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# The Revolving Door: How Leaders Push Teacher Turnover

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## ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, *THE REVOLVING DOOR: HOW LEADERS PUSH TEACHER TURNOVER*, by SUZANNE KAY BRYANT MILLER, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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Suzanne Kay Bryant Miller

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## ABSTRACT

### THE REVOLVING DOOR: HOW LEADERS PUSH TEACHER TURNOVER

by  
Suzanne Kay Bryant Miller

In today's age of accountability leaders of schools cannot afford to lose quality teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requiring schools to staff all classrooms with *highly qualified teachers* creates a major challenge. Today, more than ever, school systems need to retain their experienced and effective teachers.

While many reasons have been attributed to the revolving-door phenomenon known as teacher turnover, this research suggests that school leaders' behaviors play a major role in the issue. This qualitative inquiry focused on the perceptions of veteran teachers who have migrated from one school to another, having indicated that their primary reason for migrating was because of their leader's behavior. The following research questions guided the study:

- What were the perceptions of migrating teachers, regarding their previous leader's behaviors, qualities and attributes, at his/her former school?
- How did these perceptions influence the teacher's desire to migrate to another school?
- Was there anything that the leader could have done differently that would have made the migrating teacher stay?

Data was gathered through individual interviews, emails, and focus group discussions. The data was then analyzed qualitatively using an interpretivist theory (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) to address the research questions, and a constant

comparative method to determine patterns and themes (Merriam, 2009). Trustworthiness was established through attention to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The results of my study identified three main areas of leadership behaviors which teachers indicated directly influenced their decisions to migrate. These three areas were the leaders: (1) Lack of Knowledge of the Business of School-the leader's lack of skills needed (a) to be supportive, (b) to make connections and build relationship, and (c) to transform school into an effective community; (2) Lack of Professionalism- the leader's lack of (a) respect, (b) trust, and (c) consistent behavior; and (3) Lack of Personal Morals. While other studies on teacher turnover showed a link between leadership and teacher turnover (Barnett & Berry, 2002; Eggen, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Hirsch & Emerick, 2007; Thornton et al., 2007), my study revealed *specific* leadership behaviors that pushed teachers to migrate.

THE REVOLVING DOOR: HOW LEADERS  
PUSH TEACHER TURNOVER

by  
Suzanne Kay Bryant Miller

A Dissertation

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Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Educational Policy Studies  
in  
the Department of Educational Policy Studies  
in  
the College of Education  
Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA  
2011



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My entire life is a God-story. So, to Him, I give all the honor and glory-and gratitude for the life I have. My life would have been much different had He not given me the parents I have, or a birth-mother who made difficult decisions with my life in mind.

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My parents and sister have always encouraged and supported me, even when they might have thought I was *perhaps* making a poor choice-like the time I purchased a convertible, trading in my mini-van, when my oldest son turned 16 and my youngest children were 13-questioning where everyone would sit.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> í Purposeí ... Research Questionsí Overview of Studyí . Significanceí Limitations and Assumptionsí í í í í í í í í í í í í í í í í . Operational Definitionsí ..	1 7 8 8 9 11 13
2	<b>REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b> í í í í í í í í í í í í Teacher Turnover: A Historical Perspectiveí í í í í í í .. Cost of Teacher Turnoverí í í í í í í í í í í í í í í .. Factors Affecting Teacher Turnoverí í í í í í í í í í í .. Research on Teacher Turnover: Implications for Methodologyí Summaryí í	16 18 20 27 44 46
3	<b>METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES</b> í í í í í í í í í Pilot Studyí .. Research Questionsí Overview of Research Designí í í í í í í í í í í í í í í í Data Collection and Analysisí í í í í í í í í í í í í í í . Trustworthinessí .. Summaryí í	48 48 50 50 52 68 71
4	<b>FINDINGS</b> í . Stories of Migrationí ... Leadership Behaviors that Push Teacher Turnoverí í í í í ... Summaryí í	73 74 99 113
5	<b>DISCUSSION</b> í Leadership Behaviors that Push Teacher Turnoverí í í í í ... Implications and Recommendationsí í í í í í í í í í í .. Suggestions for Further Researchí í í í í í í í í í í í .. Conclusioní ..	114 116 119 128 129
	<b>REFERENCES</b> í	132
	<b>APPENDIXES</b> í	153

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

During a period of four years while I was a chemistry and physics teacher at a metropolitan Atlanta high school, and working on my educational leadership add-on certification at Georgia State University, I piloted and coordinated a teacher mentoring program at my school. While leading this program I collected data on the effectiveness of the program by giving a survey to both my novice teachers and my veteran mentor teachers at the end of the school year. The survey consisted of short answer and open-ended questions. The results of this survey helped me to determine what the teachers needed from the teacher mentoring program and why teachers chose to leave my school. Their reasons for leaving gave me an indication of what I could do to improve the teacher mentoring program and better support the teachers in hopes of retaining the teachers at the school.

One of the main reasons my teachers gave for leaving was due to the administrators' behavior(s), or leadership style. From the results of these surveys I began to wonder what it was about the administrator behaviors that would cause a teacher to leave a school, sometimes to go to another school or county, or in some cases to leave the teaching profession permanently. This phenomenon is known as teacher turnover and is divided between three components: (a) those who stay in the same district or school (teachers are referred to as stayers; the process is referred to as teacher retention), (b) those who move to other schools, districts, states or to private schools (teachers are referred to as movers; the process is referred to as teacher migration), and (c) those who

exit the teaching profession altogether (teachers are referred to as leavers; the process is referred to as teacher attrition) (Ingersoll, 2001a).

In today's age of accountability, leaders of schools cannot afford to lose quality teachers, whatever the reason. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requiring schools to staff all classrooms with *highly qualified teachers* created a major challenge, especially for schools in inner city and poor rural areas (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and urban schools (Krieg, 2006; Lankford et al., 2002). Today, more than ever, school systems need to retain their experienced and effective teachers.

While teacher turnover rates are similar to those found in comparable occupations (Harris & Adams, 2007), with the highest rates of turnover in the fields of special education, mathematics, and science, each of which loses 20 percent each year (Piotrowski & Plash, 2006; Salvador & Wilson, 2003), they are still costly. These costs are associated with interviewing, hiring, and training new staff. However, in schools, turnover can also compromise student learning. In general, teachers need to acquire five years of experience to become fully effective at improving student performance (Rivkin et al., 2005).

According to Richard Ingersoll (2003) in a report for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), the United States suffers from a teacher turnover crisis, not a teacher shortage. Ingersoll (2003) calls teaching a revolving-door profession. While various incentives, such as mentoring, have been put into place to attract and retain quality teachers, 30 to 50 percent of teachers are leaving the profession within the first five years of beginning their teaching careers (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Merrow, 2001). Of those percentages, teacher turnover is 50 percent higher in high-

poverty schools as compared to low-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2001c; NCES, 2008), and new teachers in urban districts exit or transfer at higher rates than their suburban counterparts (Hanushek et al., 1999).

Teacher turnover is also impacted by teacher retirement. While retirement is a normal part of any occupation, nationally, 50 percent of the 1990s teaching force were/are expected to retire between 2000 and 2010 (Hussar, 2000). Thus, the two fastest growing segments of the teaching force are retirement-eligible teachers and inexperienced teachers-the highest attrition groups (Grissmer & Kirby, 2002).

While school systems are having difficulty retaining quality teachers they are also having difficulty obtaining quality teachers. With the pressures of increased accountability on school districts, often in the form of high-stakes testing and mandated curricular standards, the challenge of attracting and retaining quality teachers is heightened. Too often the response to these mandates is the introduction of reforms and initiatives at a frantic pace, a process that results in new teachers struggling to learn their craft in dynamic and frequently chaotic environments (Johnson et al., 2001).

In an effort to improve the quality of the teaching force, some states have begun to introduce state legislation requiring aspiring teachers to pass a basic skills test before entering colleges' teacher education programs (Cavanaugh, 2002). This type of entry exam, while perhaps academically raising the bar for teacher candidates, may also make it more difficult for some students who have the potential to be highly qualified teachers, to enter teacher education programs. Raising the bar makes sense because our children should have the most competent and knowledgeable teachers possible; however, the timing of the legislation could be problematic. In an effort to improve the quality of the

teaching force, states and districts have found themselves issuing numerous emergency licenses to fill the vacancies, thus effectively weakening, not strengthening, America's selection of teachers (Heller, 2004).

One of the ways states and cities attempt to fill classrooms with highly qualified teachers is via Alternative Teacher Education Programs (ATEP). Feistritzer (2005) reported that 200,000 individuals, in 45 states, have been certified through alternative routes since 1985. Most of the programs are administered by school districts in conjunction with universities. ATEP have existed for more than 20 years in response to the projected teacher shortage and in defense of the epidemic issuance of emergency certificates (Easley, 2006). Typically an ATEP student is a career-changer (someone who already has a career but wants to become a teacher) who already holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree. While these teachers may be very knowledgeable in their academic field, they have little, if any, education background or teaching experience. They typically identify a desire to make a difference in either/or/both society and the lives of children as the reason for becoming a teacher. Studies have shown that ATEP teachers need daily contact with a mentor to provide the emotional and technical support to develop competence and professional skills (Brennan & Bliss, 1998; Jorisson, 2002; Suell et al., 2007).

In light of these concerns, why is the migration of veteran teachers a problem? First, given the strong evidence that teacher effectiveness increases sharply after the first few years of teaching, a school's veteran teachers are the most effective teachers in the building (Kain & Singleton, 1996; Rivkin et al., 2005 ). When veteran teachers migrate it can be argued that the school system pays a high price both monetarily (costs are

associated with interviewing, hiring, and training new staff) and in the area of student achievement. Second, during the past twenty years numerous studies concluded that when new teachers are paired with a mentor teacher, in a structured program, they are more likely to continue in the teaching profession than their counterparts who haven't been paired with a mentor (Boe, 1987; Boreen et al., 2000; Cohen, 2005; Danielson, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; Grissmer & Kirby, 2002; Lopez et al., 2004; Scherer, 1999; Smith et al., 2004). Thus teacher turnover is reduced, novice teachers remain in the teaching profession longer gaining the skills they need to be successful, and student achievement is positively impacted. If a school loses its veteran teachers this will more than likely result in more of the novice teachers leaving the teaching profession, and all of the problems associated with teacher turnover will continue to spiral out of control.

So, why do teachers migrate, and what role, if any, do administrators' behavior(s) play in the teacher's decision? Prior research indicates there are many factors that influence a teacher's decision to migrate. For the reader's benefit, I am listing the main reasons cited in the literature below. I will expand on these reasons in my literature review for my study in Chapter 2.

Research indicates teachers are more likely to leave a school that has lower student achievement and higher diversity (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In addition, characteristics related to teachers' certification level, type of preparation, and content area can also affect teachers' decisions to leave (Dworkin, 1980; Murnane & Olsen, 1989; Murnane et al., 1991; Shin, 1995). Generally speaking, teachers in any phase of their careers who have high academic credentials are most likely to leave the teaching



profession. Those teachers with strong education credentials are more likely to move between schools, but most likely to stay in the profession. Teachers who majored in mathematics and science, and especially secondary teachers, are more likely to leave. ATEP teachers leave public school teaching in higher proportions than those teachers who have completed their preparation in traditional programs (Brennan & Bliss, 1998; Jorisson, 2002). Other factors that influence teacher migration include, grade level and subject area taught, teacher's age, number of dependent children, level of certification, number of years since the last degree was earned, teaching experience, and salary level (Brewer, 1996; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Mont & Rees, 1996; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Theobald & Girtz, 1996).

According to a series of national studies (Elfers et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2001b; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990) lack of collegial and administrative support, lack of teacher preparation, lack of instructional materials, lack of teacher autonomy, and lack of teacher influence over decision-making have all been attributed to teacher turnover. Other studies (Bernhausen & Cunningham, 2001; Parsad et al., 2001) have cited unreasonable teaching assignments, lack of professional development opportunities, inability to handle stress, lack of management skills, and inadequate allocation of time as reasons teachers gave for migrating. According to Elfers et al. (2006), Gonzalez et al. (2008), and Ingersoll (2001b), high levels of student misbehavior and disinterest in school also lead to teacher turnover. And, the No Child Left Behind accountability factors, having to teach larger-class sizes, and lack of participation in a teacher-mentor program, all contribute to teacher migration and have also been shown to contribute to teacher turnover (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Kirby et al., 1999; Merrow, 2001).

By far the least amount of information available on factors that influence teacher migration is the link between teacher migration and administrators' behavior(s). The information that is available indicates that positive and supportive leadership by principals matters to teachers (Chapman & Green, 1986; Futerick, 2007; Hirsch, 2005). And, teachers with positive perceptions about their working conditions, and administrators, are much more likely to stay at their current school than educators who are more negative about their working conditions (Elfers et al., 2006; Kirby et al., 1999). The presence, or absence, of respect and trust between administrators and teachers also impacts teacher turnover (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to research and identify behaviors, qualities and attributes of administrators, as perceived by migrating teachers, which contribute to teacher migration. While administrators' behavior has been mentioned in prior research as a factor influencing teacher migration, currently there is little known about specific behaviors of an administrator that push a teacher to migrate. The information that is available speaks of teachers wanting positive and supportive leadership, and trust and respect from their administrator. However, none of the studies available at this time elaborate on any of the administrators' behaviors, and how they negatively impact a teacher's decision to migrate. My study contends that the problem of teacher migration cannot be sufficiently addressed until more is known about the specific leader behaviors that impact teacher decisions to stay at or leave a school. It is my hope that my study will support, and add to, the current literature regarding the link between teacher migration and leadership.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study of veteran teachers' perceptions of leaders' behaviors and how those behaviors influenced their decision to migrate to another school.

- What are the perceptions of migrating teachers regarding the leaders' behaviors, qualities and attributes at his/her former school?
- How did these perceptions influence the teachers' desire to migrate to another school?
- Was there anything that the leader could have done differently that would have made the migrating teacher stay?

## Overview of the Study

Sixteen teachers were identified as migrating from one school to another school due to the school's administration by their own admission. Of this group, six teachers were selected to be the primary participants, and interviewed individually. The selection of these six teachers was based on the level of school in which they taught (elementary, middle and high) and their gender (in an attempt to balance both male and female participants). The remaining ten teachers served as a focus group.

Data were gathered through individual interviews, emails, and focus group discussions. They were then analyzed qualitatively using an interpretivist theory to address the research questions and a constant comparative method to determine patterns and themes. Interpretivists contend that what people know and believe to be true about the world is constructed, or made up, as people interact with one another over a period of time in specific social contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interpretivists assume that all

constructs are equally valid and important, and that meaning can be created only through interaction (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). By using a constant comparative method (Merriam, 2009) I was able to compare one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. The similarities show patterns and themes in the data and are arranged in relationship to each other. I began by establishing themes within and across the six primary participants. Next, the focus group members (a) underscored the credibility of these themes by reviewing and responding to the analysis of the data of the key informants and then (b) triangulated the findings by juxtaposing their discussion of these themes with examples from their own experiences.

#### Significance of the Study

Prior research shows that there is a positive correlation between teacher quality and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Rivkin et al., 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The U.S. Department of Education estimates that approximately 2.2 million teachers will be needed over the next decade, an average of more than 200,000 new teachers annually (Howard, 2003). However, substantial numbers of schools with teaching openings have experienced difficulties finding qualified candidates, especially in the areas of math, science, and special education to fill their positions (Ingersoll, 1999; Piotrowski & Plash, 2006; Salvador & Wilson, 2003).

Retaining quality teachers in our classrooms is a very important issue. With the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and schools meeting Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP), keeping quality teachers in the classrooms is more important than, perhaps, it has ever been. With the growing diversity in our schools

teachers today are given more and more responsibility to determine ways to differentiate education for students, so that the achievement gap is narrowed.

According to Maslow (1954) students' lower level needs, physiological (food, water, sleep), safety, and love/belonging must be met prior to their being able to learn. Perhaps teachers' lower level needs must be met as well for them to be effective in the classroom. The teachers may be older, wiser, and hopefully more mature than their students, but they still need care and nurturing. Whatever leaders can do to help ensure that these lower level needs of teachers are met, thus easing the teachers' mental and emotional loads, should be done. My theory is that this would help in retaining veteran teachers.

I used qualitative methods to collect and analyze data for this study. Because I was interested in the reasons associated with veteran teachers' decision to migrate, these methods were appropriate for my research questions. Qualitative research methods permitted me to hear the concern of educators when they responded to the open-ended research questions I asked them. Qualitative methods allowed me to view an educator's unspoken body language, facial expressions, and gestures during interviews. These other types of communication also added to each teacher's story of migration.

This study is significant because it adds to the knowledge regarding the topic of teacher migration. Hopefully this study will also help to improve the likelihood of retaining quality teachers. By focusing on the issue of leadership in determining if there are specific leader behaviors, attributes and qualities that tend to contribute to teacher migration, this study may help to ensure that principals possess the requisite qualities, or at least are aware that they possess these qualities that decrease the likelihood of teacher

migration. This information may also be used to help to prepare future administrators so that they are aware of their own leadership qualities and how they might impact teachers' migration.

The remaining chapters address the literature on teacher turnover, the research methodology, the findings of the research, and the discussion of those findings. Chapter Two, the review of the literature, includes in-depth analysis of the literature on teacher turnover. In this chapter I examine research on factors attributing to teacher turnover and how the leadership of a school may impact a teacher's decision to migrate. Chapter Three addresses the methodology of the study, including the selection of study participants, and the qualitative methods and data analysis that I used. In Chapter Four, I report the research findings, detailing the six participants' stories of migration and the focus group participants' reflections and analysis of their perceptions of leadership behaviors which lead to migration. In the final chapter, Chapter Five, I provide a discussion based on the findings of the study is given. Additionally I make recommendations for further investigations.

#### Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

This study focused on the perceptions of 16 veteran teachers who had indicated that their decision to migrate to another school was based solely on qualities and attributes of their former administrator/principal. Similar numbers of teachers from elementary, middle and high schools were interviewed. Similar numbers of teachers from elementary, middle and high schools were used in the focus group.

### *Limitations*

There were potential limitations to the study that were outside of the control of the researcher. These limitations include the willingness of teachers to participate in the study; the availability of teachers to meet with the researcher; the honesty and integrity of participating teachers; and teacher biases created by their prior experiences. Additionally, at the time of the study, I was a building administrator in the county in which the teachers were currently teaching. There is the possibility that my position in the county where the study took place inadvertently had a negative impact on the amount and detail of the information provided by the teachers in the study.

### *Assumptions*

The study included a number of assumptions about teacher migration and operational definitions of terms used in the literature on teacher turnover. A primary assumption in the study was that teacher migration is highly correlated with commitment and job satisfaction. The teachers who participated in the study were all veteran teachers who chose to remain in the profession (highly committed to the profession) but who recently migrated to another school due to their perceptions of qualities and attributes of the administration at their previous school (not satisfied with their work environment).

A second primary assumption of the study was that the contributing factor of administrator behavior(s) which led to teacher migration could be discovered through a study of veteran teachers. The teachers who participated in the study were all teachers in a metropolitan area in the Southeast section of the United States. Some of them migrated from a school within the county, while others migrated into the school system from other

adjacent counties, or other states. The data collected in the study was from the teachers' most recent migration and based solely on their perceptions.

### Operational Definitions

*Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP)* is a measurement defined by the United States federal

No Child Left Behind Act that allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine how every public school and school district in the country is performing academically according to results on standardized tests (NCLB, 2001).

*Administrative support* is defined as the support given to teachers by the administrator (principal of a school). This support can be given through many differing actions, including, but not limited to, staff development opportunities, student discipline, collaborative planning time, new teacher induction programs, and dealing with difficult parents and situations.

*Administrator* is defined as the principal of a school.

*Administrator behaviors* are defined as a person's behaviors, qualities, attributes, and attitudes that are used by a person when in his/her role as an administrator (can also be known as leadership style).

*Attrition* is a term used to indicate when a teacher leaves the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2001b).

*Commitment* is defined as theoretical constructs reflecting a teacher's continued motivation to teach (Kimball & Nink, 2006).



*Leader* is defined as a person who occupies a position of responsibility in coordinating the activities of the members of a group to attain a common goal. In this study, the leaders referred to by the participants were the principals of their former schools.

*Leadership style* is a term used to denote a person's behaviors, qualities, attributes, and attitudes when in a leadership role (can also be known as administrative behaviors).

*Leaver* is a term used to describe a teacher who leaves the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2001a).

*Migration* is defined as a term used to denote a teacher leaving a school to go to another school (Ingersoll, 2001b).

*Mentor* is a term used to describe the role a veteran teacher assumes when helping/advising/coaching/encouraging a novice teacher often via a formal program or setting.

*Mover* is a term used to describe a teacher who migrates from one school to another school (Ingersoll, 2001a).

*No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* is the latest federal legislation that enacts the theories of standards-based education reform, which is based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding for schools. The Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state (NCLB, 2001)

*Novice teacher* is defined as a teacher working the first three years of employment.

*Retention* is a term used to denote a teacher remaining in a school, not just in the teaching profession.

*Stayer* is a term used to describe a teacher who remains in a school and in the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2001a).

*Turnover* is a term used to denote a teacher leaving a school, encompassing both the terms attrition and migration, including the leavers and the movers (Ingersoll, 2001b).

*Veteran mentor teacher* is defined as a teacher who has been teaching more than three years and has been assigned a novice teacher to mentor for a minimum of one school year.

*Veteran teacher* is defined as a teacher who has been teaching more than three years.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teaching is a relatively large occupation representing four percent of the entire civilian work force (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). To put this in perspective, there are twice as many K-12 teachers as registered nurses and five times as many teachers as either lawyers or professors (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). Teacher turnover has been reported as an international problem impacting North America, South America, Europe and Australia (Santiago, 2002). Predictions for massive teacher shortages in the United States in the 1980s were based on demographic trends and the aging of the teacher workforce (Ingersoll, 2001a). Those predictions now appear prophetic as policy makers seek answers to current and future teacher shortages (Ingersoll, 2001a; Santiago, 2002).

Having a highly qualified teacher is one of the few classroom characteristics that show a positive impact on student achievement (Aaronson et al., 2007; Ehrenberg & Brewer, 1994; Goldhaber et al., 1999; Rivkin et al., 2000; Rockoff, 2004). In fact, the major factor in student achievement is a caring, competent, qualified teacher (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Research has shown that students who have two poor teachers in a row may result in a child's never catching up to peers academically (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Unfortunately, research also indicates that teachers who demonstrate the highest levels of personal academic achievement-measured by ACT scores, college selectivity, and degrees in technical subjects- are the most likely to leave the profession, and the most qualified teachers-measured by such attributes as licensure status, the selectivity of the colleges from which they graduated, and their performance on standardized exams

(Ballou & Podgursky, 1997; Hanushek et al., 2004; Lankford et al, 2002; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Murnane et al, 1991).

However, Goldhaber et al. (2009) found that school systems' most effective teachers are more likely to stay in teaching, to stay in their current district, and even to stay in their current school than less effective teachers. They raise concerns about how often the lowest performing teachers are identified and actually then removed from classrooms, as opposed to those teachers just being shuffled throughout the education system, a phenomenon they refer to as the dance of the lemons. The issue of teacher turnover must be addressed before the ultimate price is paid; the loss of a quality education for our youth.

The purpose of my study is to identify leadership behaviors which may contribute to teacher turnover or migration. In this chapter, I will review the literature which provides a foundation for understanding this research. The first section of the review of the literature begins with a historical perspective of the problems of teacher turnover. I then focus on the financial cost of teacher turnover, including a review of some of the policy and program initiatives that have been introduced to try and reduce teacher turnover, and the cost of teacher turnover on student achievement.

The second section of the review of the literature looks at the current information regarding the various factors that impact teacher turnover. These factors include identification of characteristics of teachers, students, schools and leaders which have been associated with teachers' decisions to leave the profession or to change schools.

The third section of the review of the literature focuses on prior methodology used in the study of teacher turnover. The literature on teacher turnover includes both

bivariate and multivariate approaches to research (Shen, 1997). The literature also shows use of quantitative methods of research (Boyd et al., 2005; Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1995; Hanushek et al., 2004; Hanushek et al., 2005; Scafidi et al., 2007) and surveys or ethnographic studies (Buckley et al., 2005; Elfers et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2001c; Johnson et al., 2005; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). The summary of the review of the literature includes the rationale for this study.

#### Teacher Turnover: A Historical Perspective

The rise in teacher turnover, which began in the late 1980s, has been attributed to the aging Baby Boomer generation and a lack of qualified teacher candidates (Brooks-Young, 2007). However, a look at the data tells otherwise. According to Snyder et al. (1997), both student enrollment and teacher retirement have increased since 1984. Studies of the national workforce have concluded that although teacher retirement increased, the number of teachers has grown with the increases in the student population; thus, the overall stability of the workforce has remained about the same. From the first administration of the Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) in 1987-1988 until the 1999-2000 study, the annual teacher turnover rate varied by only 2.5% (Ingersoll, 2004; Luekens et al., 2004; NCES, 2005). While none of the studies point to widespread national teacher shortages, the research did highlight issues related to staffing within schools. According to Ingersoll (2001c) teacher staffing issues are not created from teacher retirement, but instead are a result of teachers moving from one school to another or exiting the profession to pursue other jobs, thereby creating a situation he called a revolving door.

Teacher turnover has been defined by the use of three major categories: (a) those who stay in the same district or school (stayers), (b) those who move to other districts or

to private schools (movers), and (c) those who exit the teaching profession altogether (leavers) (Ingersoll, 2001a). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2008), at the end of 2003-04 some 17 percent of the elementary and secondary teacher workforce (or 621,000 teachers) left the public and private schools where they had been teaching. Of the 17 percent of teachers who left, almost half of this turnover, eight percent, was due to teachers transferring to a different school. Only two percent of the 17 percent was due to teacher retirement. While teacher turnover rates are similar to those found in comparable occupations (Harris & Adams, 2007), the issue of teacher turnover continually draws the attention of policymakers, researchers and administrators. In fact, in a report published in 2003, The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) declared that teacher turnover has become a national crisis.

Almost a quarter of entering public-school teachers leaves the teaching profession within their first three years (NCES, 2007). Darling-Hammond (1999) found that 30 percent of teachers leave the profession within five years of entry, whereas Ingersoll and Smith (2003) suggests that number is actually between 40 percent and 50 percent. Turnover is highest among teachers who are young or new to teaching and among teachers nearing retirement age (Adams, 1996; Dworkin, 1980; Hanushek et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001a; Lortie, 1975; Murnane, 1984; Singer & Willett, 1988; Shen, 1997). Researchers often describe a U-shaped curve when attrition is plotted against age or experience (Guarino et al., 2006).

Recent research has increased our understanding of teacher turnover (e.g., Boyd et al., 2005, 2009; Hanusek et al., 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson, 2004; Kelly, 2004; Loeb et al., 2005; Luekens et al., 2004; NCES, 2003; Podgursky et a., 2004; Smith

& Ingersoll, 2004). These studies showed that teacher turnover differs by characteristics of teachers, students, and school environment, which I will address in detail below.

While teacher turnover may have become a national crisis, the phenomenon of teacher turnover can be viewed through different lenses, and is not necessarily problematic. Too little turnover in any organization may indicate stagnancy. Effective organizations usually benefit from a limited amount of turnover, which eliminates low-level performers and brings in new life-blood to spur on innovation. However, high levels of employee turnover impact an organization in several ways. For school systems, the cost of teacher turnover is especially high, not just due to demands on the budget, but more importantly because of the negative impact teacher turnover has on student achievement.

#### *Cost of Teacher Turnover*

The cost of teacher turnover impacts schools and schools systems in a number of ways. There is a direct financial cost, costs related to the resources used to try to reduce teacher turnover, and an academic cost in terms of the impact on student achievement.

*Financial cost.* Organizations and schools have come to the conclusion that hundreds of thousands of dollars can be saved annually by reducing employee turnover (Kimball & Nink, 2006). This is extremely important in an organization such as the school system, especially in these times of budget cuts and constraints.

Love and Kritsonis (2008) state that recent studies suggest America is spending over a billion dollars on teacher turnover. According to the NCTAF (2003) the total cost, across the nation, to hire, recruit, and train the replacement teachers is \$7.34 billion.

Kimball and Nink (2006) claim that a school system with roughly 10,000 teachers and an

estimated turnover rate of 20 percent would start to save nearly \$500,000 per year by reducing turnover by just one percentage point. These dollar amounts, as incredible as they are, do not include the price students pay when qualified teachers leave, and they do not address the negative impact teachers' leaving has on students' academic achievement.

*Policies and/or practices to reduce teacher turnover.* Initiatives to reduce the impact of teacher turnover can generally be classified into two groups. One group of initiatives attempts to increase the available supply of teachers through compensation plans, training programs, and recruitment plans. Murnane et al. reported relationships between higher salaries for beginning teachers and length in time spent in the profession. Stinebricker (1998) also found a relationship between beginning salaries and novice teachers' willingness to continue to teach. Murnane et al., (1991) noted, however, that their research indicated that some policy responses to teacher turnover, which include master's degrees for all teachers, merit pay plans, and career ladders, have shown no benefits to student achievement. And, Ballou and Podgursky (1995) reported that results of mathematical modeling found that even a 20 percent increase in beginning teacher salary would have at best marginal effects on teacher quality as measured by teacher individual academic performance.

School systems use a variety of teacher compensation plans. The majority of school systems in the United States use single salary schedules. In the single salary schedule teachers are paid on the basis of some combination of college degree level and professional longevity. Unfortunately teacher longevity is not associated with increases in student achievement for teachers who have taught more than ten years (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997). Researchers have shown that increased salary is negatively related to



attrition (Brewer, 1996; Imazeki, 2005; Kirby et al, 1999; Krieg, 2006; Podgursky et al, 2004), but positively related to switching schools (Hanushek et al, 2004; Lankford et al, 2002).

Merit pay is another type of compensation plan that has been experimented with in various states. Merit pay is a bonus pay for improved student performance, typically as indicated by student achievement on a standardized test. These bonus payments can be made to individual teachers or to organizations such as schools, or teams (Kelly, 1997). Although prior research has shown a positive correlation between merit pay plans and student achievement (Kelly, 1997), research also indicates that merit pay plans have led to lower staff morale and are often quickly abandoned due to cost factors (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997).

Another type of compensation plan experimented with in the United States is something called career ladder. Under this type of plan teachers receive additional pay based on achievement of more advanced classifications as *board certified* or *master teacher*. Teachers achieve these advanced classifications by demonstrating excellence in the classroom and assuming additional roles in the school such as mentoring, teaching staff development, or curriculum development. Career ladder programs, once again, have for the most part been abandoned due to the cost factor (Brandt, 1990) and thus have not lasted long enough to draw any correlations between the effectiveness of the program and student achievement.

Over the years researchers have expressed concern that new policies to reduce teacher turnover result in lower entry standards for the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001b; Santiago, 2002). These same researchers suggest,

instead, that policies addressing the problems of authentic professional development, salary and working conditions, among others, are more likely to address the true sources of the problem of teacher turnover.

Darling-Hammond (2001a) states that the dominant policy response to teacher turnover has been to increase the supply of teachers through increased recruitment efforts. Indeed when reviewing literature on teacher turnover this appears to be the case. Several different recruitment tools have been used throughout the United States to address teacher turnover. People have been encouraged to make career changes and pursue alternative routes to obtaining a teaching certificate. Financial incentives including signing bonuses, student loan forgiveness, housing assistance, and tuition reimbursement have also been utilized (Ingersoll, 2001a). Ingersoll states that whether a teacher leaves a school, a system, a state, or the teaching profession, the overall impact on the school and students the teacher leaves is the same. Ingersoll also suggests that until the social and organizational context of teaching is better understood, recruiting more teachers who will soon leave is not a solution to the problem of teacher turnover.

A second group of initiatives attempts to decrease the rate that teachers leave the profession in order to decrease the demand for more teachers (Ingersoll, 2001a). These programs include stress reduction and management programs, teacher induction and mentor programs, and ongoing professional learning opportunities.

According to Hancock (1998), stress is the result of a person's perception that demands are greater than his or her ability to satisfy them. Shen (1997) comments that newcomers to all organizations experience some type of stress and anxiety while Hancock (1998) points out that reactions to stress come in many forms, such as fear and

depression, or psychological responses such as high blood pressure, sweating, and withdrawal from the situation.

Bernshausen and Cunningham (2001) suggest that teachers who are experiencing stress must be taught resiliency, or the ability to adapt and bounce back when faced with upsetting or stressful conditions. They go on to say that teachers who do not learn resiliency cannot sustain their enthusiasm and commitment over time, and are more likely to leave the profession. Their research indicates that school communities can promote resiliency by encouraging teachers' feelings of competence, belonging, and usefulness. They also found that most experienced teachers who leave the profession do so because of such factors as lack of support from administrators or colleagues and insufficient involvement in decision making.

Shen (1997) suggested that to promote resiliency, schools should create teacher career ladders, with more differentiated salary schedules linked to the teacher involvement in the school in such roles as teacher leaders. Barth (1999) supports Shen's concept of increased teacher empowerment. When teachers are in leadership positions their feeling of isolation is reduced, their personal and professional satisfaction is increased, and their sense of investment and membership in the school community is enhanced. These feelings, according to Barth, invigorate teachers and help to improve their classroom teaching. However many of these programs have been stopped due to a lack of funding.

Appropriate socialization to a new organization can reduce the natural stress a newcomer may feel. This can be done by assigning a new teacher to a mentor teacher. As indicated earlier, a large amount of research on the topic of teacher turnover is

concentrated in the area of new teacher induction programs or mentoring programs (Boe, 1987; Boreen et al., 2000; Brighton, 1999; Cohen, 2005; Danielson, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; Grissmer & Kirby, 2002; Lopez et al., 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Since the early 1980s, when mentoring burst onto the educational scene as part of a broad movement aimed at improving education, policymakers and educational leaders have pinned high hopes on mentoring as a vehicle for reforming teaching and teacher education. Concerned about the rate of attrition during the first three years of teaching and aware of the problems faced by beginning teachers, policymakers saw the logic of providing on-site support and assistance to novices during their first three years of teaching (Little & Nelson, 1990).

During the past 20 years numerous studies have concluded that when new teachers are paired with a mentor, and go through a structured mentor program, they are more likely to continue in the teaching profession than their counterparts who haven't been paired with a mentor (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Unfortunately too many times induction programs are unplanned, and are at best another series of meetings new teachers must attend. However, when the programs have clear goals of improving a new teacher's performance and attitude toward teaching, teacher retention, and transmitting cultural norms, they can be very effective. Darling-Hammond (1999) reported the success of districts that reduced teacher attrition rates from as high as 30 percent down to as low as five percent after beginning a comprehensive mentoring program.

Two studies on mentoring and teachers' feelings of isolation (Boreen et al., 2000; Danielson, 2002) indicate a positive correlation between teachers' feelings of isolation and the teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession. In both of these studies

novice and veteran teachers alike often reported that they feel a sense of isolation as they attempt to address the complex issues faced by teachers. The results of these studies indicate that the feelings of isolation can be lessened by establishing meaningful learning communities. This can be accomplished by mentoring programs, resulting in more teachers remaining in the teaching profession.

*Teacher turnover and student achievement.* A high level of teacher turnover can negatively affect the cohesiveness and effectiveness of school communities by disrupting educational programs and professional relationships intended to improve student learning (Elfers, et al, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001a; Mobley, 1982; Price, 1977). In a school, teacher turnover means losing the teacher's familiarity with school practices; experience with the school's curriculum; and involvement with students, parents and colleagues. Losing a teacher means that administrators and teachers must spend valuable energy and time finding a replacement and bringing him or her up to speed. The more new teachers a school has on the staff indicates the less of a knowledge base and less cohesion (Darling-Hammond, 2002).

For some time, we have known that nothing matters more to student achievement than access to skillful teaching, a practice that often takes a number of years to develop (Lee et al., 1995). In schools with a large amount of teacher turnover, students may be more likely to have inexperienced teachers who we know are less effective on average (Kane et al., 2006; Rivkin et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004). Studies of teachers' effects at the classroom level have found that differences in teacher effectiveness are a strong determinant of differences in student learning (Sanders et al., 1996; Wright et al., 1997). And, Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2002) found that students of fully prepared and certified

teachers outperform students of under-certified (emergency, temporary, and provisional certified) teachers on standardized tests.

Whether a school operates effectively or not increases or decreases a student's chances of academic and financial success. Marzano (2003) has shown that students in effective schools as opposed to ineffective schools have a 44 percent difference in their expected passing rate on a test that has a typical passing rate of 50 percent. And, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2002), the earning potential of a student who graduates from high school is \$19,900, compared with \$11,864 for a student who does not. If the high school graduate completes college, that earning potential increases to \$37,203. A master's degree increases the income to \$49,324. A doctorate raises annual income to \$63,952, and with a professional licensure, it reaches \$71,606. School, then, can be the door to financial advancement in our society. For schools to be the springboard to the levels of success sought by students, however, schools must operate effectively (Marzano et al., 2005). One of the characteristics of effective schools is a low level of teacher turnover.

#### Factors Affecting Teacher Turnover

Studies of teacher turnover have correlated teacher turnover with a number of demographic factors, including specialty fields, race, gender, educational background, and years of experience. Teacher turnover has also been correlated with factors associated with the teaching profession, including low pay and benefits, classroom management demands, limited teacher input, and low administrative support.

### *Teacher Turnover as Related To Characteristics of Teachers*

Teaching specialty field is strongly associated with teacher turnover, with teachers of exceptional children, science, and math the most likely to leave (Ingersoll, 2001b; Murnane et al., 1991). Teachers who majored in mathematics and science, and especially secondary teachers, are more likely to leave (Dworkin, 1980; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Murnane et al., 1991; Shin, 1995). When Kirby (1993) asked former teachers whether a substantial increase in salary would have made a difference in their decision to leave teaching, the overwhelming majority said no. But, when current math and science teachers were asked about the most important factor that would help in teacher retention, over half of the teachers mentioned higher salaries. Because both math and science are high-demand fields, these teachers would probably make more money if they worked in a different profession (Brewer, 1996; Mont & Rees, 1996; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Theobald & Girtz, 1996).

Generally speaking, teachers in any phase of their careers who have high *academic* credentials (such as being a graduate from a highly selective college or having high undergraduate grade point averages) are most likely to leave the teaching profession (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997). Those teachers with strong *education* credentials (such as certification and an undergraduate degree in education) are more likely to move between schools, but most likely to stay in the profession.

Johnson and Birkland (2002) found that alternative route teachers left public school teaching in higher proportions than those who had completed their preparation in traditional programs. After the third year of teaching, both grade level and subject area make a difference in whether such teachers decide to continue in the classroom.

Alternate route elementary teachers and English teachers are more likely to stay than traditionally prepared elementary teachers and English teachers, while alternate route math teachers leave at higher rates than traditionally prepared math teachers (Zeichner & Schulte, 2001).

Teachers, especially white teachers, are more likely to stay in schools with higher proportions of white students. White teachers are more likely to leave the profession than African-American teachers, females are more likely to leave than males, and secondary teachers more likely to leave than elementary teachers (Ingersoll, 2001b; Murnane et al, 1991).

Years of experience are also highly correlated with teacher turnover rates. Teachers are far more likely to leave in the early years of their career, with 30 percent to 50 percent leaving within the first five years of beginning their teaching profession (Kiger, 2002). The attrition rate levels off after five years, and remains fairly stable at around six percent until teachers approach retirement age, when it once again rises (Ingersoll, 2001b; Murnane et al, 1991). Retirement age teachers account for only 12 percent of the total national teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001a.) The high rate of turnover among beginning teachers, however, is troubling as research indicates that teachers generally show the highest rates of improvement in teaching skills, with higher student achievement as a result, during the first few years of teaching (Ballou & Podgursky, 1997).

Boe (1997) found that teacher turnover decreased as the following variables increased: age, number of dependent children, level of certification, number of years since the last degree was earned, teaching experience, and salary level. Some researchers



and theorists have called for a complete overhaul of pay and compensation plans for teachers as a primary policy approach to reduce teacher turnover rates (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lankford & Wyckoff, 2002; Santiago, 2002). There is also some evidence suggesting that teachers who work in states with higher compensation rates stay in teaching longer (Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Shen, 1997). Compensation has also been found to be a more important factor in teachers' decisions to leave the profession during the first five years of employment than thereafter according to survey data (Stinebricker, 1998). Ingersoll (2001b) reported that in his study of national teacher turnover trends, however, that salary was not found to be a statistically significant predictor of teacher turnover.

Results from Easley's study (2006) showed that the moral ideals guiding teachers' decisions to enter the profession greatly influence the potential for their retention. Whether derived from prior experiences as a student, a love for working with students, a recognition of the limits of corporate contribution to society, or a deep-seated belief that a good education is the essential foundation of material, social and civic success, some teachers who enter the teaching profession view this as a way to have a positive impact on the world (Freire, 1998). Because these teachers see teaching as a moral obligation to society, if they do not feel a sense of fulfillment, or teacher efficacy, as indicated by an increase in student learning and improving the lives of students (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1993), these teachers migrate.

### *Teacher Turnover as Related To Characteristics of Students*

Some research indicates that teachers leave teaching or migrate to different schools for reasons associated with the students or families with which the teachers work. Elfers, Plecki and Knapp (2006) found that 35 percent of teachers surveyed cited the lack of support at home for students' learning (homework help, positive attitude toward schooling) as a primary reason for leaving a school. This figure went up to 62 percent in high poverty schools. The same study showed that 29 percent of teachers cited high levels of student disciplinary issues as a reason for leaving, with this figure rising to 53 percent in high poverty schools.

Student behavioral challenges have been found to be a major cause of stress among teachers (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Boyle et al, 1995; Hart et al, 1995; Starnaman & Miller, 1992; Van Dick & Wagner, 2001) and have also been cited as contributing to teachers' feelings of job dissatisfaction (Blase, 1986; Denscombe, 1985; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Stocklard & Lehman, 2004). Furthermore, Ingersoll's (2001b) study of national trends in teacher turnover found significant correlations in most instances between the level of discipline problems reported in schools by teachers and turnover rates.

In a qualitative study conducted by Gonzalez et al (2008), student discipline was mentioned as one of the top three reasons teachers left the teaching profession. A common complaint made by teachers in the study was that students have so many family problems and issues helping students deal with these issues is overwhelming to an educator, especially to an educator with no experience. Teachers in the study perceived students to be rude, lazy, use drugs, have no discipline or self-control, and bad attitudes.

Wrobel (1993) suggests that workshop and other trainings on conflict resolution be incorporated at the university level so that new teachers take a course prior to graduation to assist them in dealing with these issues.

### *Teacher Turnover as Related To Characteristics of Schools*

Others studies have found that characteristics related to schools contribute to teachers' decision to transfer or leave the profession. Teachers have been found to be more likely to leave urban schools (Krieg, 2006; Lankford et al., 2002) and schools that have populations of high-poverty (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) or minority students (Carroll et al., 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004; Kelly, 2004; Scafidi et al., 2007). Schools that serve high poverty communities are particularly vulnerable to teacher turnover. These schools bear more than their share of the teacher shortage burden with a turnover rate that is 50 percent higher than in low-poverty communities (Ingersoll, 2001). And, new teachers in urban districts exit or transfer at higher rates than their suburban counterparts (Hanushek et al., 1999).

Having to teach larger-size classes has also shown to have a negative impact on teacher retention (Kirby et al., 1999). Elfers, Plecki and Knapp (2006) determined that teachers tend to remain at their current school because of the type or stability of teaching assignment, the nature of their colleagues and collegial community, school location, personal or family considerations, school climate, and support from administrators in dealing with parents and students.

Holloway (2003) suggests that veteran teachers also need support so that they remain in the classroom and thrive. A survey on more than 5,000 teachers conducted by the Fast Response Survey System of the National Center for Education Statistics (Parsad

et al., 2001) found a link between the amount of professional development in which teachers had participated and the teachers' feelings of competence. Collaborative activities appeared to be especially effective in promoting the feeling of competence in teachers. Teachers who regularly participated in scheduled collaboration with other teachers, networked with teachers outside the school, and mentored another teacher were more likely than those who did not participate in these activities to indicate that they felt very well prepared for the demands of teaching and classroom assignments.

Two related issues, lack of teacher participation in decision-making and restrictions on teacher autonomy, are also mentioned in the literature as reasons for teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001b; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Ingersoll (2001b) calls this the degree of faculty control over the classroom and influence over school policies, as reported by all teachers. Ingersoll (2001b) found that schools where teachers reported high levels of teacher input had significantly lower turnover rates than schools where teachers reported low levels of teacher input. Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) found that input into decision-making and individual teacher autonomy more specifically affected the commitment levels of experienced teachers more than novice teachers.

Futernick (2007) found that teachers leave the profession because of inadequate systems such as too little planning time, too few textbooks, and lack of administrative support. Ingersoll (2003) found that teachers leave the profession because of job dissatisfaction associated with low salaries, lack of administrative support, lack of student motivation, student discipline problems, and the lack of teacher influence over decision-making. Woods and Weasmer (2002) found similar results regarding job dissatisfaction and teacher turnover. Chapman and Hutcheson (1982) suggest that people search for

environments that will allow them to use their personal skills and abilities while maintaining personal values. They postulated that if teachers do not work in such an environment, then they would seek other environments that are more desirable.

#### *Teacher Turnover as Related To Characteristics of School Leaders*

While stress reduction, induction, and mentoring programs may originate at the state or local level, all require the involvement, and support, of the local school administrator. Ingersoll (2001b) has defined administrative support as an index of the degree of assistance provided to teachers by administrators as reported by all teachers on a school staff. Positive and supportive leadership by principals matters to teachers. Chapman and Green (1986) found that principals' leadership styles and district policies can have a major influence on retention and, correspondingly, on transfer decisions.

Hirsch (2005) found that more than one-quarter of teachers cited leadership as the most crucial working condition in making their decision about whether to stay in a school. And, teachers with positive perceptions about their working conditions are much more likely to stay at their current school than educators who are more negative about their working conditions of work, particularly in the areas of leadership and empowerment (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007).

In a study conducted by Thornton et al. (2007) teachers identified three primary factors related to their decision to migrate. The most important component in their decision was leadership issues, followed by professional success issues, and building related issues. In a survey conducted by Gonzalez et al. (2008), administration was also listed as the top of three reasons teachers chose to exit the teaching profession. Barnett

(2002) found that effective school leadership is an important solution to teacher retention, as it shows up as the most important subject in working conditions.

According to Murphy and Angelski (1997), one key factor that influences teachers to remain at schools is their relationship with the building principal.

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) also conducted a survey in which they found that the most important variable in faculty commitment is the quality of the relationship between faculty and their administrator. And, in a survey of 359 former teachers conducted by Eggen (2002), the respondents indicated that the primary issue in teacher attrition was lack of administrative support for beginning teachers.

Hirsch and Emerick (2007) found the importance of trust between administrators and teachers associated with teacher turnover. Among the attributes associated with trust were the communication of clear expectations to parents and students, a shared vision among faculty, consistent administrative support for teachers, and processes for group decision making and problem solving.

In 1995, Billingsly et al. found that teacher satisfaction, commitment, and intent to leave were all highly associated with administrative support. They discovered in their study that intent to stay in teaching was higher among general and specific educators who reported higher levels of administrative support than those who reported less.

Administrative support was also shown to positively correlate to job satisfaction and commitment, and the lack of a supportive administrator was given as a reason for moving from one school to another within the district. In this study, teachers revealed a wide range of administrative behaviors which negatively impacted their decision to stay at a

school, including the administrators disrespect, lack of communication and accessibility, and lack of assistance with discipline.

Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) study of teacher commitment included data regarding administrative support for both novice and experienced teachers. Novice teachers cited administrative support in behavior management, reduce interruptions, acquire materials, and reduce excessive paperwork among the factors affecting their commitment to the profession. In this same study Rosenholtz and Simpson found that the degree of teacher commitment to an organization was tied to six organizational factors, four of which primarily were concerns of experienced teachers and two of which were primarily concerns of novice teachers. Experienced teachers tended to be concerned with what the researchers labeled core tasks, or those involving instruction. The four core factors included (a) the extent of performance efficacy experienced by the teacher, (b) the psychic rewards experienced by the teacher, (c) opportunities for task autonomy and discretion in the classroom, and (d) professional learning opportunities. Novice teachers were more concerned with boundary tasks, or learning how to manage the job of teaching. Administrative support was found to be the most beneficial when appropriately provided to teachers based on their experience levels. Rosenholtz and Simpson called for principals to *buffer* teachers. Buffering was defined as protecting teachers from those outside influences that most affected core and boundary tasks.

Beteille et al. (2009) examined the relationship between a school's effectiveness during a given principal's tenure and the retention, recruitment and development of its teachers. They found three key findings. Most effective principals were able to (1) retain higher-quality teachers, while removing less-effective teachers, (2) attract and hire

higher-quality teachers to fill vacancies, and (3) have teachers improve at a greater pace than those in schools with less effective principals. In the same study, Betteille et al. define a principal as being effective if he/she has high levels of organization management skills, which ultimately, consistently predict student achievement growth and other measures of school success.

Perhaps effective principals have a specific leadership style. Leadership styles are based on a person's dominant style of behaviors and attitudes when in a leadership role. Goleman (2000) identified six leadership styles, some of which may be related to behaviors which cause teachers to want to remain in a school or to leave that school or even the profession. These styles include: (a) coercive-the leader demands compliance; (b) authoritative- the leader mobilizes people toward a vision; (c) affiliative-the leader creates harmony and builds emotional bonds; (d) democratic-the leader forges consensus through performance; (e) pacesetter-the leader sets high standards for performance; and (f) coaching-the leader develops people for the future. Two of these leadership styles, coercive and pacesetter, negatively affect school climate and teacher performance. The other four styles positively affect school climate and performance. Underpinning the authoritative, affiliative, democratic, and coaching styles is high emotional intelligence (Fullan, 2001). Goleman (1995) identified five domains of emotional intelligence: knowing one's emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships. Because leading a school is complicated, elements of different leadership styles must be learned and used in different situations (Fullan, 2001).



In a study linking leadership style to teacher morale, Thomas (1997) showed that principals' leadership styles and leadership effectiveness are related to teachers' morale and performance. Principals who use a collaborative leadership style, who promote a positive school-climate, and who manage the instructional program, have teachers with a higher morale and performance. Principals who use an instructional leadership style, who monitor the school's instructional program and develop a positive learning culture have also shown to have a positive impact on teacher satisfaction and morale (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Heck, 1992).

In another study on leadership style, Bulach (1994) linked leadership style to school climate and student achievement. The promoter style of leadership, which involved meeting people's needs and involving parents and community in decision-making, was shown to lead to an enhanced school climate, teacher satisfaction, and student achievement. Yet another leadership style, transformational, which focuses on increasing an organization's capacity to innovate-to adapt to change successfully (Bass, 1998; Chirichello, 1999)-has also shown to have a positive impact on student achievement and teacher satisfaction (Marks & Printy, 2003).

After interviewing ninety leaders, sixty successful CEOs, all corporate presidents or chairmen of the boards, and thirty outstanding leaders from the public sector, Bennis and Nanus (1997) concluded that there were four strategies or skills that effective leaders possess. These strategies are (1) attention through vision, (2) meaning through communication, (3) trust through positioning, and (4) development of self through positive self-regard. Simply put, leaders have a vision that is compelling and pull people toward them. But, without communication from the leader nothing will be realized. The

success of the leader requires the capacity to relate a compelling image of the desired state of affairs (the vision).

Using the works of Elliott Jaques (on leaders' personality traits), of Talcott Parsons (on organizational culture), and of Warren Bennis (on leaders' behaviors) as the three primary elements of his theory, Sashkin (1988) showed how effective leadership depends on synergism among personal, situational and behavioral factors. Sashkin stated that effective leaders have the cognitive ability to create visions, understand the key situational characteristics that must be incorporated into their visions, and are behaviorally capable of carrying out the actions needed to turn visions into reality.

Sergiovanni (2001) stated that aspects of school leadership could be described metaphorically as forces that are available. Force is the strength or energy brought to bear on a situation to start or stop motion or change. He listed the five leadership forces as: (1) technical-derived from sound management techniques, (2) human-derived from harnessing available social and interpersonal resources, (3) educational-derived from expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling, (4) symbolic-derived from focusing the attention of others on matters of importance to the school, and (5) cultural-derived from building a unique school culture. The technical leader assumes the role of management engineer, emphasizing such concepts as planning and time management. According to Sergiovanni, the human leader assumes the role of human engineer, and focuses on human relationships. The educational leader brings expert professional knowledge to his/her staff. The symbolic leader assumes the role of chief and by emphasizing selective attention signals to others what is of importance and value. The cultural leader assumes the role of high priest, seeking to define, strengthen, and

articulate those enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its unique identity.

The link between leaders and followers was presented by Duke (1986). He stated the public perception of leadership is closely linked to a leader's ability to engage in actions that symbolize, for followers, responsible coping behavior. These actions are likely to change over time and from culture to culture, and with the followers' prior to experience with leaders. Therefore, leadership cannot be studied as solely a set of behaviors by individuals in executive roles, but must be studied in terms of the reciprocal influences exerted by leaders and followers and *visa-versa*. Kelly (1992) later added that organizations stand or fall partly on the basis of how well their leaders lead, but partly also on the basis of how well their followers follow.

As Duke (1986) and Kelly (1992) indicated, there is a relationship between leaders and followers. The behavior of a leader does not constitute leadership until it is perceived to do so by an observer. For leadership to occur an observer must find something about a leader meaningful. Ultimately the determination of meaning resides with the observer, who in turn is subject to the influence of his or her present beliefs and past experiences, as well as the cultural context in which he or she lives. With this in mind, we must also then focus on the followers and the relationship that exists between the leader and the followers. Because this leader-follower relationship exists between principal and teacher, when studying leadership styles one must look at these reciprocal relationships. Einstein (1995) recognized this dual nature and offered a model that depicts leadership along a continuum from *responsible for* to *responsible to* leader behaviors. The principle idea is that transformational leaders begin the leader/follower

relationship with a sense of responsibility for goal success and individual growth but their objective is to evolve the relationship, when appropriate, to an interdependent relationship when leader and follower are responsible to each other (Einstein & Humphreys, 2001).

Burns (1978) looked at the relationship between leaders and followers and described a type of leadership-moral leadership-as emerging from, and returning to, the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations, and values of the followers. Greenfield (1999) added to the conversation on moral leadership, stating that moral leadership in schools seeks to bring members of that community together around common purposes in a manner that entails being deliberately moral in one's conduct, toward and with others and oneself, and in the service of purposes and activities that seek to meet the best needs of all children and adults.

According to Barth (1999), organizations should be communities that are filled with leaders, where everyone knows their strengths and weaknesses, and shares the opportunities and responsibilities for making decisions that affect everyone. A principal of a school can, according to Barth, develop a community of leaders by (a) articulating the goal of the school, (b) being willing to relinquish authority to others, (c) involving teachers before decisions are made, and (d) by deciding who is best to handle different situations. The principal can also make sure that (a) teachers get credit for their role as teacher, (b) realize that all teachers can be leaders, (c) never be afraid to say, "I don't know," and (d) knows his/her own strengths and weaknesses.

About the same time that Barth was investigating the link between leaders and effective organizations, Kotter was attempting to distinguish the difference between good

management and effective leaders. Kotter (1990) made clear several differences between managers and leaders. The first is that leaders cope with change, while managers cope with complexity of practices. Next, leaders set directions, develop visions and strategies, align people, communicate visions, motivate and inspire people; while the manager plans and budgets, establishes steps to achieve the set goal, organizes the staff, and monitors the results using reports, then plans how to solve any problems that may arise. Leaders empower people; managers are vulnerable to reprimands from higher up. Kotter believes that the main purpose of a leader is to produce change; that leadership compliments management, it doesn't replace it; and the most frequent mistake of over managed and under led companies is that they embrace long term planning because of a lack of direction. Bennis and Nanus (1997) added to the discussion of how managers and leaders differ by stating that managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right things.

In writing about leadership, Bennis and Nanus (1997) argued that while leadership competencies have remained constant our understanding of what it is, how it works, and the ways in which people learn to apply it has shifted. DeSpain (2000) described leadership as an imperfect art practiced by those who lead in which the leader defines reality for his or her followers while creating and nurturing a vision of a new, better reality to come. Bolman and Deal (1995) stated that heart, hope, and faith, rooted in soul and spirit, are necessary for today's managers to become tomorrow's leaders. Bolman and Deal (2001) went on to assert that leadership is an ethic, a gift of oneself to a common cause, a higher calling. Easley (2006) discussed moral leadership, and showed that teacher's actualization of moral ideas in teaching and learning is intricately

responsive to an environment of support, if teachers are to remain in the teaching profession.

Jean-Marie (2004) noted that a leader demonstrates a selfless desire to both serve and prepare others. DuFour (2001) recommended that principals who embrace their role as servant leader will focus on creating school settings in which people are working towards a shared vision and are honoring collective commitments to self and others. Hunter (2004) agreed that a servant leader is one who consciously chooses to lead through service to others. As Drury (2005) argued, servant leadership is often confused with only acts of service, or leadership that only serves, when in fact, this leadership style is more. Servant leadership may be viewed as an extension of transformational leadership. A number of leadership authors (Spears, 1998, 2001; Taylor et al, 2007) have claimed that servant leadership is a concept compatible with and enhances other leadership models. Spears (1998) suggested that servant leadership opened up a new caring paradigm of leadership because it builds on relationships and focuses on service to others.

Gips(1989) underscored the importance of consistency between the concepts and ideals they are trying to develop in their students and the climate of the school community. Gips stated,

If a school is to provide an environment where the students are to learn democracy, then it must first construct an environment where the staff practices democracy. Such an environment is one where care and responsibility for the relationships among the human participants in the community are foremost. For it is out of that environment that students emerge with the strength to join questions,

observations, technical skills, and emotions to design their own visions of a larger community that values education as an endless performance choreographed by the dancers themselves. (Gips, 1989, p.2).

As a social construct, leadership has been described in terms of a role, as control or influence, and as behavior. But, without some form of organization, whether formal or informal, leadership would not have an arena in which to perform. As seen in the review of the literature, the leadership in a school and administrators' leadership style are almost impossible to separate. They overlap and are a part of each other.

Individuals contain their own interpretations of leadership based on current and prior experiences. It is almost impossible to even begin to define leadership without looking at the interplay between the organization (schools), the followers (teachers), and the leader (principal/administrator). Making sense of leadership entails understanding what it means when people apply the term and how they react to leadership, not simply stipulating what it is and what it is not. However, by reviewing the literature we are able to see that leadership plays a major role in teacher turnover.

#### Research on Teacher Turnover: Implications for Methodology

Examining the nature of the research methodology used in prior studies related to teacher turnover, informed my own thoughts as I designed this study. Shen (1998) reported that research on teacher turnover primarily consists of bivariate and multivariate approaches. Previous researchers have emphasized that the complexities of the data and the nature of teaching itself demand that both bivariate and multivariate approaches be used to fully comprehend the nature of the problem and the possible solutions that might exist (Berliner, 1986; Ingersoll, 2001b, Shen 1998). Using the bivariate approach a

researcher attempts to discover a relationship between some characteristic such as gender, race, salary, or specialty area and the likelihood that a teacher will migrate. When using the multivariate approach, researcher tests theories of why teachers migrate based upon several variables simultaneously. Ingersoll (2001b) also reported that the existing research on teacher turnover has sought to explain teacher turnover in light of various teacher attributes.

Previous quantitative research has focused on easily measured school characteristics such as the racial and economic mix of the school's students or their achievement level and teacher turnover (Boyd et al., 2005; Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1995; Hanushek et al., 2004; Hanushek et al., 2005; Ladd, 2007; Scafidi et al., 2007). Other researchers have used teacher surveys or ethnographic studies to look for a correlation between teacher turnover and working conditions (Buckley et al., 2005; Elfers et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson et al., 2005; Loeb et al., 2005; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). A few studies incorporated teacher surveys along with individual or group interviews when trying to determine what factors had an impact on teacher turnover (Billingsley, 1995; Eggen, 2002; Thornton, 2004).

Because the art of teaching is such an individual occupation, full of the personal characteristics and nuances of each teacher, many researchers suggest that studies of teacher turnover would best be suited to qualitative research. Berliner (1986) stated that teaching involves non-routine behaviors that rely on individual judgment and personal expertise for success. Huling-Austin (1990) suggested that teachers have different needs and must be considered individually.



Merriam (2009) described qualitative research as research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding based in the perspectives of those being studied, and assumes there is meaning embedded in individual situations. Merriam (2009) noted that qualitative research offers great promise in adding to the research base of knowledge and practice in education. Because of the degree to which qualitative approaches allows researchers to understand the personal elements associated with behaviors, judgments, and individual constructions of lived events and the prior emphasis in the field on quantitative methodology, I chose to focus on a qualitative approach for my the work in this dissertation.

### Summary

The review of the literature clearly shows that teacher turnover is a widespread and significant occurrence (Ingersoll, 2001b; Santiago, 2001). Teacher turnover leads to financial strain on school systems (Kimball & Nink, 2006) and can negatively impact student achievement (Kane et al., 2006; Rivkin et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004). While teacher turnover has been linked to various factors, including characteristics of teachers, students, and schools, Ingersoll (2001b) suggested that the appropriate policy solutions to teacher turnover included programs to reduce the loss of teachers, rather than programs designed to increase the supply of new teachers.

The review of the literature illustrates a somewhat higher rate of teacher turnover in public urban school districts compared to rural and suburban school districts (Ingersoll, 2001b). The literature also suggests that the greatest number of teachers who leave the profession do so during the first years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2001b; Murnane et al, 1991; SREB, 2001), and those teachers who majored in mathematics and science, and

especially secondary teachers, are more likely to leave (Dworkin, 1980; Murnane & Olsen, 1989; Murnane et al., 1991; Shin, 1995).

Several studies indicate a positive correlation between teacher turnover and administrative support (Chapman & Green, 1986; Eggen, 2002; Hirsch, 2005; Hirsch & Emerick, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001b; Thornton et al., 2007). Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) indicated differences in administrative support needed by novice teachers, compared to veteran teachers.

A review of the literature suggested that a variety of research methodologies are appropriate in the study of teacher turnover but that previous work has been primarily quantitative in nature. Merriam (2009) noted that qualitative research methods offers great promise in adding to the research base of knowledge and practice in education.

Finally, although the literature indicates various factors impacting teacher turnover, lack of administrative support appears most often as the reason teachers leave the teaching profession. By seeking answers to the following questions this study will help to provide insight into the impact leadership has on teacher turnover:

- What are the perceptions of migrating teachers regarding the leader's behaviors, qualities and attributes at his/her former school?
- How did these perceptions influence the teacher's desire to migrate to another school?
- Was there anything that the leader could have done differently that would have made the migrating teacher stay?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to research and identify administrator's behavior(s), as perceived by veteran teachers, which contribute to teacher migration. The problems associated with teacher migration, including creating inconsistency and impacting student performance and the general effectiveness of schools (Boyd et al., 2007), cannot be sufficiently addressed until more is known about the factors that impact teachers' decisions to leave a school.

For purposes of this study administrator's behaviors, or leadership styles, are defined as a person's dominant styles of behaviors, qualities, attributes and attitudes when in a leadership role. As discussed in Chapter Two, the effects of leadership styles on teachers' morale, school climate, and student achievement have previously been studied using a variety of research methods including the use of surveys and interviews (Bulach, 1994; Thomas, 1997). However, at the time I began this study, little research had been conducted looking at the correlation between leadership styles and teacher migration.

#### Pilot Study

A pilot study I conducted helped me compile initial data about teacher attrition and migration. Using a survey which was given at the end of the school year in a mentoring professional development class I taught and supervised, I asked first-year teachers to answer a few questions regarding the mentoring class and being a new teacher to my school. I also enlisted responses from my new teachers, and their mentors, to open-ended questions pertaining to teacher attrition and migration. The purpose of the pilot study was dual in nature. First, I wanted to make sure I was indeed supporting my

new teachers who were in the mentoring program; and second, I was interested in finding out why a teacher would leave our school to go to another school, or why they would leave teaching entirely.

The results of the survey showed three main reasons teachers at my school were requesting a transfer to another school (migration) or ending their teaching career (attrition). The first reason cited was student discipline problems (and fearing their own safety). The second reason was school climate (poor teacher morale). The third reason was lack of administrative support (which also impacted reasons one and two). Large class size, minimum salary scales, lack of teaching and planning time, and lack of recognition were also mentioned, but were listed as minor reasons.

From the perspective of head instructor and coordinator of the school's mentor program the overall results were positive. The program was going well and the new teachers felt supported, informed, and uplifted by the program and their mentors. The mentors felt the same and were learning a lot from the new teachers. At the same time, because I was working on my add-on certification in Educational Leadership I was very interested in the results indicating lack of support from administration as being one of the main reasons for teacher attrition and migration. I knew that I had not often felt supported, had felt taken for granted, and at times used by our principal. I was surprised to hear that others felt this way too.

From this pilot study I learned that my own feelings were just the tip of the iceberg. The results of this pilot study helped me to develop the major questions for my dissertation. What I hoped to do was to find teachers who would open up to me and

discuss their own personal stories of migration and see if there was a common theme which emerged.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study of migrating teachers' perceptions of administrative behavior(s) and how it impacted their migration to another school.

- What are the perceptions of migrating teachers regarding the leader's behaviors, qualities and attributes at his/her former school?
- How did these perceptions influence the teacher's desire to migrate to another school?
- Was there anything that the leader could have done differently that would have made the migrating teacher stay?

### Overview of the Research Design

While prior research on teacher turnover has consisted of qualitative, quantitative, survey, and longitudinal studies as the primary research methods, the type of research I conducted was qualitative research. Qualitative research is based upon the assumption that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with social worlds (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (1994) defines a qualitative study as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. Creswell (2003) also states that qualitative procedures depend on text, have distinctive steps in collecting and analyzing data, and draw on varied tactics of questioning.

There are various types of qualitative studies including ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case studies. While these types of qualitative research are distinguishable from each other they share the same basic characteristics found in any qualitative study, including that of the researcher being the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data. Interviews or extended conversations are a primary source of data collection.

My study used qualitative methods to determine what leadership behaviors impact a teacher's decision to migrate from one school to another school. Because qualitative research uses a model of investigation that helps to provide an in-depth understanding of complicated issues and focuses on personal stories and narratives, I decided this type of research provided the best means to gather data for my study. Interviews, extended informal conversations, and a focus group meeting were all used for collecting data.

Merriam (2009) states that in a constant-comparative method of data analysis the researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set (p. 159). From the notes of the six one-on-one interviews, using a constant-comparative method, I performed a cross-case analysis looking for similar themes between them. These themes were indicators of leadership behaviors which push teachers to migrate. I then triangulated the data, verifying the themes, using the information gathered from individuals, the focus group meeting, and member checks.

## Data Collection and Analysis

### *Sample Selection*

The sample selection for this study included 16 veteran public school teachers from all three levels of education (elementary, middle and high). These teachers all indicated that they transferred to their current school because of their perceptions of their previous administrator's leadership style or qualities.

I was able to identify potential teachers to interview through a snowball sampling approach, but all final choices were based on criterion sampling. According to Patton (2003), snowball sampling is when researchers "identify cases of interest from sampling people who know people who know people who know what cases are information rich, that is good examples for study, good interview participants" (p. 243). Criterion sampling is based on selecting a group to study because the participants fit a certain criteria, in this case, teachers who moved to a different school because of their perceptions of the administration's leadership.

Of the original 22 potential research participants only 16 replied when I contacted them via email or telephone. Of these 16 participants, I chose six individuals, with whom to conduct one-on-one interviews. The remaining ten educators were used to form a focus group. I chose the six primary participants in light of their school levels and gender, in an attempt to get a distribution across these criteria. Of the six participants for one-on-one interviews, four were female and two were male. Six in-depth interviews with those participants allowed for the identification of themes across the participants' experiences. The remaining ten participants, who made up the focus group for the study, consisted of seven females and three males. The focus group participants read and

analyzed the themes from the interview stories and participated in verifying the authenticity of the themes in light of their own experiences.

Prior to conducting any interviews, or meeting with the focus group, I supplied each teacher with informed consent information (see Appendix A). Because the interviews required all teachers to reflect on their own situation that took place in the past there was the possibility of them experiencing strong emotions during the interview. Each teacher was informed of the process of data collection for the study, including my having additional teachers of a focus group read the stories and reflect on their own personal experiences, and having a co-worker/peer-debriefer review my notes and summaries. Anonymity was ensured to all teachers and an explanation of what the results would be used for were given (Erlandson, et al., 1993). I ensured each teacher that he/she could remove himself/herself from the study at any time without penalty or retribution.

During the focus group meeting more specific information was shared by each focus group participant regarding their individual perceptions of leadership behaviors and migration. In my study focus group participants are referred to by the level of school they teach to ensure anonymity.

Also prior to conducting the interviews and meeting with the focus group I took the time to record my own story and perceptions pertaining to leadership and its impact on attrition, retention and migration. Doing this helped me later to focus on the *participants'* answers. I was able to bracket my personal feelings so as not to confuse them with what the participant was telling me about his/her own story.



### *Data Collection Method*

I conducted individual interviews with six of the participants. I hand-recorded field notes, detailing the content of all personal interviews and focus group discussions. When permitted, I also recorded by audiotape for later transcription.

All of the interview questions used for my interview protocol were open-ended (see Appendix B). By using open-ended questions, leaving the participant plenty of opportunity to elaborate, I was able to follow their lead in asking further questions. My follow-up questions were individualized and focused on finding out more detailed information as to why the participant felt the administrator's leadership style was the primary reason for wanting to leave their school. The interviews with the participants remained conversational, with the interview length determined by each participant's response to my questions, and lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to approximately two hours.

Each interview was held at a location chosen by the participant. Most of the meetings were held at a local coffee shop or fast food restaurant, but one participant chose to meet at school. I always opened the interview with some basic questions, asking about the interviewee's educational experiences and background. These general questions served to develop a sense of comfort as well as providing general demographic and historical information on the participants. While the interviewee was telling his/her story I took notes, being careful to note any facial expressions, body language, tone of voice or other non-spoken types of communication when obvious.

If the participant was agreeable a tape recorder was used during the interview. When I was able to use a tape recorder I was able to focus solely on the participant

without having to worry about taking notes. In these cases, I did, however, add additional notes on the participant later while listening to the tape. At the end of each interview I gave the participant a small notebook to take back with him/her. I invited the participant to use the notebook to record any additional information regarding their feelings and perceptions of the topic of our conversation should something occur upon reflection.

After reading through my notes, and reflecting on the interview, I wrote each person's story. I then had a co-worker/peer-debriefer read through my notes and summaries to determine if I had indeed correctly synthesized the data, with no researcher bias, prior to sending the summary to the individual participant. Then I sent via email a copy of the written interview report to the person who was interviewed to ensure I had precisely described the participant's personal story. I asked the participant to give me feedback on the accuracy of their reported feelings and answers from the interview. I also asked the participant for additional information that he/she may have recorded in his/her notebook after having time to reflect on the interview. None of the participants, however, had additional information to add to the report from their interview, and each indicated that my written narrative was correct.

Once the narratives from all of the interviews had been written and confirmation received from each individual participant on its accuracy, I then sent the stories to the participants in the focus group for review. I gave two weeks for the focus group participants to review the six individual teachers' stories prior to scheduling the meeting with the participants of the focus group. One of the focus group participants had access

to a meeting room in a restaurant which was owned by a family member. As a group we decided we would meet in that location.

Upon assembling at the restaurant I reminded the focus group that I wanted to gather information regarding their experiences as well as their reflections of the interview summaries I had sent them. No one seemed to want to start the conversation, so I asked the group to tell me if they were able to identify any common themes in the summaries from the individual interviews. Asking this open-ended question helped to begin the conversation. After that, conversation ensued regarding the focus group participants' own stories of migration.

While the focus group participants talked, I took notes on what they were saying. I did not have to lead the discussion as the teachers talked openly and freely with each other. They talked about how the six educators' stories were different, or similar, from their own stories. The meeting lasted approximately three hours. After leaving the meeting I typed and expanded my hand-written field notes from the focus group, had my co-worker/peer-debriefer review my analysis, and then sent the results to the 16 teachers in the study via email, once again asking for confirmation of accuracy. What resulted was a compilation of 16 educators' stories that presented a solid, cohesive picture reflecting teachers' perceptions of leadership's impact on teacher migration.

#### *Relationship of the Researcher to the Researched*

Looking back on my own experiences, as a first year teacher I was not fortunate enough to have a teacher mentor. What I did not realize at the time was how my first-year experiences would shape not only my philosophy of education, but also my path as an educator. In knowing my story as a first year teacher, I hope the reader will be able to

see why ensuring that schools have a successful teacher mentor program is important to me, and vital to my philosophy of education and leadership. The readers should also then understand why starting a teacher mentoring program at my school was a mission of mine and how working with new and veteran teachers continues to be a passion. By knowing my story the reader will also understand why the topic of my study is close to my heart and why I understand first-hand how principals' behaviors can push an already revolving door, directly influencing a teacher's decision to migrate.

When I first began to think of the possibility of teaching it was due to my need to survive monetarily and take care of my children. I knew that my marriage was in trouble. Until that time I had been a full-time, stay-at-home mother, with three small children. I had an undergraduate degree in pre-medicine with no time or money to go to medical school, but had to quickly find a job that would support me and my family. Teaching science seemed to be the logical choice- same hours and holidays as my children and not many hours of additional school needed to obtain a teaching certificate along with a master's degree in Science Education.

With help from the bank and my parents I managed to get into a local college and begin on a journey that would change my life. However, in doing so, I really hadn't given much thought as to the kind of teacher I would be or what my philosophy of education or leadership entailed. All I wanted was to get that teaching certificate and quickly find a job so I could take care of my family and myself. Little did I know what was headed my way with my first teaching assignment.

I completed my teaching certificate in March, 1993. I began filling out applications for employment in surrounding counties hoping a science teacher position

would open up prior to the 1993-1994 school year. In April, 1993, a high school football coach and science teacher was stabbed to death by his son. I was called by someone in the Human Resources office to see if I would be willing to interview for the position. With little thought to what I was walking into I jumped at the opportunity to interview for the position. I went to the interview the next day and was immediately offered the position.

After the interview was over I sat in the coach's classroom and heard his students talking to the counselors about their friend, their teacher, their coach's bizarre death. Tears came to my eyes. One of the school's assistant principals who was in the room with me later came up to me and told me that he knew I would accept the job when he saw my reaction to the student's pain. I did accept the job, and the next day I began my teaching career with no lesson plans, no idea of what type of classes I had, or the level of the students I would be teaching. I had no idea where the copy machine was located or the procedures at the school for signing in, or even where the nearest restroom was located. None of the education classes I had taken at college in my teacher preparation program had prepared me for this kind of situation, but life had.

The coach's students, not mine yet, initially hated me. I was told by one of the school counselors to remove all of the coach's personal belongings (posters, pictures, films, etc.) from the room so the family could have them. The students saw this as my trying to erase all memory of their beloved teacher in an attempt to take his place.

Progress reports had just been given out. The students didn't want to return them because the reports had the coach's signature on them. I was told by an assistant principal to try and collect them. Some students felt guilty and in some way responsible

for the coach's death. They had argued with him just the previous Friday because of their grade in his class.

Being a first-year teacher I struggled with the need I had to comfort these children in their time of grief. But, everything I had been taught in education classes emphatically said *no* touching of any kind toward students and *never* let them get too close to you emotionally. I had no mentor teacher to seek advice from or ask for guidance. In fact, it seemed that the majority of teachers and administrators avoided my room. It was as if I had become invisible. The isolation I felt was in part due to the four walls that surrounded me, but also due to the attitudes of the people that surrounded me. Everyone at the school was in mourning, and I was the person who was in *his* room. After a couple of days of leaving work a mental wreck and exhausted emotionally and physically I talked to one of the school's counselors.

Never had the school, or the counselor, been faced with such a situation either. We were all learning together. The counselor told me to let the students have the progress reports. She would see if the family would be willing to let the students have some of the pictures and posters. But I feel most importantly the counselor told me it was okay to hug and give comfort to the children, it was what the situation called for. I had known in my heart all along that that was what was needed, but being a first-year teacher I hesitated to do what simply *felt* like the right thing to do or to go against what I had been told. Now I had the permission to do what the classroom of life had taught me.

Within a couple of weeks the students started responding to me as a person who *cared* about them. Because of this they were able to open up to me and give me the chance to teach them what they needed to know about ninth-grade biology to finish the

semester and go on to the next grade level. We had shared this experience together and all bonded in some strange and unique way. Those students, now my students, were the ones who came by my room week after week to check on me over the next three years and whose care for me helped me when my divorce was final later that year (they didn't know I was getting divorced, but knew I wasn't myself). When they graduated in 1996, I cried along with them and their parents.

In the spring of 1997, I went to one of the assistant principals at my school and told him of my desire to begin a mentoring program. I also told him of the Georgia Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development's conference being held during the summer in our state which was focusing on mentoring new teachers. At that time it never occurred to me to speak to the principal of the school about my interest as he was more of a figure-head in the building, seldom being seen or heard. The assistant principal thought this was a wonderful idea, and seeing leadership qualities in me quickly agreed to enroll me in the summer conference. In return I was to begin a teacher mentor program that next fall. Needless to say I was ecstatic.

For the next four years, while still a classroom teacher, I conducted the teacher mentor program at the school. I paired mentors and novice teachers together in an effort to give teachers the kind of support I hadn't received my first year of teaching, conducted monthly meetings, observed and coached beginning teachers during my planning time, and did my best to touch base with each new teacher at least once a week. During those four years I learned more and more about the importance of mentoring and building school relationships. I was also able to complete my Educational Leadership add-on

certificate, my Teacher Support Specialist add-on certificate and begin working toward my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership.

At some point during the 1998-1999 school year I made an appointment with the principal at my school (the only way you could see him was by appointment). I wanted to speak with him about my desire to become an administrator. My hopes were that I could be promoted to an assistant principal at my current school. During the meeting I spoke to the principal of my leadership abilities, the mentor program, the two administrative internships I had completed at the school, and the numerous school committees I served on. He appeared unimpressed and quickly told me that while he appreciated my interest in becoming an assistant principal he did not believe in "promoting from within" the school, meaning I would have to look elsewhere if I wanted to be an administrator. Over the next three years I saw three *male* teachers promoted from teacher to administrator at my school under the direction of that same principal.

Because of my position at the school (coordinator of the mentor program), I learned through a mentor course survey of six female teachers in the school who left my school because of what they felt was sexual discrimination on the part of this principal. Upon speaking with these teachers individually I found out that we were all feeling the same unnerving fear I felt, that if we reported the principal's behavior we would be the ones without a job. So, it was easier to seek employment elsewhere (migrate) than to stay where your skills, talents and intellect went unnoticed and unappreciated. The 2000-2001 school year was the last year that principal worked at a school. He was promoted to a position at the county office and retired a few years later.



The fall of 2000 I applied for an administrative position in the same county where I was teaching. In the spring of 2001 I was promoted to an assistant principal at a middle school for the 2001-2002 school year.

My first experiences as an assistant principal were typical of any new job, soliciting feelings of excitement, fear, happiness, sadness, confusion, and frustration. The learning curve was no curve, but a line that shot straight up. The administrative team I joined functioned fairly effectively with each of us (there were three assistant principals) working directly with one grade level in charge of student discipline, standardized testing, meetings, and teacher evaluations for that grade level. Because of my past experience with a teacher mentor program I was put in charge of the middle school's teacher mentor program.

The principal had an open door policy which made it easy to speak with him when needed. The administrative team had weekly meetings to discuss what was on the calendar and what needed immediate attention, and to plan ahead. The principal appeared to be liked and respected by most teachers. I never heard him raise his voice or speak disrespectfully to teachers or to students. He was available to sit in on meetings and conferences when needed. At the end of my first year as an assistant principal he resigned his position, following an investigation by human resources, and was replaced by a first-year principal.

I was at that middle school for six years. During that six years, the school's demographics changed from majority white, with a four percent free and reduced lunch population to majority minority, with a 60 percent free and reduced lunch population. The total number of students in the school increased from 1700 to 2300 and the number

of assistant principals increased from three to six. The school went from making Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) the first two years I was there to not making AYP. The school had a dramatic increase in the number of student discipline referrals involving gang activity, drugs, weapons, and violence. My last year at the school, 2006-2007, I presented 52 seventh- grade student discipline tribunals which resulted in the students being suspended from the school for a full calendar year.

I am still unsure if these conditions are to blame for the new principal's demeanor or if her negativity was just her innate nature. This new principal seldom smiled, barked orders like a drill sergeant, and was disrespectful to almost everyone. She would make comments in faculty meetings like "you can all be replaced." On any given day the grade-level administrators would receive approximately 30 discipline referrals which had to be dealt with as quickly as humanly possible, but were still expected to observe five classrooms daily. If we did not get these things done then we were written up. When I tried to explain to the principal that this was an impossibility her response was that she expected it all to be done-if I wanted a job. One of the other grade-level assistant principals threw away the majority of the discipline referrals she received, while the other grade-level administrator gave the discipline referrals back to the teacher who wrote it, instructing the teacher to assign a teacher- consequence. Needless to say, teachers in those grade levels did not feel supported by their grade-level administrator.

Our leadership team meetings became very tense with none of the six assistant principals, except one- the principal's favorite, wanting to speak in fear of retaliation. At the end of my third year at the school I began looking for an assistant principal position at another school. My decision to migrate was based solely on my principal's behavior.

It wasn't until the end of my sixth year at the school, when I applied for an assistant principal position in a neighboring county that I was able to migrate. My suspicion is that the principal probably had nothing good to say about me, or my leadership skills, when speaking with other principals in the county. I was fortunate that the wife of one of my seventh- grade teachers worked at a middle school in a neighboring county where they had an assistant principal position available. The teacher's wife put in a good word for me with her principal, who called me for an interview, and I was offered the job the evening after my interview. During the same time period that school year, the principal's favorite assistant principal was named as the principal of a new elementary school in the county. This was a very odd happenstance in our county for two reasons- the assistant principal had never worked at an elementary school before and typically the honor of opening a new school was only given to veteran principals.

Two and one-half months after migrating to the new school I was diagnosed with breast cancer. While doctors do not yet know what triggers this type of breast cancer, HER2, to grow and spread so rapidly, my oncologist said that some research indicates a strong link between HER2 and stress. To date, almost three years since my diagnosis, I am cancer-free and am appreciating more fully the value of a strong faith, healthy relationships with family, friends, and colleagues, and good health.

My experiences as an educator led to my passion for this research project. In addition, important skills that I have learned during my years as an educator which helped me with this study include listening, observing, and the ability to form an empathetic alliance with people. As I conducted this inquiry, I had to be watchful of themes that emerged, but resist the temptation to add meaning prematurely. And,

because I reflected upon my own experiences as well, I had to be careful not to interpret what a subject was saying as my thoughts or feelings, or my thoughts and feelings as theirs.

I also ensured the proper treatment of the participant(s). It was important for me to exercise sound judgment in the field to ensure ethical procedures in the research process (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Because this type of study requires the researcher to be an active participant in the study, I was able to get close to the participants. This allowed me to establish a rapport of trust and open communication with the participants. In the words of Spradley (1979) there was a continuous ebb and flow of information from the subject(s) to the researcher.

I understood entry into the lives of the subject(s) had to be gained. After getting in contact with the participants and beginning open communication the element of trust was established. This element of trust in a researcher/ participant relationship allows the researcher to ethically learn the things the researcher needs as the researcher collects data to answer the research question (Maxwell, 1996). Because I was an administrator in the same school system as the participants I was aware that the participants might not be willing to open up to me. But, because I was the instrument of research in this study (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) I knew the importance of developing a trusting relationship with the participants in order to get the data that was needed and worked on establishing a positive rapport.

In an effort to convey an easy and open atmosphere, and continue to ensure the element of trust, the interviews were held at a location of the participant's choice. By conducting interviews at these locations it allowed me to have an open and leisurely

interview that established rapport and allowed presuppositions and frames of reference of the participant to emerge.

Prior to conducting the first interview I wrote my own thoughts regarding my experiences with migration and administrator's leadership behaviors. This journaling process is considered to be part of the Epoche process in phenomenological research, which is a type of qualitative research. It is a way to encourage an open perception of others feelings when the researcher is also incorporating his/her own feelings in the research. Writing down reflections allows a researcher to bring to the surface, acknowledge, and work to set aside prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas. With my own feelings and perceptions written down and bracketed, I found it easier for me to experience an internal sense of closure, thus being open to others feelings and perceptions. This process helped me to not label someone else's feelings as *my* own, but to hear them as a clear and distinct voice all their own.

One other technique I used to try and address researcher bias was to have a co-worker act as a peer-debriefer. My colleague read through my notes from all the interviews, and the focus group meeting, and then read the narrative of each educator's story and the conclusion. I asked my co-worker to let me know if I captured the essence of the participant's story in the narrative, and conclusion, or if perhaps something needed to be changed. This was done prior to me sending the narratives to the individual participants and the focus group participants.

### *Data Analysis*

Qualitative research has been described as research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding based in the perspectives of those being studied (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative researchers must translate their data into intelligible accounts and accessible arrangements. Wolcott (1995) asserts that "the real mystique of qualitative inquiry lies in the processes of *using* data rather than in the process of *gathering* data" (p.1). Qualitative data were gathered so that individual perspectives could be heard, and considered, in-depth.

Organization of the data began with the transcribed interviews. The data analysis for the research included horizontalizing the data, regarding every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and question as having equal value (Moustakas, 1994). After the interviews had been transcribed or my field notes fleshed out, notes from the focus group meeting were analyzed qualitatively for conceptual and recurring common themes. First I looked for comments that had been made from each participant, or participants in the focus group, indicating particular behaviors of the leaders at his/her former school that lead him/her to make the decision to move. For example six of the 16 total participants used the phrase "Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" to describe one of their principal's behaviors at their former schools. I made a chart of the common behavior comments noting how often the behavior had been discussed.

From the list of behavior comments I looked for similarities to identify categories. Once the categories became more apparent the themes emerged. The themes were used to develop the textural descriptions of the participants' experience and were the ones in which most of the conversations were focused. My co-worker looked at the data that had been coded, and the resulting categories and themes which emerged, verifying them for accuracy.

## Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is concerned with the questions of trustworthiness of results, or, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the ability of the researcher to convince the reader with the findings of a research project are worthy of attention. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further state that qualitative research must seek to establish trustworthiness of results using related concepts of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

In gathering data through qualitative research with the intent of telling the stories of the participants, great care must be taken to portray the lives of the participants as accurately as possible. Regarding the basic arts of fieldwork Wolcott (1995) urges researchers to adopt both an artistic and a scientific posture: "You need a capacity for careful observing and reporting, but you need as well to trust your instincts, value your experience, and have a clear sense of both of what you do and what you do not know" (p. 32). The trustworthiness of any qualitative study relies heavily on the role of the researcher, the human instrument. I have ensured the trustworthiness of the study through awareness of issues of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability.

### *Credibility*

Credibility of the results of this study was established in three ways. First, I had the professional skills necessary to engage interviewees in the interview process, based upon my history and background as a teacher, teacher support specialist, and administrator. These disciplines require the understanding and application of active listening skills, including asking probing questions and repeating what the participant has

stated by paraphrasing. These skills are inherent in establishing trust on behalf of those being interviewed and thus credibility in qualitative research. Second, I involved participants in member checks. Member checks were conducted using email with individual participants and with focus group participants. The member checks allowed me to test my conclusions with members of the groups to determine whether or not I had allowed personal bias and experiences to distort the meaning of participant responses. Third, I triangulated findings across participants (individuals and focus group participants) and across data sources (original interviews and follow-up member checks) to establish the credibility of the themes which emerged in analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### *Transferability*

Transferability allows a reader to apply the data from the study to other situations and to gain insight which may have personal meaning. However, it is not the goal of qualitative research to produce data which can be replicated by another researcher in a similar situation. The goal is to create a story which may shed light on a reader's perceptions or stimulate a reader's thinking. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, "It should be clear that if there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere" (p. 298). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also state that "the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible" (p. 298). In this study I have attempted to ensure transferability by the use of complete, detailed descriptions of the qualitative data collected. Provision of a complete, detailed description allows the reader to derive personal conclusions as to the transferability of the



results of this study to another situation. Although this study was specific to 16 veteran teachers' perceptions of leadership behaviors and how these behaviors impacted their decision to migrate to another school, there is the capacity for transferability.

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability is the assurance that the research will stand up to critical and objective evaluation. This assurance is reached via a confirmability auditor who reviews all materials, acting as a disinterested party on behalf of the unknown readers who are themselves unable to establish the trustworthiness of the study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "Upon successful completion of these steps, the auditor will be able to reach an overall decision about the study's confirmability, the extent to which the data and interpretations of the study are grounded in events rather than in the inquirer's personal constraints" (p. 324).

Through the use of triangulation, and the use of multiple methods or sources to secure an in-depth and accurate understanding of the data as possible, confirmability of the results of this study was established. I had a co-worker/peer-debriefer who was familiar with research design, and also working on a doctoral degree, analyze my notes, summaries, and coding of categories to determine if I had indeed correctly synthesized the data prior to sending the summary to the individual participant. While a conversation was had with the peer-debriefer regarding my coding, no changes were needed. The individual participants then confirmed the information. A final confirmation was performed by the participants in the focus group (member checking).

### *Dependability*

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) "dependability is the extent to which all data have been accounted for and all reasonable areas explored" (p. 324). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further assert that there is no credibility without dependability. A researcher must use overlapping methods to ensure the probability that credible and dependable findings will be produced. Dependability was established in this study by triangulation of the data. Data from interviews, the focus group discussion, and member checks were compared for similarities and differences to establish the dependability of the findings. In addition, I wrote a reflective summary of my own experiences with leadership and migration in an effort to keep my own personal story from impacting my ability to hear clearly the teachers' stories.

### Summary

In summary, this research study was designed as a qualitative investigation to try and determine if teachers' perceptions of leadership behaviors impacted their decision to migrate. This was done by conducting six one-on-one interviews. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of migrating teachers regarding the leader's behaviors, qualities and attributes at his/her former school?
- How did these perceptions influence the teacher's desire to migrate to another school?
- Was there anything that the leader could have done differently that would have made the migrating teacher stay?

After the interviews were complete, I then compared my notes from the interviews, using a constant- comparative method, and performed a cross-case analysis looking for similar themes between them. The themes which emerged were indicators of leadership behaviors which push teachers to migrate. I triangulated the data, verifying the themes, using the information gathered from individuals, the focus group meeting, and member checks.

In Chapter Four I will describe, in detail, the narratives from the six one-on-one interviews. I will then follow these narratives by delving into a discussion of the themes which emerged, showing how the themes were supported by the members of the focus group.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

The purpose of my study was to research and identify qualities and attributes of leaders, as perceived by veteran teachers, which contribute to teacher migration. Teacher migration is a problem currently impacting school systems across the country. The following research questions guided my study.

- What are the perceptions of migrating teachers regarding the leader's qualities and attributes at his/her former school?
- How did these perceptions influence the teacher's desire to migrate to another school?
- Was there anything that the leader could have done differently that would have made the migrating teacher stay?

Chapter Four presents the findings for my study and is divided into two sections. The first section, *Stories of Migration*, includes six individual narratives of educator's personal experiences, and their *perceptions* of how the leaders at their most recent school impacted their desire to migrate. The educator's names have been changed to protect their identities.

The second section, *Leadership Behaviors that Push Teachers to Migrate*, is an overview of the themes which emerged from the educator's stories. From the themes which emerged from the six one-on-one profiles, I performed a cross-case analysis looking for similar themes between them. These themes were preliminary indicators of leadership behaviors that push teachers to migrate. I then triangulated the data by sharing the narratives with the focus groups. This process, along with my member checks,

allowed me to verify the themes by drawing on additional reflections from my focus group participants. As I present the themes from my cross case analyses, I integrate the references to the experiences of my focus group participants which they shared as a way of confirming the credibility of the initial themes. To maintain anonymity of the focus group participants they are referred to in this section by the level of school in which they currently are teaching (elementary, middle, and high).

### Stories of Migration

#### *Charlotte's Story*

Charlotte is a special education teacher who has been teaching for nine years at the middle-school level. She has taught in two metropolitan school systems in our state. Charlotte has a master's degree in a specialized area in her field and worked for many years with children prior to becoming a teacher. She decided to become a teacher because she loves children and knew that she could help them. Her most recent migration occurred from a metropolitan school system adjacent to the one in which she is currently working.

Our meeting took place at a local coffee shop in the town where Charlotte teaches. When I arrived at the coffee shop Charlotte was waiting on me, standing just inside the front door of the building. We introduced ourselves to each other and then Charlotte, without saying a word, led the way to a small table toward the back of the coffee shop for our conversation. Charlotte chose a seat at the table where her back faced the entrance of the shop. She was very quiet.

Even though there was a nip in the air outside, the sun was streaming through the glass windows and the coffee shop was pleasantly warm, but not overly so. It was mid-

morning and the coffee shop smelled like fresh roasted coffee, cinnamon and vanilla. I asked Charlotte if I could get her something to drink or eat, hoping this might help ease her apparent uneasiness. She replied that she would enjoy a small cup of coffee with cream. I went to get her a small coffee, and me a large coffee, but also brought back a piece of apple cinnamon coffee cake for us to share. We chatted for a few minutes, getting to know each other, as we enjoyed our coffee and cake. When I asked Charlotte if I could audiotape our conversation she meekly said that she would rather me not because she did not want to take a chance of anyone overhearing it and recognizing her voice.

At first Charlotte appeared guarded and nervous, making little eye contact, not smiling, and occasionally, cautiously, looking from side-to-side. However, the more she talked, the more comfortable she became, making eye contact and occasionally laughing nervously at how bad things were at her previous school. However, she maintained a very quiet, demur, voice throughout entire conversation. I ultimately attributed her original behavior to her being somewhat shy (and perhaps hungry and in need of caffeine) and needing the time to become comfortable with me, our surroundings, and our conversation.

At the beginning of our conversation Charlotte passionately exclaimed, as her eyebrows raised and her eyes widened, that she understands the nature of teaching special education students and all the demands that go along with the job. Because of the specialized issues surrounding special education, and special education students, she feels that the administrator working with teachers in the special education program needs to be very supportive, caring, and knowledgeable of special education issues.

In Charlotte's past experience, although her former administrator had appeared to be supportive and caring at first, as the year continued the administrator was less and less visible, and Charlotte ended up feeling "neglected." What started as an "open door policy," and an administrator who welcomed Charlotte's admittance, quickly turned into the door being shut and Charlotte feeling uncomfortable with knocking. Charlotte stated that when she did knock on the door the administrator would chastise her. According to Charlotte, "It was easier to avoid the administrator's office than reap the wrath that was behind the door."

A number of other administrative-related factors also led to Charlotte's feeling of a lack of support. For instance, Charlotte stated that an administrator needs to be able to pull all teachers together, regular education and special education, to work as a team. At her previous school, she felt that far too often her special education students were left out of school-wide activities, ending up with hurt feelings and becoming depressed. And, the regular education students and teachers too often "looked down" on her students. Charlotte felt that the administrator needed to try and change the attitudes of both regular education teachers and students, regarding special needs students, by finding ways to help the special education teacher and students feel like a welcome, and integral, part of the school.

Charlotte went on to say that her administrator had been at the school for a while and seemed to have neglected to learn about all the new details, changes, laws, and technology that had flooded the area of special education. Because of this Charlotte, once again, felt less supported in her job as a special education teacher. In fact, at times, she felt that she knew more than the administrator (about special education issues) and

informed the administrator on several occasions of things that had changed in policy and procedures. When this happened, the administrator got defensive; even though, according to Charlotte, she never was disrespectful when addressing her administrator. Looking back Charlotte wondered why her administrator couldn't just say, "I'm sorry, I don't know the answer to that question," or "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to steer you wrong. I didn't know that had changed." Instead, the teachers, including Charlotte, were made to feel bad.

Charlotte often got the feeling that the administrator really didn't want to work with the special education program. She conjectured that could have been because the administrator had no background in that area, or possibly because her interests were in other areas. Regardless of the reason, there seemed to be a lack of positive recognition of teachers in the program. Charlotte's frustration was evident as she described that she never got any "pats-on-the-back" from her administrator, nor even a kind word or smile indicating that she was doing a satisfactory job. Instead there was a lot of negativity that came from her administrator, which - in turn - produced more negativity in Charlotte and the other teachers in her department. This negativity was never more apparent than the last spring Charlotte taught at the school when standardized test scores arrived. Instead of celebrating the special education students' gains in certain testing areas, the administrator questioned the special education teachers as to why the students didn't perform better and make greater gains.

The lack of attention to special education was also evident in the administrator's physical absence from Charlotte's classroom. Thinking across the time she spent in the school, Charlotte contended that her administrator seldom came into her classroom until



it was time to do an "official" observation. As the school years progressed, the administrator stopped visiting the classroom and began avoiding eye-contact and conversation with Charlotte in the hallways. This was in direct contrast to what Charlotte wanted from an administrator and what she envisioned as behaviors evident in a supportive leader. Charlotte explained that what she needed was an administrator who was frequently visible to the students and herself. Charlotte believed that the administrator's presence would have helped with the difficult classroom management issues posed by her special education students.

While the lack of support was a big problem, according to Charlotte, her main frustration with her administrator was a lack of respect. With the corners of her mouth turned down in a scowl, she described how this lack of respect was apparent in the form of public reprimands. On numerous occasions, Charlotte was "screamed at" in front of not only her students, but also their parents. In addition, she was criticized in front of fellow teachers. Shaking her head in disbelief Charlotte recounted an occasion where she was openly chastised in front of her peers when she had walked in ten minutes late to a meeting. On that particular morning Charlotte had a sick child at home and was trying to get the child taken care of, so that she could come into work. Although her administrator was frequently late to these meetings, the administrator didn't even ask why Charlotte was late before belittling her in front of everyone. Charlotte went on to say that this type of behavior was not only directed at her, but at other special education teachers in her department, and with regular education teachers across the building as well.

Despite the lack of support and the explicit disrespect, for a long time Charlotte remained at her previous school. In fact, Charlotte taught six years at that school. When

I asked her why she stayed at the school for that long, with conflicted emotions she admitted that she has difficulty with change, and starting over again. In her initial years at the school she had had friends who she hated to leave. That reason, however, weakened over time because it was not long before her closest friends were asking for transfers. Another year or two had passed with Charlotte being unhappy because she felt she should wait until her own children were a little older, which she knew would help with the transition.

Because special education teachers were in high demand all over the county, Charlotte knew that she wouldn't have difficulty finding a teaching position at another school when she finally decided the time was right. Indeed, once she looked for a new position, she had no trouble locating one. When I asked if there was anything the administrator could have done to get her to stay at the school, Charlotte replied, "No, the irreparable damage was done a long time ago."

Charlotte had truly hoped that she would be able to stay at the school, grow with her job and her students, and make a positive impact in the school's cluster and the community. Instead, because of her administrator, she wasn't able to do that. She migrated to another school leaving her former school in need of another highly qualified teacher.

### *Matt's Story*

At the time of the interview, Matt had been in education for 11 years all of which had been at the middle-school level. He had worked in one rural county school system and two metropolitan school systems in our state. He had advanced degrees in math and

social studies education, and a degree in educational leadership. Matt's most recent migration took place from an adjacent metropolitan school system.

Matt chose for us to meet at his current school. He says that he trusts his current administration and knows we will have his classroom to ourselves while we talk. When I arrived at Matt's school he met me in the front lobby of the school. We introduced ourselves, making eye contact and shaking hands, and then Matt escorted me down a hallway to his classroom. He was immediately warm and friendly, smiling and chatting as we walked. As we passed other staff members along the way to Matt's classroom, they would smile and greet us, and appeared to like and respect Matt by the nature of their interactions with him. The dialogue was not always about school-related issues, but sometimes about sports (a spectacular pass during a recent college football game), or family (one of Matt's co-worker's children had recently been sick with Chicken Pox).

Matt's classroom was warm and inviting. We sat at a round table that was situated in one corner of the room. Matt turned one of the chairs around so that the back of the chair was against the edge of the table. He then sat backwards in the chair, loosened his tie (his shirt-sleeves were already rolled up), and folded his arms on the top of the table. The edge of his left hand was covered with marker ink which indicated to me that he had been writing on the white board during today's lesson.

A single window allowed sunshine to flood the room with bright, natural light. There were curriculum-related materials on the walls, and the desks and tables were arranged in a manner that appeared to facilitate group work and conversations. There was an air of confidence in the way Matt presented himself and in his manner of speaking, but he was not arrogant. Matt seemed very comfortable with the surroundings (he had stated

that he trusted his current administration) and talked freely about his experiences with migration. While Matt was agreeable to my audio taping our conversation, he did ask that I immediately erase or destroy the tape as soon as I was finished with it.

Matt, shrugged his shoulders, and matter-of-factly stated that leadership at his previous school was the *only* reason he left. While he feels an administrator needs to have a balance of fairness, firmness and kindness, Matt stated that his former principal did not have this balance. Rather his administrator verbally abused and intimidated the teachers and provided little or no support or guidance for professional growth. Matt leaned forward on his arms and said that it is important to him to have a principal who is supportive, and offers multiple staff development opportunities during the school year, so he can grow as a teacher and become more effective in the classroom.

During the time he was at his previous school, which was in an upper-middle class area of the state, Matt was berated and cursed by his former principal. Matt shook his head in what appeared to be sadness as he described the principal's inappropriate actions toward non-tenured teachers. However, Matt said that the principal's inappropriate behavior wasn't directed just toward non-tenured teachers, as the principal would talk negatively about all teachers - both to their faces and behind their backs. Teachers never knew what personality the principal was going to exhibit at any given moment. The principal's inconsistent personality alienated the staff, as did his lack of respect toward them.

Matt's frustration was evident as he described his principal as being very unapproachable and intimidating. With a heavy sigh Matt claimed that teachers would

get called into the principal's office and served a letter of reprimand for no apparent reason and without explanation. The principal would regularly make teachers cry.

The principal, on more than one occasion, drove by Matt's house to see what cars were in the driveway. Never would the principal ask any questions but would always assume the worst and "hope to catch us doing something we weren't suppose to do." On numerous occasions the principal falsely accused teachers of inappropriate behavior, but would never apologize for the action. The conditions he faced at his previous school, because of his principal, led to his suffering from migraine headaches and insomnia. Since migrating to a new school Matt has not been plagued with either headaches or insomnia.

Matt assumed that because of the principal's insecurities, the principal "made fun of" those teachers who were in higher degree programs. According to Matt the principal was threatened by other's strengths, and felt threatened by same-sex subordinates. While no one's work was good enough for the principal's extremely high expectations, the principal never clarified what was to be done, how it was to be done, or gave the support the teachers needed in order to accomplish what they "thought" the principal wanted. According to Matt you were "damned if you did, and damned if you didn't." Matt felt that a principal should know his/her own areas of strength and weakness, and his/her areas of negotiables and non-negotiables, and then hire staff who can bring cohesiveness to the school.

I asked Matt if he ever thought about going to his principal's supervisor to report what was taking place. He shook his head, and said that while he had thought about it, he

knew it would be in vain because the principal, and the principal's supervisor, were golf buddies.

Nothing that the principal could have said or done would have made Matt stay. Matt commented that at one point he tried to "kill the principal with kindness" by writing personal notes, volunteering for extra duties, and even having his wife bake something special for the principal. Nothing worked. Matt resigned himself to the fact that nothing would change at his school unless the principal was moved to a different school. So, he decided to begin looking for a teaching job elsewhere, and migrated.

At the time of our interview Matt was seeking a job in administration in his current county. He felt assured he would eventually get an administrative position as his current principal has put him in "leadership roles" in his school and is "keeping an eye on the job postings" in the school system. Matt said he never got this type of administrative support at either of his other schools. However, Matt stated that his prior experiences have helped shape his own philosophy of leadership and have shown him the kind of leader he will, and won't, be.

### *Carrie's Story*

When Carrie and I met, she identified herself as a special education teacher who had been teaching for 11 years. Three of those years had been at the middle-school level. The remaining eight years had been at the elementary-school level. She had taught in two different metropolitan school systems in our state. Carrie had a master's degree in a specialized area in her field. She decided to become a teacher because she loves children and knew that she could help them to be successful. Her most recent migration occurred

from a school located within the same school system where she was now currently teaching.

As with Charlotte, Carrie chose to meet at a local coffee shop. The coffee shop was located in the same town where Carrie currently teaches. I arrived at the coffee shop before Carrie and stood outside on the patio to wait for her. When she arrived I recognized her immediately based on the description she had given me.

Carrie seemed frazzled when she arrived and was apologetic because of her tardiness to our meeting. She went on to explain that she had been in a meeting at her school and that the meeting had run late. I told her there was no need to apologize; that I knew exactly what she was talking about as end-of-the-day meetings, by nature, are more-often-than-not that way. We joked about the need to have some sort of sign to alert someone to come and *save* you from some meetings, but that *this* meeting (our meeting) wasn't going to be like that.

The afternoon we met was beautiful. The sky was a crystal blue with very few clouds so we decided to sit outside at a table on the patio. After ordering our coffee we chose a table, covered by a big umbrella, away from the front door of the coffee shop, but still in view of the coffee shop patrons. Carrie commented that she enjoys *people-watching*, and wondering what the people do for a living, where they had come from, and where they were going. I couldn't help but wonder if her interest in *people-watching* might be distracting to her as we talked, but it never appeared to negatively impact our conversation. Carrie was very adept at multi-tasking.

Carrie was also personable and energetic; confident, but not egotistical. When I asked her if I could audio tape our conversation, she smiled and said she would rather me

not, but that we could talk all I wanted. I reminded her that our conversation was all about her and she smiled again.

According to Carrie, she chose to migrate from her previous school because the leadership at the school did not understand her needs, or of how to help teachers be effective in the classroom. She felt that the principal needed to "walk a mile in my shoes" in order to have a true grasp on what her days were like. With little planning time, and more and more demands on her time, she thought that administrators required too many extra meetings. While Carrie knew that certain meetings were necessary (like the one she just left), she also felt that there were times when effective communication could have taken place either through a written memo, that was put into a teacher's mailbox, or through an email. Carrie chuckled and then commented that she thought her former principal liked to hear herself talk.

Carrie felt that her principal also liked the feeling of "power" and "being in control." Carrie characterized her principal's leadership style as being overly reliant upon micro management. Carrie, with a sigh of frustration, reminded me of her education experience and degrees, and stated that she would have rather be treated like the professional educator she is, rather than a child "whose hand has to be held."

Carrie would have liked for her principal to have a true "open door policy." One in which she knew that she would be welcome at any time. Carrie understood that her principal might not be able to talk to her when she walked in, but just knowing the door was open, even if the principal said, "I'm busy at the moment. Can you come back later?" would have been better than the door being shut all the time. It would also have been better than having her head "bitten off" when she stepped across the threshold of the



door. I asked Carrie if it was that way all the time. She replied, “No, and that was part of the problem.” Carrie stated that “you never knew who you would get, Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde, when talking to the principal,” then made a growling noise and smiled. This inconsistency was one more reason Carrie avoided interactions with her principal. Shaking her head back and forth, Carrie commented that she didn’t have time in her day to try and figure out what was going on with the principal when she had students who needed her.

While Carrie didn’t expect “warm-fuzzies” all the time she stated it would have been nice, on occasion, to be genuinely recognized for a job well done. Instead, what she received from her principal was a stern “bark.” Carrie frustratingly stated that, “Just a pat on the back, or a note card placed in my mailbox, would have been wonderful.”

Thinking about her needs, Carrie noted she values administrative support and feels it is critical when dealing with students and parents. Carrie did not feel supported by her previous assistant principal, either. Instead, according to Carrie, the assistant principal *always* sided with the parent. In fact, Carrie frankly stated that she didn’t want to go into conferences with the assistant principal because she knew that more often than not, she would receive belittling and condescending comments in front of the parents or in front of her peers after the conference. When I asked if she had discussed this with her assistant principal, Carrie said that she tried to once, but her assistant principal basically told her that she was making it all up. When I asked if she had then gone to her principal, she said that she couldn’t do that because there was this “us - against -them” mentality that pervaded the building and that everyone knew that the principal “sided with *that* assistant principal no matter what.”

Carrie felt that there was no trust between her administrators and the teachers in her department. Because the administrators, on too many occasions, had said one thing, and then had done something else, it was difficult for Carrie to trust. Carrie sees herself as a trusting person, but knows that once trust has been broken, she finds it difficult to get it back - it must be earned-over time. It seemed to Carrie that her administrators didn't care anything about trusting, earning trust, being respectful, or earning respect.

In Carrie's mind, nothing could be done to "fix things." Carrie asked for a transfer, and received it, leaving another school with one less highly qualified teacher.

#### *Michael's Story*

My next participant, Michael, had been in education for 15 years, teaching at both the middle school and high school levels. He had taught a wide range of classes including science and social studies in three metropolitan school systems in our state. His most recent migration occurred from an adjacent metropolitan school system to where he was currently teaching. Michael stated that he migrated to another school due to the administration.

When trying to set up a meeting with Michael it quickly became apparent that his schedule was very full with school activities, but that he really wanted to talk about his experiences with migration. He asked if we could meet at a fast food restaurant near his school. We had to reschedule the meeting twice due to his school schedule.

I arrived at the restaurant before Michael, understanding that his time was valuable, and that he would probably need to rush off to get somewhere later that evening. However, the weather had turned rainy, windy, and cold, and gave me some hope that Michael might not have an evening activity to attend.

I recognized Michael immediately as he pulled into a parking spot at the restaurant. He wore a rain jacket and a baseball cap, both of which had a picture of his school's mascot and the school's initials embroidered on them. When Michael first arrived at the restaurant he appeared to be in a hurry. We introduced ourselves to each other then quickly ordered our meals. Michael grabbed his tray, which was filled with food (reminding me of the amount of food my sons eat), and selected a table where we could sit.

There were few patrons in the restaurant that evening so Michael had no difficulty in finding a table. He didn't appear concerned with where we sat, but more concerned with the timeliness of everything as he kept looking at his watch. I was glad that I had stood in a different line to order my dinner so we were both ready to sit down to eat and converse at the same time.

I placed my food tray on the table, took off my raincoat and sat down. Michael sat down and immediately began to eat. At that point in the evening I was unsure as to how successful this meeting would be. Not only was the smell of French fries taunting me, making my dinner salad less and less appealing with every inhaled aroma, but Michael appeared to be much more focused on his meal than on talking.

Michael was very business-like and direct (not interested in idle chit-chat), but was friendly and open. During our conversation he kept eye contact and smiled, when he didn't have food in his mouth. The more Michael spoke about his experience with migration, the more he seemed to calm down (which slowed down the rate of his speech and the rate at which he ate) and relax. My first assumption was that this had more to do with Michael's sitting, resting, and breathing, than with the topic of discussion. But, I

later concluded that Michael was indeed a lot like my sons; when he was hungry, nothing else mattered until he ate.

When I first spoke to Michael he agreed to being audio taped, however when it came time for us to discuss his experience with migration, he said that he had had more time to think about things and had changed his mind, allowing me to only take detailed notes. According to Michael the principal at his former school had very poor communication skills. When the principal did decide to hold faculty meetings the principal rarely would attend. Instead, the principal sent the assistant principals or lead teachers to conduct the meetings. Michael, taking another bit of his hamburger, and looking directly at me, questioned how someone with poor communication skills could become a principal of a school, or for that matter the leader of *any* group or organization.

Not only, according to Michael, did the principal have poor communication skills, the principal also had poor speaking and organization skills. The principal had difficulty anticipating problems as evidenced in the fact that the school had no structured Student Support Team (SST), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), or summer school program for those students who were in danger of retention. Michael then stated, lowering his voice, and leaning closer to me, that he knew it was against "the rules" for the principal not to have these teams at the school.

Because the principal was, according to Michael, a poor leader, there was no vision or mission at the school. There was definitely a lack of focus. Michael adamantly stated that he needed a leader who had strong communication skills and a clear vision of where the school was headed. "Like a coach has with his team," Michael added, his eyes widening, like a light-bulb had just been turned on in his mind.

While Michael's principal was charismatic with the public, according to Michael, that was not the case with the faculty. Michael added, shaking his head, that his former principal would try and intimidate the staff with threats of poor evaluations or termination - sometimes both. Comments like, "few teachers will make it to the end of the year," were commonly said to the staff. While the principal tended to stay behind closed doors, and was not visible walking the hallways or visiting teacher classrooms, the principal did seem to delight in finding teachers who were not at duty posts. Needless to say, morale was very low and the principal's behavior exacerbated the problem.

According to Michael, teachers would follow through with discipline issues, writing referrals to the administrators. More often than not the principal and assistant principals would "hide the referral forms," never getting to them. Or, on occasion, the principal would take the negative student behavior that had been written up by the teacher lightly, and no consequences would be given to the student. Michael indicated, taking his baseball cap off and running his fingers through his hair, that this behavior from the principal undermined the teachers' authority and morale suffered.

Michael and the other teachers had been told they couldn't fail more than ten percent of their students. This problem was compounded by the low expectations the principal had for the students. According to Michael, brow furled, "This low expectation was non-spoken, but very much evident in the principal's comments toward the staff." Because the staff was never offered staff development on teaching to the diverse group of students that comprised the student population, it seemed this "non-spoken" lower expectation was not to be changed, but fulfilled. Michael shrugged his shoulders, twisted his mouth and stated with frustration, that the staff was left with lower expectations of

students. Consequently they were unable to truly teach the curriculum due to the spoken "no more than ten percent of your students can fail - more commonly known as the ten percent rule."

All of these issues influenced Michael's decision to migrate to another school. I asked Michael, what could have been done to change his mind and keep him at that school? According to Michael, nothing could have been done. The damage had already been done, and it seemed there was "no visible light at the end of a non-ending tunnel." While Michael had friends at his previous school there was a lack of camaraderie established among the staff. Michael speculated this was because the "principal never modeled, or put value in such things."

### *Cindy's Story*

At the time I interviewed Cindy, she had been in education for 18 years, nine years at the elementary-school level and nine years at the middle-school level. During that 18 years Cindy had taught a variety of classes. She had taught in three different states, and in high poverty schools. Her most recent migration occurred from a more rural school system in the same state where she was currently teaching.

Cindy and I met at a local coffee shop, on a quiet street in a nearby town, on a gloomy Saturday morning. When I arrived Cindy was already there and had settled herself and her belongings into a table toward that back of the store. Cindy was busy reading a book and sipping coffee when I arrived, but looked up and waved me over to the table when she saw me enter the building. I walked up to the table and we formally introduced ourselves, chatting for a few minutes. I put my things on the table, asked her if I could get her anything, and then went to get my own coffee. By the time I returned

with my coffee in hand Cindy had put her book away and appeared ready to begin our intended conversation.

Cindy appeared very serious and no-nonsense, making eye-contact but not really smiling. While she was open and somewhat friendly, she seemed preoccupied. Initially I found myself wondering about the cause of her seeming preoccupation. I conjectured that perhaps it was the book she was reading. Or, maybe she was thinking of what she had to get accomplished that day. Perhaps it was the topic of our soon-to-be-had conversation that made her appear sullen and preoccupied.

After hearing her story I decided that her demeanor was because of the memories the topic of our conversation had evoked, and of her concern for teachers and students everywhere who have to contend with principals like the one she gladly left behind. Cindy reluctantly allowed me to tape our conversation but wanted the tape returned to her as soon as I was finished with it.

While Cindy has seen many principals come and go during her years in education, she migrated from one school to another because of a principal. Cindy stated that she had been at one school for numerous years and watched as 50-70 teachers left every year. Some of the movement may have been due to the schools increasing diversity, but, more than likely, she felt that the movement was due to the principal.

When I asked Cindy to tell me more and explain how this person impacted her own desire to migrate, her eyes dropped to focus on the cup of black coffee she held between her hands. She took in a deep breath, exhaled, looked up at me, and then she sadly expressed that she was tired of administrators getting away with things, and students losing out in the long run. She said that she was tired of going through the

"proper channels" and nothing happening. I kept quiet and waited patiently for Cindy to tell me more. After a few minutes had passed, with Cindy focusing on her coffee cup again, she began to tell me her story. She spoke slowly, but purposefully, and appeared to be visually seeing everything in her mind's eye as she relayed her story to me.

Cindy's experience that led up to her migration to another school began when her principal physically moved his office to the back area of the front office suites. The principal then placed black construction paper over the windows of his office to block others' visibility into the office. The staff was told that the principal didn't have time to answer personal emails, so they must go through the school secretary if they needed to contact the principal.

About this same time the staff noticed new furniture and decorations being delivered to the principal's office - oriental carpets, beveled glass for furniture tops, expensive lamps - but were told there were no funds for staff development. Then the principal took three rooms in the front of the school that had previously been used for classrooms and converted them to offices, putting the students who had originally been in these three classrooms outside in cold, damp, and dirty trailers. Cindy began to shake her head, and with disgust in her voice said that the principal called the trailers "learning cottages" to make them sound more appealing to both the staff and the community. She then looked me in the eyes and asked a rhetorical question, "How could he sleep at night knowing he put kids out there [in trailers] while he had all the creature comforts of home at school?" Cindy felt her principal was immoral, thinking only of his personal interests.

Because the staff had to make an appointment to see the principal by first speaking with his secretary (who was like the principal's "guard dog"), and you had to



see the principal to get permission to do *anything* at the school, there were several issues that were not addressed the year prior to Cindy's migrating to another school. When a fellow teacher got sick and the staff wanted to collect money to help the family, no staff member could get in to see the principal to get permission as his calendar was full. Also, the school had regularly participated in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. However, in the year before Cindy migrated, the school did not participate in the fund raising event as the principal "couldn't be bothered by such things" according to his secretary. Reflecting on these two experiences Cindy wished she had gone ahead and spear-headed both of these events, rallying the staff to monetarily support both the sick staff member and all the sick people who benefit from Relay for Life. But, begrudgingly she admitted, again with her eyes lowered, that she feared she would lose her job, which she couldn't afford to lose.

There was a commonly held sentiment by the staff of Cindy's former school that the principal had his favorite teachers. This created a "divided" staff. Cindy knew there were staff members that she could talk to about her frustration, and she knew there were other staff members with which she couldn't speak, in fear of the principal's retaliation. According to Cindy, staff members knew that if you didn't sign in in the mornings that the principal would "write you up." *No* excuses would be heard. However, Cindy noticed that the principal followed up on his threat by "writing up" only certain people.

Cindy conceded that while the principal did hold, and attend, regular meetings, the principal seemed "uneducated," having to painstakingly read from notes. At times the principal even had to read the words to commonly known songs during school functions. The principal appeared to have no vision or mission, or if he had one he never

shared it with the staff. According to Cindy, the principal was in it just for the status, or public relations aspect, not for the students.

While Cindy has no proof of another issue, as she began telling me about the following story, she said that it was "common knowledge among the staff." According to Cindy, as she lowered the level of her voice, the principal had to use personal funds to pay money back to the school where school funds had been used for personal items. There was talk among the staff of other unethical behavior, such as forging signatures on teacher observations and not reporting school discipline issues. In fact, Cindy stated with a tone of disgust in her voice, that there was an incident where a teacher was slapped by a student, and the principal refused to do anything about it. Also, teachers' cars were keyed and a windshield smashed, and - once again - nothing was done. Gang activity was rampant at the school. Because the principal was fearful of the school being labeled as "unsafe," which would reflect poorly on him, all of this went unreported.

Cindy went on to suggest that the principal had unethical hiring practices. While she stated that she is not a person of prejudices, there was mounting evidence at the school that the principal was hiring only minority candidates for open teaching positions. The principal would hire "warm bodies that were of color - no, not even warm bodies." The principal was "intent on hiring color, not quality." In the end it was the students who suffered because of the principal's unethical behaviors.

Cindy disclosed that she and some other staff members took their complaints as far up as the county's school board. Cindy's uncertain if anything had been done yet. However, she did know that the principal is no longer at the school, but currently holds a position at the county office. Cindy heard rumors that this is a "holding position" until a

thorough investigation can be done. She's not confident that is the case though because the principal has "a lot of friends higher up."

What Cindy does know, as she stated with confidence in her voice, is that she couldn't take it any longer. She and many other teachers, friends and acquaintances, at the school asked for a transfer. When I asked Cindy what could have been done differently for you to stay? "Having a principal who was ethical, moral and truly cared about people - doing what is right, even if it meant getting your name in the paper in a negative circumstance."

Cindy said with a half-smile on her face, and looking at me in the eyes, that at some schools, like the one she just migrated from, the staff is all that the students have. The teachers must be the parent, mentor, guidance counselor, coach, and teacher. But, this being the case, the teachers must have the support of the administration, and a mutual respect for each other. They must know that when things are tough, they will get through it together. They must be able to trust one another, knowing that they all do what is best for the students, even when it might be painful.

Cindy ended our planned conversation stating that she prays daily for the school and the teachers and kids that are still there. As for her, she had to get away before she entirely forgot why she got into teaching in the first place.

### *Lauren's Story*

At the time of data collection for this study, Lauren had been teaching for 23 years at both middle-school and high-school. She had her master's degree in her area of concentration, English, and an add-on certificate in English-Language-Learners (ELL). Lauren had taught in a rural county and two different metropolitan school systems in our

state. She has taught in upper and lower socio-economic areas. Her most recent migration occurred from an adjacent metropolitan school system.

Lauren and I met at a local fast food restaurant arriving at about the same time. We introduced ourselves and decided to get lunch. It was a cold, gloomy, gray day. Lauren chose for us to sit in a booth near a window. We took off our rain gear, got settled in, and commented on our lunch selection (both of us getting "healthy" salads and diet drinks).

Lauren was friendly, smiling, making eye-contact, chatting, and easily carried on polite conversation. However, when I asked her about beginning the interview, she looked down at her food, lowered her voice and the smile left her face as she indicated she did not want to be audio-taped during our conversation. Because her demeanor changed so quickly, I tried to put her at ease by stating that not using an audio-tape recorder was perfectly fine and that I would take notes instead. Lauren perked back up and said, with a smile, that that would be alright with her.

According to Lauren, when the leadership at her previous school eroded to expose the incompetency of those in charge, she put in for a transfer. When I asked her to elaborate Lauren spoke clearly and with purpose and stated that leadership directly impacts a teacher's decision whether to stay or leave. She further stated that leadership sets the tone for the entire school; "that's the key." "The principal's philosophy usually trickles to the other administrators and then to the teachers, staff, and students."

"Actions taken by administration send messages to teachers regarding support they may or may not receive during the course of a school year," Lauren said confidently. In her case it was evident that the messages that were being sent were non - supportive.

Lauren, with sadness in her voice, felt she did not have the support of the administration in dealing with difficult parents, difficult students, or improving her own instruction to accommodate a very diverse student group. Even though Lauren was not a novice teacher at the time, the first year Lauren was at her previous school she asked her administrator about being assigned a personal contact with another faculty member (mentor) to help her learn how to work better with the particular student population, but was given none. And, on two different occasions Lauren asked the principal about offering staff development classes to help the staff in dealing with these issues, but always got the same, non-committal response, of "I'll check into it." In disbelief, Lauren indicated that in the three years she was at the school, never did the staff have classes to assist with these issues.

Lauren went on to say that an administrator's handling of discipline in the school, value placed on teacher's opinions as a professional, and general expectations of the staff and students are all very important in setting the tone for success in a school. In her previous school she felt she had none of this type of support, respect or motivation to achieve from her administrators. Lauren said with irritation, shaking her head, that she felt like she spent more time trying to discipline her students than she did teaching them the curriculum. She didn't feel like she had the support from the administration to deal with the discipline issues. It was common knowledge that the principal would call a student into the office to speak about an incident that had occurred, and as a consequence only give the student a "slap on the wrist" and instructions "not to do that again."

Lauren would rather work for an administrator who is "straight shooting," so you always know where you stand. Even if she happened to disagree about something, at

least they could just agree to disagree. Her previous principal was very inconsistent with behaviors and attitude, so you never knew what you would encounter on any given day. This wishy-washy behavior made it very difficult to talk to the principal. "Was it better to try to address an issue face-to-face on any given day (hoping the principal was in a good mood)? What happens if you follow the principal's secretary's instructions to set up an appointment and get the principal on a really bad day? You run the risk of being screamed at, put down, and made to feel second-rate at best." Even on a good day her previous principal put on airs that set the principal apart from the teachers. Pretending he was superior to the teachers caused teachers to feel alienated and unwelcomed.

Morale dwindled with teachers feeling like they had no voice inside or outside of their classrooms, and little hope that anything would change. After three years Lauren put in for a transfer to another school. Many other staff members transferred as well. Lauren feels that the high teacher turnover at the school was due partly to the nature of the students who attended the school, but mainly due to the principal's behaviors. Lauren went on to speculate that perhaps the principal just didn't know what to do as the school had changed so drastically in three years; that perhaps the principal needed a principal-mentor.

#### Leadership Behaviors that Push Teachers to Migrate

The following major themes emerged from the data analysis as being leadership behaviors that push teachers to migrate: (a) Lack of knowledge about the business of school; (b) Lack of professionalism; and (c) Lack of personal ethics and morals. All of these behaviors have the potential to ebb and flow into each other and are not listed in any particular order.

*Lack of knowledge about the business of school*

One of the major areas of concern from all of the participants appeared to be in the area of the leader's lack of knowledge about the business of school. The major subthemes that emerged were the leader's lack of skills needed (a) to be supportive, (b) to make connections and build relationship, and (c) to transform a school into an effective community. During the one-on-one interviews Charlotte, Matt, Carrie, Michael, Cindy, and Lauren all commented on their principal's lack of knowledge about the business of school.

*Being supportive.* All of the participants described a need for support and that their administrator's lack of an ability to be supportive as a primary issue leading to their decision to migrate. For instance, Charlotte stated that her administrator first appeared to be supportive, but as the year continued the administrator was less and less visible, and Charlotte ended up feeling "neglected." The only time Charlotte's administrator came into her classroom was to do an observation. What Charlotte said she needed was an administrator who was frequently visible to the students and herself. Charlotte believed that the administrator's presence would have helped with the difficult classroom management issues posed by her special education students. Charlotte went on to say that her administrator appeared to have neglected all the new details, changes, and technology that recently occurred in the area of special education. Because of this she felt less supported.

Just as Charlotte did, Cindy also desired her principal's presence in order to feel supported. Cindy stated her principal was so far removed from the staff that he placed black construction paper over the windows of his office to block others visibility into the

office. And, the staff was told that the principal didn't have time to answer personal emails, so they must go through the school secretary if they needed to contact the principal.

While Charlotte and Cindy desired support through the principal's presence, Matt expressed a desire for information and guidance on how he and his fellow educators could live up to the administrator's high expectations. In his situation, Matt's, principal never clarified what was to be done, how it was to be done, or gave the support the teachers needed in order to accomplish what they thought the principal wanted.

In the case of Carrie, she believed that the administrator's lack of sensitivity to the amount of time teachers needed to plan and the increasing demands was evident in the amount of busy work and meetings that were called. In many cases she felt meetings were not opportunities for support, rather educators' time was being wasted. Carrie felt she had little planning time, and more and more demands on her day. She felt that her administrator required too many extra meetings when there were times that effective communication could have taken place either through a written memo, that was put into teachers' boxes, or through an email. Carrie stated that administrative support is critical when dealing with students and parents. However, Carrie didn't have that support with her previous administrator.

Charlotte and Carrie both wanted support with student discipline issues, as did Lauren and Michael. Michael felt that by his principal not dealing with discipline issues, the teacher's authority was undermined and morale suffered. The staff was never offered staff development on teaching to the diverse group of students that comprised the student population. Lauren stated that it was evident the messages that were being sent by her



principal were non - supportive. Lauren felt she did not have support dealing with difficult parents, difficult students, or improving her own instruction to accommodate a very diverse student group. On two different occasions Lauren asked the principal about offering staff development classes to help the staff in dealing with these issues, but in the three years she was at the school, never did they have classes to assist with these issues. Lauren went on to say that an administrator's handling of discipline in the school, value placed on teacher's opinions as a professional, and general expectation for the staff and students are all very important in setting the tone for success in a school. In her previous school she felt she had none of this type of support, respect or motivation to achieve.

Like Cindy and Charlotte, an elementary-school teacher in the focus group commented that the principals "lack of presence at the school" made her feel unsupported, while a middle-school teacher in the focus group commented on the principal's 'closed-door' policy to the office," which left that teacher feeling unsupported. A high-school teacher in the focus group said that the principal's "lack of support in dealing with parent and student issues," was a reason he had migrated, as did Carrie, Michael, Charlotte and Lauren. And, like Matt, another elementary school teacher in the focus group stated that a "lack of, or unclear, expectations of staff and students" was one of the reasons she migrated.

*Making connections and building relationships.* Many of the participants described a need to feel that their administrator was approachable and willing to discuss school issues. Because they didn't feel this sense of approachability, making it easy to form connections and build relationships, they chose to migrate. As an example, Matt stated that his principal was very unapproachable and intimidating. Matt felt that a

principal should know his/her own areas of strength and weakness, and his/her areas of negotiables and non-negotiables, and then hire staff who can bring cohesiveness to the school.

Just as Matt needed an administrator who was approachable, so did Cindy. Cindy stated the principal was so far removed from the staff that he placed black construction paper over the windows of his office to block others visibility into the office. And, the staff was told that the principal didn't have time to answer personal emails, so they must go through the school secretary if they needed to contact the principal.

Carrie also wanted to feel her administrator was approachable. Carrie would have liked for her administrator to have a true "open door policy." One in which she knew that she would be welcome at any time. Carrie understands that her administrator may not be able to talk to her when she walks in, but just knowing the door is open is better than the door being shut all the time. It would also be better than having her head "bitten off" when she stepped across the threshold of the door. Carrie stated it would be nice to be genuinely recognized for a job well done. Instead, what she got from her administrator was a stern "bark." Carrie went on to state that, "Just a pat on the back, or a note card placed in my mailbox, would have been wonderful."

Just as Carrie noted a desire for her administrator to be approachable, but also to show appreciation, Charlotte needed a show of appreciation from her administrator as well. Charlotte never got any "pats-on-the-back" from her administrator, nor even a kind word or smile indicating that she was doing a satisfactory job. Instead there was a lot of negativity that came from her administrator, which - in turn - produced more negativity in Charlotte and the other teachers in her department.

Carrie, Charlotte, Matt and Cindy all needed an administrator who was able to make connections and build relationships, as did several of the focus group participants. A middle school teacher stated that the principal's closed-door policy to the office made him very unapproachable, while a high school teacher in the focus group stated that the principal's "never apologizing when wrong but quick to point out others mistakes" made it difficult to want to work with the principal. A middle school teacher in the focus group stated that the principal's "inability, or lack of desire, to form relationships with staff members" as a reason she migrated. That same educator stated that "building relationships with staff is at the heart of a school." In this participant's opinion "a leader should try to get to know each staff member on a personal level to discuss things such as family, advanced degrees, outside interests-like baseball, etc."

*Transforming a school into an effective community.* All of the participants described a need to be a part of a school that was an effective community, and cited this as a reason they migrated. According to them the leader was expected to be at the helm of the school community and have a vision, or direction the school was headed in, that was shared with the staff. To do this the leader needed not only a vision, but strong communication skills. However, Cindy stated that while her principal did hold, and attend, regular meetings, the principal seemed "uneducated," having to painstakingly read from notes-lacking communication skills-and had no vision or mission.

As with Cindy, Michael's principal at his former school had very poor communication skills. When Michael's principal did decide to hold faculty meetings the principal rarely would attend. Because the principal was, according to Michael, a poor leader, there was no vision or mission at the school. Michael's principal also had

difficulty anticipating problems as evidenced in the fact that the school had no structured Student Support Team (SST), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), or summer school program for those students who were in danger of retention. While Michael had friends at his previous school there was a lack of camaraderie established among the staff. Michael speculated this was because the principal never modeled, or put value in such things.

Just as Michael's former principal wasn't able to establish a sense of community and family among the staff, Charlotte stated that her administrator was not able to pull all teachers together, regular education and special education, to work as a team. Instead, Charlotte's students too often were left out of school activities and looked down on.

Carrie also desired a feeling of community and family, but got something else entirely. Carrie felt that her administrator liked the feeling of "power" and being "in control." Carrie characterized her administrator's leadership style as being overly reliant upon micro management instead of using the staff's areas of strength to build an effective school.

Matt, like Carrie, noted his administrator not noticing, or using, the staff's areas of strength to build an effective school. Matt felt that a principal should know his/her own areas of strength and weakness, and his/her areas in which he/she is or is not willing to negotiate first, then hire staff who can bring cohesiveness to the school. But, that was not what Matt encountered at his previous school before he migrated.

As Matt and Carrie needed an administrator who took note of the staff's areas of strength, and build upon them, Lauren wanted her administrator to offer staff development in order to strengthen her areas of weakness, and improve upon her areas of

strength. However, on two different occasions Lauren asked her former principal about offering staff development classes to help the staff in dealing with the student and diversity issues in her school, but in the three years she was at the school, never did the principal offer classes to assist the staff with these issues.

As with all of the individual participants in the study, some of focus group participants cited their leader's lack of ability to transform a school into a community as a reason for migrating. Some of the group participants stated that their leader's lack of a vision, or discussion of the direction the school should be moving in; inability to interpret data thus no idea of what kind of professional development the teachers needed; and poor communication skills, including speaking and listening, were all reasons they migrated.

*Lack of professionalism*

All sixteen participants in my study cited leadership behaviors, which I collectively refer to as the leader's lack of professionalism, as one of their biggest areas of discontent and main reasons for migrating. The major subthemes that emerged during the interviews were the leader's lack of (a) respect, (b) trust, and (c) consistent behavior. In my opinion all of these behaviors impact a leader's ability to support staff, build relationships and make connections, and transform a school into an effective community, all of which I outlined in *Lack of Knowledge of the Business of School*, above.

*Respect.* According to Charlotte and Matt, they needed to be respected by, and feel respect for, their administrator. Without this respect from their administrator, they both chose to migrate. On numerous occasions, Charlotte was "screamed at" in front of her students, and their parents. Also, Charlotte was openly chastised in front of her peers when she walked in ten minutes late to a meeting even though the administrator was

frequently late to these meetings. What Charlotte thought was an "open door policy" quickly turned into the door shut and left Charlotte feeling uncomfortable with knocking. Charlotte states that when she did knock on the door the administrator would chastise her. According to Charlotte, "It was easier to avoid the administrator's office than reap the wrath that was behind the door."

While Charlotte was screamed at, and openly chastised by her administrator, Matt was berated at and cursed at by his principal. The principal would do this only to non-tenured teachers. However, the principal would talk negatively about all teachers - both to their faces and behind their backs. Matt claimed that teachers would get called into the principal's office and served a letter of reprimand for no reason and without explanation. The principal would regularly make teachers cry. Matt assumes that due to the principal's insecurities, the principal "made fun of" those teachers who were in higher degree programs.

There was evidence of similar disrespectful administrator behaviors among participants of the focus group. Examples given that led to migration from the focus group participants included the principal's "putting teachers down in front of students, parents and peers" (a middle school teacher), "raising the voice- yelling- at the teacher" (an elementary school teacher), and "use of sarcastic tone/statements when speaking with teachers" (a middle school teacher),

*Trust.* Three of the individual participants in the study noted that they needed to be able to trust their administrator, and know the administrator trusted them. Matt's principal was very suspicious of the staff and on more than one occasion drove by Matt's house checking on him. The principal would never ask any questions but would always

assume the worst. And, on numerous occasions, the principal falsely accused teachers of inappropriate behavior, but would never apologize for the false accusation.

Like Matt's previous principal, Michael's previous principal was not trusting of the staff. Even though Michael's principal tended to remain behind closed doors, the principal seemed to delight in finding teachers who were not at duty posts.

As did Matt and Michael, Carrie also felt that there was no trust between her administrator and the teachers in her department. Carrie characterized her administrator's leadership style as being overly reliant upon micro management, leaving Carrie to feel she would rather be treated like the professional educator she is, rather than a child whose hand has to be held.

The issue of a lack of trust was also discussed in the focus group as a reason for migrating. Two of the comments made in the focus group were about the principal's "lack of acknowledgement of teacher as expert in his/her field-questioning teacher's knowledge of subject area" (a high school teacher), and having "all teachers sign in at various times before, during, and after conferences- showed a lack of professional courtesy" (an elementary school teacher).

*Consistent behavior.* All but two of the individual participants in the study mentioned that their principal exhibited inconsistent patterns of behavior. This inconsistency was cited as one of the reasons the teachers migrated. Matt stated that teachers never knew what personality the principal was going to display at any given moment. Matt felt that a principal should know his/her own areas of strength and weakness, and his/her areas of negotiables and non-negotiables; but, when principals didn't know themselves they would naturally exhibit inconsistent behavior.

Just as Matt saw inconsistency in his principal's behavior, so did Lauren. Lauren stated that she would rather work for an administrator who is "straight shooting," so you always know where you stand. Her previous principal was very inconsistent with behaviors, and attitude, so "you never knew what you would encounter on any given day." This "wishy-washy" behavior made it very difficult for Lauren to talk to the principal. "You run the risk of being screamed at, put down, and made to feel second-rate." Even on a good day her previous principal put on "airs" that set the principal apart from the teachers. Pretending he was superior to the teachers caused teachers to feel alienated and unwelcomed.

Cindy's principal's inconsistent behavior depended on the staff member with whom the principal was dealing with. Cindy knew there were only certain staff members that she could talk to, and she knew there were other staff members with which she couldn't speak, in fear of the principal's retaliation. It was commonly known in Cindy's previous school that if you didn't sign in in the mornings that the principal would "write you up." No excuses would be heard. However, Cindy noticed that only certain people would be "written up."

While Matt, Lauren and Cindy all commented on their prior principal's inconsistent behavior, Carrie described her principal's inconsistent behavior another way. Carrie stated that "you never knew who you would get, Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde, when talking to the administrator." This inconsistency was one more reason Carrie avoided interactions with her administrator. Because the administrator, on too many occasions, had said one thing, then done something else, it was difficult to trust. Carrie sees herself as a trusting person, but once that trust has been broken, she found it difficult to get it



back - it must be earned. It seemed to Carrie that her administrator didn't care anything about trusting, earning trust, being respectful, or earning respect.

Like Carrie, during the focus group meeting two middle school teachers and one high school teacher used the phrase "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" to describe their former principal's inconsistent behavior. They all stated that this behavior was one reason they migrated.

*Lack of personal ethics and morals*

Four of the six individual participants indicated that they would rather work for a leader who had personal ethics and morals. If their leader didn't have personal ethics and morals, then they viewed this as a reason to migrate. While all four of these participants indicated personal ethics and morals were important to them, the specific examples cited were very different from each other.

Matt claimed that teachers would get called into the principal's office and served a letter of reprimand for no reason and without explanation. The principal, on more than one occasion, drove by Matt's house to see what cars were in the driveway. According to Matt the principal was threatened by other's strengths, and felt threatened by same - sex subordinates, so Matt hypothesized that the principal was trying to "catch him" doing something he should not be doing.

According to Michael the staff was unable to truly teach the curriculum due to the principal's spoken "no more than ten percent of your students can fail - more commonly known as the ten percent rule." Michael's former principal would try and intimidate the staff with threats of poor evaluations or termination - sometimes both. Comments like, "few teachers will make it to the end of the year," were commonly said to the staff. His

principal seemed to delight in finding teachers who were not at their duty posts. Michael stated that more often than not the principal and assistant principals would hide student discipline referral forms, never getting to them. Or, on occasion, the principal would take the negative student behavior lightly, and no consequences would be given. The staff was never offered staff development on teaching to the diverse group of students that comprised the student population. Michael felt these behaviors were unethical and immoral.

Cindy also cited immoral behavior by her principal. The principal had new furniture and decorations delivered to the office - oriental carpets, beveled glass for furniture tops, expensive lamps - but the staff was told there were no funds for staff development. Cindy cited other examples of her principal's immoral behavior-taking three rooms that had been used for classrooms and converting them to offices, thus putting the students who had originally been in these three classrooms out in trailers; staff member not being allowed to see the principal without going through the secretary; playing favorites with the staff; and, forging signatures on teacher observation documents. There was also talk of the principal under-reporting student discipline issues because the principal was fearful of the school being labeled as "unsafe." Cindy goes on to say that the principal seemed to have unethical hiring practices as well. While she states that she is not a person of prejudices, there was mounting evidence that the principal was hiring only minority candidates for open positions at the school. According to Cindy, the principal was in the position just for the status, or public relations aspect, not for the students.

Lauren felt that the way her former principal handled student discipline issues was immoral. Lauren stated that it was common knowledge that her former principal would call a student into the office to speak about an incident that had occurred, and as a consequence, only give the student a slap on the wrist and instructions not to do that again. Lauren felt that because of the principal's improper handling of student discipline, the students felt like they were the ones in control of the school, and teachers soon realized not to expend their energies writing student referrals, as nothing would be done.

The focus group participants confirmed that corrupt administrators, or administrators with reduced ethics and morals, were a large problem in many of the teachers' previous schools, not just the teachers from the one-on-one interviews. This corruption was evident in the areas of "inappropriate use of school funds" (a middle school teacher), "grading procedures and practices" (a high school teacher), "playing favorites with the staff, which allowed certain teachers to get the 'best assignments'" (an elementary school teacher), "use of intimidation tactics to get a personal agenda into the school" (a middle school teacher), "practicing a 'do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do' philosophy" (a middle school teacher), "ignoring problem students and discipline referrals" (a middle school teacher), and "on a power trip and all that entails" (a high school teacher). When I asked this participant to tell me what that meant I was told that "the administrator seemed to delight in inflicting emotional discomfort on others." Seven of the ten focus group participants used the terms unethical or immoral during the focus group meeting when discussing some of their former principal's behavior.

One of the middle school teachers in the focus group recalled a rumor at her previous school about the married principal having an affair with one of the single teachers who worked there. While the principal, and the teacher, denied the affair, the staff felt that the rumor was true. The belief that the rumor was true made it difficult for the focus group teacher to work with teacher. The year after the focus group teacher migrated there was an internal investigation at the school. It resulted in the principal being fired and the teacher being moved to a different school.

### Summary

The results of my study identified three main areas of leadership behaviors which teachers indicated directly influenced their decisions to migrate: (a) Lack of Knowledge of the Business of School-which includes that leaders inability to be supportive, make connections and build relationships, and transform a school into a community; (b) Lack of Professionalism-which includes the leaders lack of respect, trust, and consistent behavior; and (c) Lack of Personal Ethics and Morals. For each of these areas, a number of teachers indicated that it was an important issue in their decision to leave a school. In Chapter Five I will look at each of these areas and discuss implications and recommendations for leaders and leadership programs, along with suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

As teacher turnover increases, and the demands for accountability and student achievement continue to be persistent, a thorough investigation of how to retain effective, highly qualified, teachers is crucial. The dominant areas of research regarding teacher turnover have focused on the teacher's *working conditions*, including teachers having the opportunity to participate in professional development (Parsad et al., 2001), a new teacher's ability to participate in a formal teacher-mentor program (Darling-Hammond, L., 2003), the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the school (Carroll et al., 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Kelly, 2004; Scafidi et al., 2007), and the teacher feeling supported by his/her school leader (Chapman & Green, 1986; Futernick, 2007; Hirsch & Emerick, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001b). However, very few studies focused solely on the leader's behaviors and how those behaviors impact teacher turnover (Barnett, 2002; Eggen, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Hirsch & Emerick, 2007; Thornton et al., 2007).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to contribute to the literature regarding teacher turnover. I sought to describe specific leadership behaviors, as identified by migrating teachers, which push the ever-revolving door of teacher turnover. I sought to gather this information in a research inquiry focusing on these three guiding questions:

- What are the perceptions of migrating teachers regarding the leader's behaviors, qualities and attributes at his/her former school?
- How did these perceptions influence the teacher's desire to migrate to another school?

- Was there anything that the leader could have done differently that would have made the migrating teacher stay?

By listening to teachers' voices from the six case-study participants, and to the opinions of the individuals in the focus group, my study revealed issues with building-level leaders' behaviors which must be addressed if the phenomenon of teacher turnover is going to decrease. If these behaviors are allowed to continue, then it will be our children who will pay the ultimate price.

Working with the six primary participants gave me the opportunity to listen closely to the words of individual teachers as they described their own story of migration. This approach also allowed me to be cognizant of the expressions of pain, anger, frustration, and even hurt, that was sometimes evident on their faces, or in their voices. Even the participants' choices for the locations of our interviews and their preferences regarding whether they were comfortable with tape recording was revealing. During the one interview that took place at a teacher's school, I remember thinking that you could tell a lot about the teacher being interviewed by the appearance of his classroom and his interactions with other staff members. At the same time, the fact that the other five key informants chose not to meet on their school campus, and many were uncomfortable with the idea of having their experiences captured on tape, was also noteworthy.

During the three-hour focus group meeting with the additional participants, conversation flowed easily. It appeared that the educators were enjoying each other's company and conversation. There was speculation regarding how their administrators got to be in the role of principal, and on a more adult level, which principal may have been "sleeping with" whom at the county-level. There was conversation about politics

and the state of the "business" of education in regards to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001). There was, however, no remorse in their decision to leave their previous schools. Prior to saying our good-byes for the evening an elementary school teacher, who had engaged in the conversation, but was by far the quietest member of the group, reminded us all of a saying regarding students and teachers-"They [students] don't care how much you [teachers] know, until they know how much you care." Then that same teacher stated, "I think the same can be said for teachers and administrators." As a whole the teachers I interviewed felt sad for the staff members they left behind, and the students who ultimately are the ones who lose.

#### Leadership Behaviors that Push Teacher Turnover

The results of my study identified three main areas of leadership behaviors which teachers indicated directly influenced their decisions to migrate: (a) Lack of Knowledge of the Business of School, (b) Lack of Professionalism, and (c) Lack of Personal Ethics and Morals. For each of these areas, a number of teachers indicated that it was an important issue in their decision to leave a school.

Prior research showed that teachers migrated because of characteristics associated with schools. Ingersoll (2001b), Elfers et al. (2006), Parsad et al. (2001), and Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) all found that teachers migrated because of a poor school climate and indicated this was related to teachers' lack of participation in decision making, professional development, and a lack of collegial and administrative support. Blase (1986) and Denscombe (1985) discovered that teachers leave a school that has a high level of student discipline, and a lack of administrative support to deal with the large amounts of student discipline. Danielson (2002), Darling-Hammond (1998), Kirby et al.

(1999), and Merrow (2001) showed that new teachers who had a formal teacher mentor tended to remain in the teaching profession, as compared to new teachers who did not have a formal mentor teacher.

When you look at the characteristics associated with schools, which teachers cite as reasons for migrating, it is evident that the leader in a school can directly impact many of these characteristics. While my study supports the findings of these earlier studies, what is critical to my research findings is that veteran teachers feel they *know* what a leader should know, and do, when it comes to the business of schooling. And, as a result, these educators decide to leave when it is apparent that their leader has no idea what to do to effectively lead the school community. The teachers in my study stated that their leaders did not support them, know how to build relationships, or turn a school into a professional learning community that supports learning for all. Their leaders *lacked the knowledge about the business of school*, so they left.

The previous research on teacher turnover showed that teachers value trust between themselves and their leaders and that the quality of that relationship was important to them (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007). Various researchers discussed the relationship between the leader and the follower, and how important this relationship is to the success of the organization (Duke, 1986; Einstein, 1995; Einstein & Humphreys, 2001; Kelly, 1992). My study supports these findings. However, my study indicated some *specific* leader behaviors that squelch this leader-follower relationship, push teachers to migrate, and decrease the overall success of the school. The teachers in my study indicated that they needed to feel respect and trust, for, and from, their leader, if they were to remain in their school. The teachers in my study stated that some of the



behaviors their leaders exhibited that hurt the respect-trust relationship were their leaders were inconsistent and played-favorites with the staff. Other specific leader behaviors that were mentioned include the leader's screaming at teachers, belittling them in front of their peers, and parents, and using a sarcastic tone when addressing the teacher. My study showed that leaders who exhibited these types of behaviors, according to the teachers, *lacked professionalism*, neither acting as a professional, nor treating teachers as professionals, and pushed teacher turnover.

The last area of leader behaviors, as indicated from my study, which negatively impacts teacher turnover, is a leader's *lack of personal ethics and morals*. While moral leadership has been mentioned in the literature, I was unable to find any research linking moral leadership to teacher turnover. Easley (2006) discussed the importance of moral leadership on teacher retention, stating that teacher retention, while multi-layered, implicates principals' moral leadership. He went on to say that traditional leadership methods, roles and responsibilities, are called into question when a school has a high-level of teacher turnover. Gips (1989) elaborated on the need to have an environment of care in a school, one where care and responsibility for the relationships among the human participants in the community are foremost. It is the leader who has the most influence on the school environment. Burns (1978) and Greenfield (1999) both spoke of moral leadership, and stated that moral leadership entails being deliberately moral in one's conduct, toward and with others and oneself, and in the service of purposes and activities that seek to meet the best needs of all children and adults.

Many leadership theorists (Drury, 2005; DuFour, 2001; Hunter, 2004; Jean-Marie, 2004; Senge, 1995; Spears, 1998, 2001) discussed a type of leadership called

servant leadership. A leader is considered a servant leader when he/she is selfless, and strives to create a school setting where people work toward a shared vision and honor collective commitments to themselves and others. This was the type of leadership that the teachers in my study seemed to want, desire, need, but did not find at the schools they left. In fact, on too many occasions the type of leadership exhibited was just the opposite. Some of the teachers' stories included memories of their principals falsifying grades, forging signatures on teacher evaluations, and misusing school funds. There were also stories of leaders abusing the power they had as the leader of the school with threats of groundless termination, showing favoritism to certain staff members, and carrying on inappropriate relationships with teachers. The teachers in my study also felt that by the principal not offering staff development opportunities to the staff, which would have helped them support the needs of the students, the leaders were exhibiting amoral behavior. They also felt that too often the principal exhibited amoral behavior by allowing students to continue to misbehave, with no consequences for their actions. There was frustration among the teachers I interviewed towards the county-level personnel for allowing these principal behaviors to continue at the local school level, which was evidenced by the fact few principals were released from their job, but were simply shuffled around from job-to-job within the school district.

#### Implications and Recommendations

There are some serious implications from this study regarding leaders' behaviors and how they push teachers to migrate. As evidenced from my study, if leaders want to reduce teacher turnover, they should try and incorporate certain behaviors into their leadership, while reducing other behaviors. Because my research provides evidence that

there are specific behaviors, exhibited by leaders, which push teachers to migrate-lack of knowledge about the business of school, lack of professionalism, and lack of personal morals-I will divide my recommendations into two main categories based on the results of my study: (a) organizational leadership behaviors-focusing on the information regarding a leader's lack of knowledge about the business of school, and (b) personal leadership behaviors-focusing on both a leader's lack of professionalism and personal morals.

*Organizational leadership behaviors*

One of the major areas of concern from all of the participants appeared to be in the area of the leader's lack of knowledge about the business of school, which includes the leader's lack of skills needed (a) to be supportive, (b) to make connections and build relationship, and (c) to transform a school into an effective community. All of the participants described a need for support, and that their administrator's lack of an ability to be supportive as a primary issue leading to their decision to migrate. Even though the participants expressed the need for support in different ways, for instance, Charlotte stated that her administrator first appeared to be supportive, but as the year continued the administrator was less and less visible, and Charlotte ended up feeling "neglected," while Matt expressed a desire for information and guidance on how he and his fellow educators could live up to the administrator's high expectations. Carrie believed that her administrator's lack of sensitivity to the amount of time teachers needed to plan and the increasing demands of the job were never taken into consideration. Michael stated that by his principal not dealing with discipline issues, or offering staff development on how to teach to the school's diverse student population, he did not feel supported. Cindy's

principal was so far removed from the staff that he placed black construction paper over the windows of his office to block others visibility into the office. Because of his lack of availability, Cindy did not feel supported. Lauren felt she did not have support dealing with difficult parents, difficult students, or improving her own instruction to accommodate a very diverse student group. Different participants in the focus group also commented on their principal's lack of presence at the school, and lack of support in dealing with parent and student issues, which left them feeling un-supported, as reasons they had migrated.

Some recommendations I would suggest to leaders to help that teachers feel supported would be to: (a) develop differentiated instructional roles, such as mentors and curriculum coaches, to support the teachers; (b) ensure that teachers have continued opportunities to develop and hone skills to meet the needs of the school's learners by offering various models of professional development such as study groups, critical friends groups, vertical team groups, action research, and mentoring; (c) ensure teacher's have access to the resources they need to build quality lessons and assessments, and train them on how to use these resources, especially in the growing area of technology; (d) communicate clear expectations to staff, parents, and students; and (e) have clear and consistent student discipline policies, and support the teachers when dealing with student discipline issues.

Many of the participants described a need to feel that their administrator was approachable and willing to discuss school issues. Because they didn't feel this sense of approachability, making it easy to form connections and build relationships, they chose to migrate. Charlotte needed an administrator who could pull all teachers together, regular

education and special education, to work as a team, and who gave "pats-on-the-back" indicating that she was doing a satisfactory job. Carrie would also like to get some kind of recognition for a job well-done. Matt wanted a principal who was approachable and unintimidating, who knew his/her own areas of strength and weakness, and his/her areas in which he/she is or is not willing to negotiate, and would then hire staff members who would bring cohesiveness to the school. Carrie, Cindy, and several of the focus group members, would have liked for their administrator to have a true "open door policy" and to want to build relationships with the staff. And, one of the focus group members stated that the principal's inability to apologize when wrong but quick to point out others mistakes made it difficult to want to work with the principal.

When looking at teachers' need for the leader to build relationships and make connections, some suggestions I would make would be to: (a) find ways to express appreciation to the staff without utilizing the budget- duty-free lunches, personal notes in their mailbox, blue jeans days, etc.; (b) be approachable, and be seen-often-in the school building-hallways, classrooms, cafeteria-and at school events-ballgames, concerts, competitions; (c) celebrate successes of the school, staff, and students; and, (d) find ways to build positive relationships with staff, students, parents and the community, both within the school day, and after the school day ends; and (e) place teachers in leadership roles when they are ready-this entails truly knowing the staff and not being afraid to give up control.

All of the participants described a need to be a part of a school that was an effective community, and cited this as a reason they migrated. According to them the leader was expected to be at the helm of the school community and have a vision, or

direction the school was headed in, that was shared with the staff. Charlotte wanted her administrator to be able to pull all teachers together to work as a team, while Carrie felt she needed an administrator who did not rely upon micro management. Michael, Cindy, and several of the focus group members needed a leader who had good organizational and communication skills, who set up support services at the school, who had a vision, and built a sense of camaraderie among the staff and students. Lauren and some of the focus group members wanted a principal who would analyze and interpret data, and offer staff development classes to help the staff in dealing with school-wide issues.

Some recommendations I would suggest to leaders that would help transform a school into a community would be to: (a) try and establish formal and informal opportunities to gather teacher input regarding teacher's teaching assignments, school schedules, and professional development opportunities they need by disaggregating the school's data; (b) develop, and engage, school improvement teams in collaborative decision making; and, (c) engage the community and business organizations to identify how their resources can support student learning.

In trying to reduce teacher turnover, leaders would be wise to look at their own schools, as the organizations they are, and through the lens of an organizational leader, and address any problem areas that may exist. From reflecting on the teachers' stories of migration in my study, and knowing the organizational reasons they migrated, leaders may need to adjust some of their current practices in order to reduce teacher turnover at their schools.

*Personal leadership behaviors*

The second area of major concern from all of the participants was in the area of the leader's lack of (a) professionalism, including the lack of respect, trust, and consistent behavior; and (b) personal ethics and morals. According to Charlotte, Lauren and Matt, one of their main concerns with their administrator was a lack of respect. They all spoke about their principals berating and chastising them in front of their peers. Even some of the focus group members included lack of respect from their administrator as a reason they migrated. Matt, Michael and Carrie felt a lack of trust from their principal helped to push them to migrate. Two members of the focus group also indicated that a lack of trust from their principal was one of the reasons they decided to leave. Matt, Carrie, Cindy and Lauren all spoke of their principals' inconstant behavior, and stated that teachers never knew what personality the principal was going to display at any given moment. They all felt that this wishy-washy behavior made it difficult to trust and build relationships, especially knowing that the principal played favorites with the staff. Focus group members called this type of behavior "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and also indicated this type of behavior pushed them to migrate.

Some recommendations I would suggest to leaders to address teachers' concerns in regards to leader's lack of professionalism would be to: (a) develop a proactive leadership style, which promotes teacher empowerment, meaningful involvement, and effective communication; (b) treat teachers as adults, not children, showing respect for the professionals they are; (c) build trust among staff, students, parents, and the school community; (d) initiate ongoing, positive communication; (e) develop effective listening skills, seeking first to understand; (f) have a thorough understanding of state and national

policies (e.g. NCLB, AYP) and how those impact the school; (g) inspect what is expected and model expected behaviors; (h) engage in professional development opportunities, and get involved with professional organizations; (i) collaborate, and engage in collegial conversations, with other principals and leaders; (j) lead reflectively; and, (k) consistently ask yourself, is this what is best for my *students*.

Four of the six individual participants, and seven of the ten group participants, cited lack of personal ethics and morals as a reason they migrated. Matt claimed that teachers would get called into the principal's office and served a letter of reprimand for no reason and without explanation. Michael stated that the staff was unable to truly teach the curriculum due to the principal's ten percent rule who often threatened the staff with poor evaluations or termination if they went against his rule. To make matters worse, Michael cited examples of his principal's inappropriate handling of student discipline. Cindy also cited immoral behavior by her former principal, including mishandling of school funds, and unethical behavior when dealing with teacher evaluations, student discipline, and hiring practices. Lauren also stated that her former principal mishandled student discipline. Corrupt administrators or administrators with reduced moral ethics were a large problem in many of the focus group members' previous schools. Examples of this corruption included inappropriate use of school funds, unethical grading procedures and practices, favoritism among staff members, use of intimidation tactics, practicing a 'do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do' philosophy, and ignoring problem students and discipline referrals. Sergiovanni (1992) and Fullan (2001) both speak about moral purpose in discussions of effective leadership. Sergiovanni states that an effective leader should maintain high ideals and a moral purpose, and appreciate the moral-ethical



implications of the work done in schools. Fullan added to the discussion on moral purpose by stating that every leader, to be effective, must have and work on improving his or her moral purpose.

Some recommendations I would suggest to leaders to address teachers' concerns in regards to lack of personal ethics and morals would be to: (a) be knowledgeable of the school's budget, be a good steward of the funds, know how to generate funds through fundraising, and apportion all resources ethically and fairly; (b) understand how a school earns teachers through various programs-special education, gifted, ELL, etc.- and know how to best staff a school, maximizing the points allotted, in the ways that best support the *students*; (c) do not play "favorites" among the staff and place teachers on a Professional Development Plan, when needed, basing it solely on factual information; (d) consistently be cognizant of your behaviors and actions and ask if they are fair and consistent, and can be morally and ethically defended; (e) know your areas of strength and weakness, and ask for assistance when needed; and (f) find ways to de-stress-exercising, gardening, reading for pleasure, meditating, praying, etc.

In an effort to reduce teacher turnover, leaders would be wise to look not only at their schools through a broad organizational lens, but at their own leadership behaviors through a microscopic lens. What they find under the microscope may indeed surprise them, especially in the light of the results of my study. Because of the new light that the results of my study bring to the area of teacher turnover, leaders would be remiss not to examine their own leadership behaviors. From reflecting on the teachers' stories of migration in my study, and knowing the leader behaviors which pushed them to migrate, leaders may need to change some of their current behaviors in order to reduce teacher

turnover at their schools. Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 categories of behaviors, which they called responsibilities, of the school leader, many of which I suggested above, based on my study. Marzano et al. correlated these school leader responsibilities to student achievement, which I do not find coincidental, in the least, based on the findings of my study. My study concludes that when leaders lack certain leadership behaviors teachers will choose to migrate. Prior research showed that a high level of teacher turnover can negatively affect the cohesiveness and effectiveness of school communities by disrupting educational programs and professional relationships intended to improve student learning (Bryk et al., 1990; Ingersoll, 2001a; Mobley, 1982; Price 1977); and, in schools with a large amount of teacher turnover, students may be more likely to have inexperienced teachers who we know are less effective on average (Kane et al., 2006; Rivkin et al., 2005; Rockoff, 2004).

Keeping good teachers should be one of the most important things that a school leader does. Substantial research evidence suggests that well-prepared, capable teachers have the largest impact on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). Effective teachers are a valuable human resource for schools and should be respected, supported and treasured. Teachers in my study evidenced dissatisfaction and frustration when working with principals who exhibited certain behaviors. Their level of dissatisfaction and frustration was such that they chose to migrate. If the goal of a school system is to limit teacher turnover, then the powers that be should make a concerted effort to address these concerns.

My research provides evidence that there are specific behaviors, exhibited by principals, which push teachers to migrate-lack of knowledge about the business of

school, lack of professionalism, and lack of personal ethics and morals. In having this information school systems may want to ensure that new hires for leadership positions do not have these qualities, or at least are aware that these qualities can lead to teacher turnover. This information may also be used to help educate and train those people who already have leadership positions so that they can be aware of their own leadership qualities, and styles, and how they might impact teachers' migration. School systems may need to offer professional development opportunities to principals regarding this information, and offer support to principals who need to change their negative behaviors. Also, colleges with educational leadership preparation programs should take note of these findings, incorporating them into the program.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

Additional studies could be performed based on the results of this study. While this study concentrated on veteran teachers' decisions to migrate based on their perceptions of their leaders' behaviors, there was a wide variety of variables among the 16 teachers. These variables included school level taught (elementary, middle and high), number of years in the teaching profession (seven to 26), subject area taught, and gender. My study did not show any patterns among these variables, indicating to me that these veteran teachers, no matter what their gender, subject area, number of years teaching, or grade level, were all wanting for the same types of behaviors from the school leader, for them to stay at a school. However, if a researcher chose to collect data in a different way, determine the sample in a different manner, or include a larger sample selection, then the results might possibly be different. Further research on teacher turnover could investigate to see if any differences existed from variable to variable, say females versus

males - perhaps females need more support than males, in regards to perceptions of leadership behaviors and migration. It might also add to the discussion of teacher turnover to determine if the principals of the schools the teachers left viewed their leadership behaviors the same way that the teachers who left viewed them.

### Conclusion

As teacher turnover increases, and the demands for accountability and student achievement continue to persist, retention of effective, highly qualified, teachers is essential. With the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and schools meeting Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP), keeping quality teachers in the classrooms is more important than, perhaps, it has ever been. With the growing diversity in our schools, teachers today are given more and more responsibility to determine ways to differentiate education for students, so that the achievement gap is narrowed. When we fail to retain effective, highly qualified, teachers, we essentially fail our students.

It is both fortunate, and unfortunate, that leadership behaviors play such a vital role in teacher turnover. It is fortunate because leadership behaviors may be one of the *only* variables we have the ability to change, or address, when trying to retain teachers. Too many of the contributing factors of teacher turnover – socio-economic status and ethnicity of students, teachers who are retirement age, and teachers who migrate due to family issues- are out of our hands. It is unfortunate, however, because more often than not, a person's behaviors are difficult to change, unless the person *wants* to change. And, before someone can want to change his/her behavior, he/she must first acknowledge that there is a problem behavior. From listening to the stories of the teachers in my study, it appears that the leaders of the schools they left did not want to see the error in their ways-

nor did, perhaps, the county-level leaders who employed them. But, what was evident is that these teachers wanted-no, demanded-to work for a moral leader.

In looking at the different leadership behaviors that push teachers to migrate, the knowledge of the business of school-organizational knowledge-would be relatively easy to teach someone, if they wanted to learn. However, the other leadership behaviors - professionalism and personal morals-are not something that can be easily taught. Not that it is impossible, but, it would be difficult.

Sergiovanni (1996) discusses the need for a theory of leadership based on moral connections. He contends that "leadership based on moral authority relies on ideas, values, and commitment and compels parents and principals, teachers and students to respond from within" (p.34). Sergiovanni also states that "changing our theory from school-as-organization to school-as-moral-community is the way to restore integrity and character to the literature on school organization, management, and leadership" (p. 57). These communities, according to Sergiovanni, would be covenantal, and the laws would be "planted in the heart, rather than written on stone" (p. 57).

Fullan (2001) also speaks of leaders having a moral purpose-being intensely committed to betterment, and states that "every leader, to be effective, must have and work on improving his or her moral purpose" (p. 13). He goes on to say that moral purpose is about both *ends* and *means*. He defines one of the *ends* of school as making a difference in the lives of students. But, he states that "the *means* of getting to the end are also crucial-if you don't treat others (teachers) well and fairly, you will be a leader without followers" (p. 13). Fullan states that effective leaders are constantly working on developing positive relationships at all levels of the organization, and lead with integrity.

He feels that "to strive to improve the quality of how we live together is a moral purpose of the highest order" (p. 14).

It appears that in these ever-changing times, and in our efforts for our schools to be the best, be *world-class*, make AYP, and close achievement gaps, students have been reduced to test scores, teachers (and leaders) to data-analysis machines, and school systems and states to competitive teams, vying for notoriety and the almighty dollar. Covey (1991) states that "when managing in the wilderness of changing times, a map is of limited worth-what's needed is a moral compass" (p. 94), and that "the idea of moral compassing is unsettling to people who think they are above the law" (p. 99). According to Covey, a person's internal moral compass allows them to view changes and situations through a moral lens, giving them a deep respect for *true north* principles-fairness, kindness, dignity, charity, integrity, honesty, quality, service, patience, and respect for people and property.

In light of the results of my study, I would venture to say that some of us have lost sight of what truly matters-perhaps because our internal moral compass is out-of-whack. When administrators see teachers choosing to migrate from their school perhaps they should ask themselves, "Am I pushing the revolving door? Is my moral compass pointing to the True North?"

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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

## LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Teacher:

I am a graduate student conducting a research study at Georgia State University under the direction of Dr. Al McWilliams, professor of Educational Leadership. I am investigating teachers' perceptions of leadership behaviors and how it impacts teacher migration.

This study may further the understanding of factors that affect teacher turnover. I believe this information may be of significant value to those in leadership positions within the school districts, and university educational administration preparation programs.

Information obtained in this study will not be shared with other administrators, and will not be associated with participants. There are no known risk factors associated with participating in this study. However, you may become uncomfortable as you reflect on the nature of the reasons why you requested to leave a previous teaching position.

Though your participation in this study is voluntary, your opinions and feelings are of great importance. There is no penalty for refusing to participate in the study, and the names of the participants or non-participants will not be revealed. In an effort to ensure anonymity a different name will be used in the final document instead of your real name. As a participant in this study you have a right to examine any materials related to the study upon request.

If you have any questions, please call me at 770-921-3203 or contact my advisor, Dr. Al McWilliams, at 404-651-3158. If you prefer to email me you may do so at [skbmiller@hotmail.com](mailto:skbmiller@hotmail.com).

Thank you for your participation in this study. I wish you the best in your chosen profession.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Miller  
Georgia State University  
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Tell me about your experiences at your former school.
- What are your perceptions of your previous leader's behaviors, qualities and attributes at your former school?
- How did these perceptions influence your desire to migrate to another school?
- Was there anything that the leader could have done differently that would have changed your mind about migrating, and kept you at your former school?