the level of grit within the novice teachers who left the profession.

### **Study Procedures**

A study will be conducted in 2018 to develop an understanding of the impact select external and internal factors had on rural, central Minnesota novice teachers, causing them to leave the teaching profession. The study incorporated a quantitative research methodology involving an online survey of school administrators in rural, public, Minnesota schools.

### **Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

### **Benefits**

The results of this study will be published to better support and retain novice teachers in rural school settings.

### **Confidentiality**

Your interview will be transcribed into a word processed format, with your name and the name of your school being changed so that identification of a specific individual will be protected.

### **Research Results**

Upon completion, the researcher's dissertation will be electronically available for you to review the results.

### **Contact Information**

If you have any additional questions, please contact the researcher, Patrick J. Sutlief at [supa1301@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:supa1301@stcloudstate.edu) or the advisor, Dr. John Eller, at [jfeller@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:jfeller@stcloudstate.edu).

**Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.**

## Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter



### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

**Name:** Patrick Suttief

**Email:** supa1301@stcloudstate.edu

### IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: **Exempt Review**

**Project Title:** Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the role of grit in the teachers who elect to leave the profession

**Advisor** Kay Worner

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.
- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.
- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email [ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu) and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

**IRB Chair:**

Dr. Benjamin Witts  
Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis  
Department of Community Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy

**IRB Institutional Official:**

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan  
Interim Associate Provost for Research  
Dean of Graduate Studies

#### OFFICE USE ONLY

<b>SCSU IRB#</b> 1614 - 2286	<b>Type:</b> Exempt Review	<b>Today's Date:</b> 5/4/2018
<b>1st Year Approval Date:</b> 5/4/2018	<b>2nd Year Approval Date:</b>	<b>3rd Year Approval Date:</b>
<b>1st Year Expiration Date:</b>	<b>2nd Year Expiration Date:</b>	<b>3rd Year Expiration Date:</b>



## Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South MC 204K, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

### Continuing Review / Final Report

Principal Investigator: **Patrick Sutlief**

Co-Investigator:

Project Title: **Study of Novice Teacher Attrition Factors in Rural Central Minnesota, and the role of grit in the teachers who elect to leave the profession**

If the project has been completed (no longer collecting data on human subjects) please indicate your projects status under Final Report and complete questions 1 through 5. If you have completed collecting data on human subjects but continue to analyze the data, as long as no new data is being obtained, your project would be considered completed.

If the project has not been completed (you are collecting data on human subjects) please indicate the status of your project under Continuing Review/Project Continuation and answer questions 1 through 5.

#### Final Report

- ☒ The Project has been completed.  
☐ Project has not and will not be conducted. Explain:

#### Continuing Review/Project Continuation

- ☐ Data collection continues with enrolled participants.  
☐ Participant recruitment continues following approved IRB protocol.

Have any changes been made to your research project (changes in subject recruitment, informed consent documents, design, methodology, procedures, etc.) since it was approved by the IRB?

- ☒ No  
☐ Yes, explain:

Final Report and Continuing Review/Project Continuation, please answer the following:

- How many participants have participated in your study 54
- Have any adverse events (complaints, unexpected reactions, discomfort, or problems) occurred during this research project  
☒ No  
☐ Yes, explain:
- Have any participants withdrawn from the research, either voluntarily or at the researcher's request?  
☒ No  
☐ Yes, explain:
- Has any new information been identified that may affect the willingness of subjects to participate in this research project?  
☒ No  
☐ Yes, explain:
- Have any changes been made to your research project (changes in subject recruitment, informed consent documents, design, methodology, and procedures, etc.) since it was approved by the IRB?  
☒ No  
☐ Yes, explain:

Patrick Sutlief  
Principal Investigator's Signature

09/01/2019  
Date

SCSU IRB#: 1614 - 2286

**Appendix E: Initial Study Survey Solicitation**

August 16, 2018

Dear Fellow School Leader,

My name is Patrick J. Sutlief. Currently, I am the principal at in Browerville Public Schools. I am contacting school leaders in Freshwater and/or Region 5 districts looking for some assistance. I am conducting a research study (with Saint Cloud State University) on novice teacher attrition in rural, central Minnesota. The purpose of this study is to determine causes of early career teachers to leave the teaching profession. Schools invest professional development and many resources in young teachers. Perhaps this study could inform schools in rural Minnesota on how to keep young teachers in the profession.

The study is designed to ask school administrators in rural, public, Minnesota schools about their perceptions of factors that lead new teachers to leave the profession. The survey will only take 3 or 4 minutes and your input is GREATLY appreciated!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PVHFW2B>

Thank you very much and have a great year!

Patrick J. (P.J.) Sutlief, Principal

**Appendix F: Follow-up Study Survey Solicitation**

September 9, 2018

Dear Fellow School Leader,

My name is Patrick J. Sutlief. Currently, I am the principal at in Browerville Public Schools. A couple weeks ago, I sent a request to you regarding a research study (with Saint Cloud State University) on novice teacher attrition in rural, central Minnesota. The purpose of this study is to determine causes of early career teachers to leave the teaching profession. Schools invest professional development and many resources in young teachers. Perhaps this study could inform schools in rural Minnesota on how to keep young teachers in the profession.

I know the first week has come and gone, and you are tremendously busy, but I would really appreciate the 3 or 4 minutes it would take to participate in this survey. The study is designed to ask school administrators in rural, public, Minnesota schools about their perceptions of factors that lead new teachers to leave the profession.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PVHFW2B>

Thank you very much for your time and consideration!

Patrick J. (P.J.) Sutlief, Principal

**Appendix G: Follow-up Study Survey Solicitation**

October 10, 2018

Dear Fellow School Leader,

My name is Patrick J. Sutlief. Currently, I am the principal at in Browerville Public Schools. I am contacting school leaders in rural Minnesota school districts looking for some assistance. I am conducting a research study (with Saint Cloud State University) on novice teacher attrition in rural, central Minnesota. The purpose of this study is to determine causes of early career teachers to leave the teaching profession. Schools invest professional development and many resources in young teachers. Perhaps this study could inform schools in rural Minnesota on how to keep young teachers in the profession.

The study is designed to ask school administrators in rural, public, Minnesota schools about their perceptions of factors that lead new teachers to leave the profession. The survey will only take 3 or 4 minutes and your input is GREATLY appreciated!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PVHFW2B>

Thank you very much and have a great year!

Patrick J. (P.J.) Sutlief, Principal