

The Magic Pill: A Qualitative Study of Relational Leadership, Leader Feedback, and
Teacher Attrition in Georgia

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ABSTRACT

New teachers are leaving the profession at steadily increasing rates at a substantial cost to Georgia taxpayers who support local school districts and the state department of education (Pelfrey, 2020). Recruitment, training, and hiring efforts are examples of these cost burdens. Teacher turnover causes educational losses for students and financial strains for communities (Owens, 2015; Tran & Smith, 2020). Forty-four percent of teachers leave the field within their first five years, and two-thirds of current teachers do not recommend the profession to others (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). This study examined new teachers' perceptions of the influence of leadership style on school climate and new teachers' decisions to remain in the profession through school administrators' use of leader feedback. An interpretive qualitative research approach was applied to examine five new teacher participants' lived experiences through narrative inquiry under the lens of the Relational Leadership Theory. Data were analyzed and triangulated through semi-structured interviews, data from the Georgia Department of Education's tool for teacher performance feedback, and observations of teachers and the school's social media. The findings revealed how relational leadership supported new teachers but did not reveal that the application of leader feedback influenced decisions for attrition. They also indicated that teachers entering the profession during the Covid-19 pandemic needed additional leader feedback on professional growth, classroom management strategies, and instructional practices. Additionally, this study shows the need for school leaders to be mindful of timely, personalized, frequent feedback and emotional support for Millennial and Generation Z teachers.

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“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.”—Philippians 4:13

I began my doctoral degree in my fifties. So, I challenge anyone who reads this, if anyone reads this, to always keep learning. It is never too late to begin a new educational journey. However, if your goal is to start a doctoral program, first commit Philippians 4:13 to memory, pray, and find a support group. For without these things, you may not succeed.

First, I want to thank Dr. Rudo Tsemunhu for chairing my dissertation. Aside from the immense work this entails, she put up with my type-A personality and endless phone calls and emails. Dr. Tsemunhu’s feedback and coaching skills are not to be rivaled. Dr. Leech challenged me as an educational leader, coached me for an interview, and improved my practice as a school leader. Dr. Lairsey, without knowing me, also jumped on board and aided me with a perspective to enrich my study.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

I started attending the new teacher recruitment fair in my school district in the spring of 2010. As a new administrator, I was very excited at the prospect of meeting new teachers and veteran teachers interested in relocating to our community. The fair lasted four hours, and I returned to my principal with over 200 resumes from teachers with a secondary social studies degree alone. In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I only received 14 resumes. In a conversation with our district's version of an assistant superintendent, a chief, we lamented the current staffing problems and our anxiety about the trend continuing. The Georgia district where I propose to complete this study had 130.5 teacher vacancies as of July 23, 2021, and 172 teachers resigned in the 2020-2021 school year, whereas only 62 retired (MCSD, 2021).

In addition to the mounting lack of interest during recruitment fairs, the student teachers I work with are dropping out of the program more frequently during their last semester of the teacher preparation program. Four student teachers I worked with did not complete their final student teaching semester in the previous three years. Unlike student teachers in the past, these young people did not communicate well, experienced issues coping with the stress of teaching obligations, and demonstrated an unwillingness to accept guidance from their cooperating teachers. The local university is trying to prepare students for these difficulties and has agreed with the district for guaranteed employment after graduation. However, the same retention concerns are still present for those student teachers who complete the program and begin a career in education.

The problem of teacher attrition is well-documented and beyond just my personal experience of over 20 years of teaching and 13 in administration (Owens, 2015; Pelfrey, 2020). I have seen differences in leadership style, school climate, and specific school leaders' abilities to retain teachers during this time. I am privy to the transfer list, a request process for current teachers to move to other schools within the district. Those teachers' top choices are the schools with documented high climate ratings from the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) and the Georgia school rating system (Talent Ed, West Central Georgia school system). Teachers want to move to and stay in schools with positive, supportive climates, and not all the students in these schools are socio-economically advantaged.

In his executive summary, Pelfrey (2020), a policy and research analyst in the Georgia governor's office, revealed that new teachers are abandoning their careers at steadily increasing rates within the first five years of service. Pelfrey (2020) reiterated the details of those cost burdens by outlining details of recruiting expenditures, hiring efforts, and loss of productivity. During the 2019-2020 school year, 6,233 new teachers were hired in Georgia, which did not keep pace with resignations and retirements (Pelfrey, 2020). Considering these statistics, educational leaders must understand how the attrition of new teachers affects students and communities, why academically prepared new teachers choose to leave, and how to retain these new professionals.

Owens (2015) and Tran and Smith (2020) noted the rise in educational losses for students and communities and the financial burden created by the need for recruitment and training of new teachers. In a study linking teacher stress with attrition, Farmer (2020) detailed several critical factors for teachers leaving the profession: high-stakes testing, material differentiation for

multi-level learners, paperwork, lack of parental involvement, and student discipline and violence. While researchers have identified how the above factors contribute to attrition, there is little focus on how leaders who use relational practices can create positive climate conditions to promote teacher retention through leader feedback to support teachers in their jobs more effectively.

With growing teacher attrition in Georgia, innovative leadership strategies are urgently needed (Owens, 2015; Pelfrey, 2020). My research was a narrative inquiry of new teachers' perceptions of the influence of leadership style on school climate and new teachers' decisions to remain in the profession through school administrators' use of leader feedback. I concentrated on the relational experiences of teachers through the lens of relational leadership theory. I have hopefully contributed to a line of inquiry focused on teacher attrition by focusing on how teachers' perceptions of leadership and feedback from administration affect their commitment to the profession.

Problem Statement

Teacher attrition in Georgia is problematic (Owens, 2015; Tran & Smith, 2020). According to Georgia's attrition report for the Georgia Department of Education, Georgia teachers abandon their careers at an attrition rate of 47 percent within only five years of service (Owens, 2015). Furthermore, two-thirds of Georgia teachers did not recommend teaching as a viable profession. These losses come at great personal expense to the teachers abandoning their careers and the State of Georgia regarding time, effort, loss of productivity, and financial costs. The Georgia Department of Education's researchers ranked mandated testing, Georgia's teacher evaluation (Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, TKES), teacher duties, and resource

unavailability as the top-ranked causes of teacher attrition (Owens, 2015). Georgia teachers specifically identified the way administrators evaluate them as the number two reason for leaving the profession (Owens, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relational leadership style and leader feedback on classroom performance supported teachers to do their jobs more effectively and the impact it had on teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia.

Research Questions

RQ 1: What career experiences of new teachers in Georgia support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive high school in Georgia?

RQ 2. Do relational leadership practices and leader feedback on classroom performance support teachers to do their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

RQ 3. How has the application of feedback from school administration impacted teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

Significance of the Study

Georgia teachers are abandoning their careers at an alarming rate, leading to a high attrition rate within the state and public education. This study aimed to determine if leader feedback on classroom performance and relational leadership supported teachers to do their jobs more effectively and assess the impact this system has on teacher attrition rates in Georgia. The Georgia Department of Education, local Boards of Education, school administrators, and teachers looking to be proactive within their field may benefit from this study that will pinpoint the main factors in the problem of teacher retention and attrition.

School leaders who reduce teacher attrition contribute to eliminating teacher shortages and improving student achievement. I hope to add to the current body of literature by examining the lived experiences of Millennials and Generation Z within their first few years of teaching (Dimock, 2019). By examining the perceptions of these new teachers, school administrators may recognize the importance of their leadership style, leader feedback, and how it contributes to the well-being and retention of new teachers. Results from this study may also inform educational leaders about how administrative evaluation practices used for creating school climates conducive for teachers in these generations may increase their desire to remain in the profession.

In addition to the growing concerns of teacher attrition, especially within the first few years in education, insights into the perceptions of Millennials and Generation Z may provide employers with recruitment information. A deeper understanding of new teachers' specific needs and the perceptions of Millennials and Generation Z may also enrich new teacher preparedness programs within school districts or at the university level.

Theoretical Framework

Smit (2018) credited Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012) as the pioneers of Relational Leadership Theory. According to Smit (2018), Ospina and Uhl-Bien identified leadership as a social process of influence through social constructs, or in other words, how communication happens between leaders and followers based on the agreed social norms. Uhl-Bien (2006) defined Relational Leadership Theory (RLT) as "the study of both relationships (interpersonal relationships as outcomes of or as contexts for interactions) and relational dynamics (social interactions, social constructions) of leadership" (p. 667).

The roots of the Relational Leadership Theory stemmed from the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory and Hollander's Idiosyncrasy Credit Model in tandem with definitions of relational leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Uhl-Bien (2006) defined the Leadership Member Exchange theory as a relationship-based approach to leadership, including a dyadic relationship between leaders and followers that grows incrementally as a base of leadership influence. She described Hollander's Model as a process involving influential relationships with leaders, including transactions or rewards (Uhl-Bien 2004, 2006). Uhl-Bien (2006) noted RLT as relatively new and explored two theoretical perspectives in her research. The first perspective she called entity or identifying attributes of interpersonal relationships, and the second perspective, relational, or the view leadership as a social construction process. She described the entity perspective as focusing on individuals and their perceptions and expectations relative to their relationships, and the relational perspective positing knowledge is socially constructed and distributed.

Uhl-Bien (2006) theorized relational leadership differs from personal relationships in that

it starts with processes that make relational realities rather than people. She also considered leadership in terms of social constructions made through rich connections among members of an organization. Uhl-Bien (2004) wrote that RLT moves from hierarchical leadership, a top-down, pyramid-shaped organizational structure, to an influence process between leaders and followers to create dynamic institutional change.

Like the RLT school of thought, Webb (2018) described Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) in terms of connection; people yearn for relationships created by mutual empowerment and empathy. These growth-fostering relationships result in the participants' increased sense of worth, vitality, and desire for other relationships (Webb, 2018). Webb discovered leaders who practice using the RCT perspective created resilience with connectedness in relationships, helping teachers to respond well to adversity and resist disconnection from peers and leaders. Webb (2018) described relational culture theory as not only relational but contextual in the sense of relational competence developed by feelings of "mattering." I will base my research on the perceived benefits of a relational leader in providing a climate of growth and well-being through leader feedback on classroom performance resulting in teacher retention from relational theories and practice.

Conceptual Map

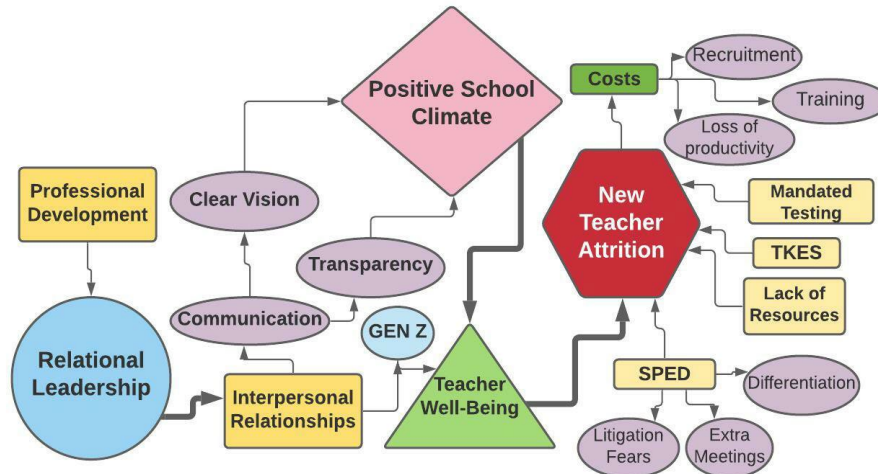


Figure 1: Conceptual Map

In creating my conceptual framework, I merged the theoretical lenses I utilized to design the study's methodology and the theories necessary for data analysis. Specifically, my conceptual map focused on relational leadership's impact on school climate and teacher retention, yet I had to consider other factors. Owens (2015) linked teacher attrition to specific concerns such as mandated testing, TKES, lack of resources, and special education demands. Community and recruitment costs from attrition burden school districts. In Figure 1, I mapped the over-arching effect of relational leadership on teacher attrition. Leaders who practice relational leadership build interpersonal relationships, which increases communication (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Leaders who communicate their vision and are transparent create positive school climates, contributing to a teacher's well-being (Lasater, 2019; Reitman & Karge, 2019; Wigford & Higgins, 2019). Ultimately, new teachers who are fostered emotionally are more likely to remain in the profession (Wigford & Higgins, 2019). These interconnected challenges within schools provide a

unique and challenging task for school leaders. It is necessary to examine challenges through a relational theory lens.

Research Methodology

I used narrative inquiry to analyze the stories of the lived experiences of new teachers that contain characters and settings in temporal sequence based on significance and often causality, arranging it through cultural contexts (Carter, 1993). Furthermore, narrative research methods allowed me to highlight the importance of the experiences and stories of new teachers in this study. I purposefully recruited five teachers from a large comprehensive urban Georgia high school to participate in this research. I used three sources to collect and triangulate data. These include individual interviews, data from the Georgia Department of Education on Georgia's tool for leadership performance feedback, and teacher observations. Data analysis included coding, reducing, categorizing, and connecting themes (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Limitations

This study was limited to five participants within their first five years of experience in Georgia's identified large comprehensive urban high school. Therefore, the findings may not be transferable to all educational leaders. Full performance evaluation protocols were not fully administered in the past three years, so several new teachers will not have been entirely through the process to receive as much feedback from administrators. As the primary tool in this research process, I am also the most significant liability to validity. I am a relatively well-known administrator within the participating school district and schools; thus, I must be keenly aware of how my role in the educational community might influence data within my study. My natural

researcher subjectivity and bias may influence my final research findings and conclusions. Data are self-reported; therefore, interview responses may not fully represent the truth. This study is being conducted at a specific time, thus not representing the attitudes and perceptions for future dates.

Summary

I used a narrative research inquiry approach to explore the impact of teacher attrition on school districts, students, and communities. I used a narrative inquiry to investigate new teachers' perceptions of how their leadership styles affected school climate, specifically Millennials and Generation Z. I also to understand the influence of leaders' feedback on their decisions to remain in education. I used Ospina and Uhl-Bien's (2012) Relational Leadership Theory to understand and describe the social processes of influence leaders have, which may influence new teachers to remain in the teaching profession. A qualitative research design of narrative inquiry guided me in interpreting the new teachers' perceptions of leadership. Findings from this study may inform educational leaders with evidence of the importance of leadership style, its contribution to school climate, and the specific needs of new teachers from Millennials and Generation Z to reduce teacher attrition.

Definition of Terms

During the implementation of this study, there will be acronyms, terms, and concepts which may require further description.

Attrition Rate: The rate at which educators leave the teaching profession.

CCRPI: The College and Career Ready Performance Index is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational

stakeholders to promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students (GaDOE, 2019).

Climate Star Rating: The School Climate Star Rating is calculated using data from Georgia Student Health Survey, Georgia School Personnel Survey, Georgia Parent Survey, student discipline data, and attendance records for students, teachers, staff, and administrators. The School Climate Star Rating provides school-level data on the following components in equal value (GaDOE, 2019):

- *Survey* – a measure of student, teacher, and parent perceptions of a school's climate;
- *Student Discipline* – a measure of student discipline using a weighted suspension rate;
- *Safe and Substance-Free Learning Environment* – school discipline incidents and student survey responses on the use of illegal substances and the prevalence of violence, bullying, and unsafe incidents within a school; and
- *Attendance* – the average daily attendance of teachers, administrators, and staff members and the percentage of students absent less than 10% of *enrolled days*.

Climate Star Rating Levels: Each school receives a 1-5 star rating, with five stars representing an excellent school climate and one-star representing improvement needs. Schools have access to a comprehensive report which allows them to identify areas in need of improvement and plan targeted student interventions to improve achievement for all students (GaDOE, 2019)

Core Four of Personalized Learning: EdElements core four elements for personalized learning:

Flexible Content and Tools, Targeted Instruction, Student Reflection and Ownership, and Data-Driven Instructions. This platform was adopted by the LEA of the large, comprehensive, urban high school in this study.

COVID-19: SARS-CoV-2 is the official name for COVID-19 and is the virus responsible for the global pandemic, which began in 2019.

Cultural Context: Cultural context is the environment or situation relevant to the beliefs, values, and practices of the culture under study.

Empowerment: A process emphasizing determining the means necessary to create professional relationships (Balkar, 2015).

E-Sports: Electronic sports, or a form of competition using video games

Feedback: Serves the purpose of the person who is seeking self-mastery or growth in their area of expertise, which serves an internal purpose (Green, 2001).

GACE: Georgia Assessments for Certification of Educators

GaDOE: Georgia Department of Education

Generation Z: People born between 1997 and 2015 (Dimock, 2019).

Hollander's Idiosyncrasy Credit Model: Hollander's model is a process involving influential relationships with leaders, including transactions or rewards (Uhl-Bien 2004, 2006).

Leadership-Member Exchange Theory (LMX): LMX is a relationship-based approach to leadership, including a dyadic relationship between leaders and followers that grows incrementally as a base of leadership influence (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Local Education Agencies (LEAs): A public board of education within a state or community for

administrative control or direction of public schools.

Magnet School: In the United States educational system, magnet schools are public schools with specialized courses or curricula, thus being a “magnet” to draw students from across normal zoned boundaries.

Mandated Reporter: Government employees in Georgia who have probable cause to believe that a child has been abused must make a report within 24 hours to the Department of Child Protective Services or law enforcement and are subject to criminal penalty for failing to do so. (DFCS - Georgia Child Protective Services. 2022).

Millennials: People born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019).

Provisional Certification (Georgia): A three-year certificate issued to teachers who are completing their requirements for professional certification. To apply for this certification, one must complete the following:

- Have a Bachelor's degree or higher
- Pass the GACE Program and Content Assessments in the area
- Pass the Georgia Educator Ethics Assessment
- Hold a temporary, non-renewable certificate (GaPSC, 2022).

Relation: "an aspect or quality (as resemblance) that connects two or more things or parts as being or belonging or working" (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. xix).

Relationship: "the state of being related or interrelated; the relation connecting or binding participants in a relationship; a state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealings" (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. xix).

Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT): RCT is described in terms of connection; people

yearn for relationships created by mutual empowerment and empathy (Webb, 2018).

Relational Leadership Theory (RLT): RLT is "the study of both relationships (interpersonal relationships as outcomes of or as contexts for interactions) and relational dynamics (social interactions, social constructions) of leadership" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 667).

Relational Pedagogy: Relational pedagogy is the systematic construction of appropriate relationships embedded within the schooling process (Crownover & Jones, 2018).

School Climate: The quality and character of a school based on the perceptions of school life from stakeholders in the educational community. School climate reflects the norms, goals, and values (culture) of a school.

School Culture: The guiding beliefs, values, and norms of a school community

School Mission: A statement that educational organizations use to describe educational goals and community priorities.

School Vision: A public declaration that educational organizations use to describe future goals.

Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS). The expectations for teacher performance consisting of five domains and ten performance standards.

Teacher Effectiveness: Interpreted as the impact one has on student achievement. Teacher value-added is a measure of effectiveness. (Harris, Ingle & Rutledge, 2014)

Teacher Effectiveness Measure. An annual evaluation that consists of three components: (1) Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), (2) Professional Growth,

and (3) Student Growth. These components combined contribute to the overall scores that teachers receive (GaDOE, 2021b).

Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). The state of Georgia's current teacher evaluation system.

Young Life: A Christian ministry that reaches out to middle school, high school, and college students whose mission is to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, I discussed the problem of new teacher attrition, specifically school culture, leadership, and new teachers' needs. In this chapter, I will present literature relevant to teacher attrition, Relational Leadership Theory, leaders' influence on school culture and climate, age-group characteristics of teachers entering the profession, and the details of Georgia's common teacher evaluation system, identified as Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). TKES is the platform from which school leaders communicate and coach new teachers on professional goals, performance standards, and increasing student achievement (GaDOE, 2021b).

Using the Baccalaureate and Beyond survey, Ingersoll et al. (2018) estimated that 44 percent of teachers left education within five years. Sutchter et al. (2019) showed a shortage of 64,000 teachers in 2015-2016, which increased to 112,000 by 2018. Ingersoll (2001) emphasized the harmful effects of migration and attrition, resulting in the loss of continuity and affecting the school climate. He described the relationship between teachers' decisions to stay in education or leave as a U-shaped curve; the younger teachers have higher departure rates than those close to retirement (2001). Young teachers remain the most prominent group leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2002). Ingersoll (2004) noted many teachers leave education for personal family reasons such as parental duties and retirement. However, a growing number of teachers leave due to job dissatisfaction stemming from lack of support from administration and discipline issues.

Thus, this study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions and lived experiences in the first five years of their profession and determine how or if leadership style and leader feedback on

classroom performance influenced new teacher retention. Furthermore, I hope to examine whether leadership style in Georgia affects climate and teacher well-being as perceived by teachers in an identified large comprehensive urban high school. The following research questions will guide the research:

RQ 1: What career experiences of new teachers in Georgia support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive high school in Georgia?

RQ 2. Do relational leadership practices and leader feedback on classroom performance support teachers to do their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

RQ 3. How has the application of feedback from school administration impacted teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

Although this study will focus on school leaders' classroom performance feedback regarding teacher attrition, I will pay attention to the myriad other factors that affect attrition and how leaders can use feedback to mitigate those influencing issues. MacBeath (2012) identified five key factors contributing to teachers' dissatisfaction with their jobs. These include the intensification of a lack of autonomy for teachers, the stress of role and work overloads, diminished authority and respect, increased discipline issues, increasing populations of special needs students, and an influx of students with social-emotional needs. He noted that these problems contributed to recruitment and retention issues in countries worldwide, finding lack of resources, intense workloads, leadership support, trust, and stress issues consistent problems

regardless of the location for new teachers in his study. Although attrition among new teachers is global, Ingersoll et al. (2018) discovered trends affecting the retention problem within educational settings.

Ingersoll et al. (2018) outlined seven trends within the teaching force in the past three decades. These researchers described new teachers as larger, grayer, greener, female, diverse, consistent in pedagogy, and unstable. The first trend, larger, described a higher growth of teacher numbers than student increases. However, the authors contributed most of that growth to private schools and mandates for smaller student-to-teacher ratios in elementary schools. Ingersoll et al. (2018) used grayer to describe older teachers and increased retirements. An increase in retirements is beneficial for the cost of teachers but detrimental to the experience, thus the "greener" reference. The ratio of female to male teachers and diversity in ethnicity increased in the thirty years studied. Yet, the pull for students in education in top academic college students has not increased (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Ingersoll et al. (2018) marked the most concerning trend, unstable, as the high attrition rate of teachers; almost half of teacher turnover happens in one-quarter of public schools. Minority teachers left more often than white teachers, and the gap has grown. Ingersoll et al. (2018) contributed some of this to minority teachers being sought after to teach at difficult-to-staff schools with less desirable working conditions. Kraft et al. (2016) noted that individual and organizational factors such as desirable working conditions and learning environments shaped the productivity of teachers. They presented evidence that school climate and leadership quality strongly influenced a teacher's decision to remain in education. The Learning Policy Institute (2017) emphasized in their study the significant role quality leadership and administrative

support play in teacher retention. These researchers suggested that principals' emotional and instructional support is more prominent than teacher workload in deciding to remain in or leave a school (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

Sutcher et al. (2016) revealed that 42 percent of teachers left the profession because of dissatisfaction with the administration due to a lack of support, input, and control over teacher decisions resulting in unhappiness with working conditions. These researchers reported that administrative support was the most consistent factor associated with teacher attrition. Kraft et al. (2016) surveyed teachers and illustrated how school leadership style predicted teacher retention decisions, and leaders who supported teachers influenced retention. They analyzed reciprocal relationships between leadership styles, organizational capacity, teacher practices, and student achievement and found multiple correlations. The Learning Policy Institute (2017) concluded teachers' perceptions of administrators were a dominant factor in career decisions; leaders who set clear expectations supported and encouraged, and recognized staff increased teacher retention.

In addition to the problems associated with new teacher attrition, the pool from which districts hire is also changing. Sutcher et al. (2019) reported teacher preparation enrollments declined 35% between 2009 and 2014, with an alarming increase of 23% fewer candidates completing their program of study. They noted a 35 percent decrease in teacher education enrollments from 2009 to 2014, contrasting the need for teachers to instruct a projected increase of over 3 million students in the next decade. Due to current and anticipated shortages, Ingersoll et al. (2012) estimated more than 40 percent of teachers enter the profession through non-traditional routes. They specified that the first year of teaching contributed to the highest attrition

rate, especially when pre-service preparation is weak. The researchers also acknowledged the differences between traditional and non-traditional routes to teaching certification but found pedagogical losses contributed to the most significant discrepancies in new teacher success. They listed practice teaching, observations, courses in methodology, and learning theory as significantly related to attrition. Four times as many underprepared, inexperienced, and out-of-field teachers filled positions in high-poverty and high-minority schools than their certified counterparts (Sutcher et al., 2019). They showed through their research that teachers with alternate routes to certification leave two to three times more frequently than their comprehensively prepared counterparts, as do teachers in high-poverty schools and minority educators. There are thirty non-traditional educator preparation programs in Georgia, with many teaching endorsements available (GAPSC, 2022). Anticipating the potential teaching shortage due to the effects of Covid-19, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) released a memo in 2021 outlining how districts could ensure a strong teacher workforce during the Covid -19 crisis, including mitigating measures to shorten the alternate certification program (GaDOE, 2021b).

School leadership is critical in retaining teachers, especially considering pedagogical losses with alternate routes to certification. Lasater (2016), Reitman and Karge (2019), and Wigford and Higgins (2019) all cite relational leadership as transformational for school climate. Yet, there is a lack of focus on new teachers' perceptions of climate and how it influences their decision to stay in the profession. One of this study's purposes is to examine principals' leadership practices and their influence on new teacher retention.

In this section, I will explore the literature surrounding teachers' perception of leadership

on retention within their first five years in the profession. In this manner, I will devote the following section to the connectedness between leadership, school climate, and retention. If a school leader practices relational leadership, I hope to find that this practice might alleviate the other issues or deciding factors for teacher attrition through my research.

Theoretical Framework

Uhl-Bien (2006) defined relational leadership as a dialogue between members of an organization to construct knowledge systems and principles and saw relationship leadership as a shared decision process that is nurtured and supported. She regarded relational leadership as emergent as the behaviors, approaches, or values are constructed based on the ongoing relational dynamics between people in an organization. These individuals, leaders, and followers are involved in relationships to attain a mutual goal (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Balkar (2015) explained that teachers' empowerment perceptions depended on the principal's leadership style and relationship with the administration. She commented that empowerment was both the result and characteristic of organizational culture and concluded strong relationships between teachers and principals resulted in the empowerment of teachers.

Relational leadership is contextual, growing from the sincerity of interchanges within a circumstance (Branson & Marra, 2019). Relational dyads are also contextual, and Uhl-Bien (2004) described the complexity of relational practices as an interaction between leaders and followers in terms of situational context variables, which can have different values in different environments. They maintained relational leaders influence the ultimate acceptance of a leader's vision, and "deeply effective leadership is founded on the reciprocal and dynamic relational processes formed between the appointed leader and those to be led" (p. 101). Employees who

willingly follow leaders and become involved allow enacting leadership practices; leadership roles are negotiated through human interactions and relationships (Branson & Marra, 2019).

Smit (2018) described effective school leaders as prioritizing teacher empowerment, acknowledging accomplishments, and maintaining harmony. While describing attributes of relational leadership, she wrote:

“Relational leadership also involves relational integrity and responsibility. This sense of responsibility, to be responsive, responsible, and accountable to others in the everyday interactions proposes a moral stance of caring relationships and moral responsibility, which is embedded within relational integrity. This is evident in how principals treat their staff, learners, and the community recognizing their responsibility to act and relate in ethical ways (p. 77).”

In the same vein, Branson and Marra (2019) suggested a leader's power to influence is strictly based on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Clifton (2017) described a leader's role as having a coach's attributes and style. He suggested that leaders provide basic needs such as benefits and job safety, have collaborative environments, and recognize and reward excellence. Employees need to believe in a company's mission, vision, and future viability or place of employment (Clifton, 2017). He argued that if employees feel valued and genuinely engaged in their work as stakeholders, productivity will increase, and adverse actions, such as absenteeism and attrition, will decrease. Clifton (2017) recommended leaders give a clear direction of expectations, provide ongoing, focused feedback on performance with goals for the future, and use equitable evaluation practices focusing on achievement and development. He concluded relational leaders were far more effective in

engaging workers and knowing an employee's strengths. These leaders provided growth opportunities and recognized achievement, retaining productive employees.

In his study of Georgia schools, Owens (2015) noted that school administrators and district leaders influenced teacher support perceptions, positively affecting teachers' decisions to stay in the classroom. Lasater (2016), Wigford and Hopkins (2019), and Reitman and Karge (2019) agreed that relational leadership styles adopted by school administrators, professional development in relational leadership, and a focus on public school educators' well-being were crucial components in the ongoing pursuit of teacher retention. Likewise, Dekawati et al. (2020), in their study on leadership roles in school quality through climate, supported the idea that effective school leaders indirectly improved teacher retention rates through leadership by creating an inviting, positive school climate. As the literature reveals, administrative support improves retention rates; however, it is necessary to examine how relational leadership, a specific leadership philosophy, impacts teacher attrition and retention.

Evidence supports relational leadership as exceptionally effective in reducing teacher attrition. Lasater (2016), an assistant professor at the University of Arkansas in Educational Leadership, described relationships as the cornerstone of educational leadership. In writing about organizational sustainability, Nicholson and Kurucz (2019) styled relational leadership in morality and ethics in a culture of care. They concluded that relational leaders who establish and maintain caring relationships contribute to thriving organizations. Owens (2015) specifically observed that principals who practiced relational leadership impacted attrition and were critical in reducing other stresses' roles in that decision. Likewise, Farmer (2020), whose study focused

on teacher stress, concluded that supportive school leadership and positive relationships were the two most critical variables when predicting teacher retention.

Webb (2018) felt teachers are working in a survival mode due to unrealistic demands and advocated for changes to our society's social and political devaluation of relational skills. When teachers can collaborate and connect, transferring or leaving for another career is less likely (Webb, 2018). Ford et al. (2019) also found that teacher relationships with school administrators increased commitment to schools and the profession by analyzing the relationships between teachers' psychological needs and burn-out rates. Spinella (2003) defined the relationship between school leaders and teachers as having mutual respect, providing time to receive support from peers, and intervening in bureaucratic tasks. She pointed out that principals who intentionally foster new teachers provide environments that deter attrition. Ingersoll (2002) noted that teacher attrition or turnover is less prominent in schools where teachers have input in organizational factors. Ingersoll (2002) suggested greater administrative support is needed based on data from his research.

Although researchers have concluded that relational leadership is an effective element in teacher retention, developing relational leaders can be problematic without targeted professional development. Uhl-Bien (2006) advocated for professional development devoted to the importance of relationships and developing quality relational skills. Based on the data collected during Dahlkamp et al.'s (2017) study of principals' self-efficacy, they also concluded a need for principals to develop skills to improve relationships with parents and the community resulting in teacher retention. Lasater (2016) determined school leaders struggled to navigate teacher support roles, and school administrators needed professional development to improve relational

leadership. Lasater examined the skills necessary for building-level leaders to build rapport, establish trust, and communicate effectively with their teachers and staff. She suggested that leaders needed to develop productive and collaborative relationships with the community and found a need for professional development on specific aspects of fostering supportive relationships despite diversity barriers in school communities. The Learning Policy Institute (2017) suggested principals participate in extensive professional development to hone collaboration skills, collaborate with peers to support collegial problem solving, intern with veteran administrators, and mentor when able. Lasater (2016) argued that developing highly sophisticated relationship skills would affect professional development ideology.

Ford et al. (2019) focused on another aspect of relational leadership. They concluded that well-implemented professional development contributed to teacher self-efficacy and showed how school leaders impacted teachers' psychological well-being on several levels, resulting in the likelihood of retention. Tran and Smith (2020) took aspects of the need for training further and concluded professional development for leaders in providing differentiated support for new teachers would result in teacher retention. They emphasized building teacher self-efficacy and buffering distracting responsibilities as an administrative task, allowing new teachers to focus on mastering their pedagogy. Administrators who met these self-efficacy needs would see reductions in teacher attrition, even in hard-to-staff schools (Tran & Smith, 2020). Branson and Marra (2019), in their study of the practice of relational leadership, agreed that leaders should be taught relational leadership. Their four-stage process included a sincere desire to understand group culture and become an active member, championing employee accomplishments, encouraging employee self-efficacy, and enabling a growth mindset.

Teachers derive their perceptions of school climate from the school community's culture (Jones, 2020). Therefore, if a teacher does not perceive a leader as supportive and caring, teacher retention becomes problematic for the administrator (Jones, 2020). Jones described relational pedagogy as a social construct created by educators for shareholders to understand the purpose of education and knowledge as it transpires in a community. In a study of principal support, Anderson (2019) noted a new teacher's perception of leadership most prominently predicted decisions to remain in education. She concluded principals who valued teachers as individuals and met development needs retained staff. CooperGibson (2018) found that teachers were less likely to leave the profession if they felt valued and respected.

Jones and Watson (2017) also provided insights into how a principal's leadership style impacts teacher perceptions positively or negatively. They suggested leaders consider adjusting leadership styles to include more attention to relationships based on these perceptions. Urick (2020) studied data from the 2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and found that teachers who perceived shared leadership and frequent interaction with their principal were likelier to stay in their current position. Likewise, principals attuned to the perceptual relationships with teachers positively influence teachers' decisions to remain in education. These principals responded to the teachers' needs, guided their teachers, established the school climate, and prioritized student achievement. Urick found that teachers' commitment to leaders who undertook this role increased, making attrition less likely. She indicated that recognizing teachers' perception of administrative support affected their professional choices. In many ways, the teachers' perceptions of the school climate connect directly to their beliefs about remaining in the profession, just as their perceptions of leadership (Dekawati et al., 2020). As such, it is

necessary next to discuss the interrelatedness of school climate and teacher retention.

Culture and Climate

Peterson and Deal (2016) described the culture of a school as a "highly enduring web of influence [that] binds the school together and makes it special" (p. 163). They maintained that leadership is the glue that shapes and supports positive, student-focused cultures. According to Peterson and Deal (2016), solid, positive cultures include norms of collegiality, shared vision and purpose, rituals celebrating student accomplishment, innovative teaching practices, and parental commitment. Ingersoll (2004) described schools as a mixture of bureaucratic and social organizations with formal and informal rules and obligations. Peterson and Deal (2016) emphasized the necessity of leaders understanding the cultural norms, uncovering and articulating core values, reinforcing positive cultural elements, and eliminating or reducing dysfunctional elements. Hinde (2004) also focused his research on the effects of school culture and found that schools with positive cultures yielded teachers who felt confident taking risks. Toxic cultures resulted in opposition to change.

Dekawati et al. (2020) found that school leaders had a direct, positive effect on school quality and climate. They studied how school climate variables, instructional leadership, and school quality were correlated and provided information on how instructional leaders can increase school climate and quality, resulting in the empowerment of teachers. Leaders facilitating mutually beneficial relationships enabled organizational conditions, ensuring growth and stability (Branson & Marra, 2019). They explained that employees who can rely on one another due to relationships built on trust, integrity, transparency, and collegiality add to a safe culture. Hinde (2004) discovered that schools, where leaders wielded power in the delicate

balance of mandates and collaboration, allowed for cultural changes resulting in supportive climates.

Dekawati et al. (2020) defined school climate as the essence of a school's goals, practices, structures, and interpersonal relationships resulting from the building-level administrator's work. As the building-level principal directly influences schools' culture and climate by clear goals, MacNeil et al. (2009) concluded that school leaders are essential, even if indirectly, for student academic success and organizational health. Principals who focused on school climate and led, rather than managed, improved student achievement and faculty morale and motivation (MacNeil et al., 2009). Likewise, Coleman (2017) studied variables contributing to teacher attrition and found statistically significant relationships between school culture, teacher evaluations, increased learning outcomes, instructional feedback, and teacher attrition. Ingersoll (2001) suggested a correlation between a cohesive school organizational structure and high teacher turnover, which indicates an unsuccessful school climate. Leaders who nurtured and encouraged collaborative relationships which enhanced personal and professional growth empowered teachers and provided climates conducive to organizational success (Davis & Wilson, 2000). Teachers stressed and overwhelmed were inclined to leave the profession, and teachers who received positive feedback and support were less inclined towards attrition (Coleman, 2017).

Dekawati et al. (2020) implied school leadership and climate were inseparable variables in school quality, and teachers who felt empowered and satisfied were more likely to stay in the profession. An empowered school culture members displayed confidence in the principal's

performance (Balkar, 2015). Coleman (2017) concluded that administrative support in providing positive work environments and managing workloads reduced teacher attrition.

Business leaders have transformed organizations to support the needs of younger workers in the past two decades; schools must follow suit with millennials and Generation Z (Peronto, 2013). She advocated considering millennials' needs, which indicated a desire for personal connections with administrators. The relationship-oriented behavior of leaders is support-driven and exhibits trust and confidence in employees' abilities and ideas (Uhl-Bien, 2004).

Administrators demonstrating collaborative practices and an amicable rapport with new teachers increased trust and developed a more positive school culture (Uhl-Bien, 2004). Ingersoll (2004) discovered the impact school administrators have, both formally and informally, on controlling the resources and decisions crucial to the work of teachers.

Smit (2018) likewise found principals who implemented relational leadership styles influenced teachers and students to create a supportive climate. Griffin (2007), studying teacher retention in Georgia, discovered that administrative support was the most effective motivator. Intrinsic factors, such as support from principals and school climate, outweighed external factors like salary or school location. School leaders who nurtured welcoming cultures retained new teachers by providing emotional support in addition to resources (Peronto, 2013).

Reitman and Karge (2019) reiterated the importance of strong leadership and outlined the need for solid teacher support from school leaders and mentors. The researchers noted that assisting teachers with classroom set-up, in-class observations, and frequent emails distinguished influential relational school leaders and mentors as more effective at increasing teacher retention than non-relational peers. From these observations, they developed six themes demonstrating

specific support strategies: individual relationships, pedagogical knowledge, teacher perceived competence perceptions, mentoring, professional learning, and reflection. Reitman and Karge's 60-participant induction program study included a 100% retention rate, despite 85% of high-poverty communities, thus concluding the importance of a specific administrative mentorship plan to meet the needs of new teachers.

Tran and Smith (2020) also examined teachers' needs in different career stages, human resource strategies, and how principals should be intentional in their practice of supporting teachers. They showed a need to approach teacher retention differently in the various stages of a teaching career. They summarized that beginning teachers' concerns include day-to-day functional skills and a need for encouragement and recognition.

In addition to meeting the needs of new teachers, providing a positive culture is necessary for the success of all teachers in the building (Jones & Watson, 2017). Branson and Marra (2019) remarked it is essential in today's workplace for leaders "to know more about the people they are leading and not just about what people do at work each day" (p. 100). They further explained that employees need to feel included, valued for their skill diversity, and given opportunities to focus on mental and physical well-being. Teachers interviewed by CooperGibson Research (2018) felt resigned to excessive, unsustainable workloads, feelings of unwarranted scrutiny, and a lack of support from the administration. CooperGibson Research (2018) recommended increasing the level of support from school leaders to "reduce feelings of pressure in terms of scrutiny, accountability, and workload (p. 5)." They suggested principals focus on teacher well-being, including assistance in managing stress, coping with illness, and help with performance and policy procedures (CooperGibson, 2018).

Georgia teachers have identified relational leadership problems as deciding factors for leaving the profession, with teachers feeling devalued and under constant pressure (Owens, 2015). In this light, Farmer (2020) concluded that administrators who provided positive school climates contributed to decreasing stress and increasing teacher retention. There are a plethora of ways school-building leaders can improve school climate and reduce teacher stress. Jones and Watson (2017) explained relational leaders developed consideration behaviors that contributed to educators' social, emotional, and professional well-being. They defined these behaviors "as regarding the comfort, well-being, status, and contributions of followers" (p. 46). School leaders who attended to these consideration behaviors increased retention rates (Jones & Watson, 2017). Webb (2018) insisted that leaders who give teachers professional learning opportunities or authority roles help establish teacher well-being, impacting retention.

Additionally, Wigford and Higgins (2019) studied teachers' perceptions of well-being. They found that the most substantial effect came from school leaders on the work environment, the need for appreciation, and, most importantly, the sense of belonging created by personal relationships. Peronto (2013) and Farmer (2020) observed that new teachers who had difficulty socializing left the profession early and emphasized the need for a relational peer support environment to reduce stress and increase well-being. Wigford and Higgins (2019) defined stable well-being as individuals having the psychological, social, and physical resources required for their work environment. They suggested relational leadership, the art of being valued and listened to by administrators, balanced by being given appropriate levels of autonomy, fostered teachers' sense of well-being, and made them less likely to leave the profession. As the literature proposes, the well-being of all individuals within the school results from effective leadership.

Therefore, exploring the intersections of well-being and one's guiding leadership philosophy is necessary.

Smit (2018) described relational leadership as an ongoing engagement of influence leading to growth while maintaining a caring relationship. She also aligned care ethics, or well-being, to relational leadership. Likewise, Van der Vyer et al. (2020) performed a quantitative survey on the relationship between teachers' professional well-being and principals' leadership behaviors. The authors found if teachers perceived their principals as transformational leaders, they experienced a sense of professional well-being. Conversely, principals perceived as *laissez-faire* contributed to lower levels of well-being in their staff. The authors' findings indirectly link teacher well-being to teacher retention by linking well-being to learner performance.

Wigford and Higgins (2019) reported that 43% of teachers complained leaders were not concerned about their well-being, thus not supporting teacher retention. The researchers suggested that appropriate autonomy levels and valuing teacher contributions facilitated staff well-being. Likewise, Jones (2020) agreed that relational school leaders supported teachers using relational leadership skills to empathize, recognize humanity, and note power roles. He believed that successful relational leaders conceptualized teachers' emotional and psychological states showing empathy, balanced school climate, rigor needs, and recognized transparency and communication obligations. He also asserted that successful relational school leaders recognized and embraced relational pedagogy and reduced teacher attrition. Furthermore, Jones & Watson (2017) wrote that leadership teams who adjusted traditional management roles, including inclusive consideration behaviors, thrived. They concluded that relationship-oriented leadership

styles and task-oriented leadership behaviors involving security and belongingness increased teachers' motivation, growth, and retention.

Millennials and Generations Z

Most teachers currently entering the teaching profession are considered Millennials, born between 1980 and 1994, or Generation Z, born after 1994 (Bako, 2018). Those entering the teaching profession who went to college directly following high school are in Generation Z. Characteristics of this group of young people and their specific needs are significant in understanding their perceptions of leadership and climate. Dimock characterized Generation Z as the most culturally and ethnically diverse generation in American history, with the entirety of their lives steeped in technology. Considering the average age of young people completing college in four years is 22, most new teachers are members of this diverse new generation (Dimock, 2019). Stahl (2021) projected that by 2025, Generation Z would constitute 27% of the workforce and that this generation would have a values-driven approach to careers, specifically mentioning their ethical concerns. She described these young people as more interested in job security, financial stability, employer transparency, and willingness to work harder than millennials.

Schroth (2019) described Generation Z as highly educated, racially diverse, economically astute, and achievement-oriented. Bako (2018) called Generation Z digital natives and depicted them as far more pragmatic and career-focused than the previous generation. Although proficiency with technology as a digital native is beneficial, Schroth (2019) pointed out that the smartphone has had a detrimental impact on communicating and interacting face-to-face. Whereas Generation Y (Millennials) prefer collaborative and team efforts, Generation Z is more

comfortable with isolation and less community-minded (Bako, 2018). Generation Z has grown up in a unsafe culture, resulting in emotional trauma, including increased anxiety and depression, Schroth (2019) explained in her study. Schroth also explained the impact of a lifetime of witnessing social justice movements impact on Generations Z's perceptions. Generation Z is the most diverse and accepting of differences, yet globally unaware, and due to their proclivity toward isolation, they seek leaders who are risk-takers and self-sacrificing (Bako, 2018). Despite racial and ethnic diversity and passion for social justice issues, Schroth (2018) suggested that Generation Z is more likely to support free speech restrictions. The subjectiveness of their feelings and what is "objectively offensive" will drive employers to clarify speech and behaviors within the workplace, according to Schroth (2018).

Bako (2018) characterized Millennials as technologically proficient, pragmatic, healthy, and clever, likely not to make the mistakes of previous generations. Dimock (2018) described this generation as growing up in the shadows of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, becoming politically active when Obama was elected, and entering the workforce during an economic recession as the "slow start" generation. Millennials have extensive educational, financial, and personal strengths (Bako, 2018). However, Bako commented that this preparation has often resulted in job dissatisfaction due to unrealistic expectations from leaders and employment responsibilities. The parents of Generation Z similarly provided financial freedom during high school, thus reducing the need for jobs while preparing for higher education (Bako, 2018). Due to the increased economic support from their parents, as they enter the workforce, Schroth (2019) postulated that they would arrive with a lack of work experience. Schroth (2019) anticipated the growing need for leaders to compensate for Generation Z's lack of life skills due to

overprotective parents who removed obstacles and only gave positive feedback, thus producing inabilities to cope in the workplace.

Panwar and Mehta (2019) described leadership as "crafting a context for invention and inclusion in the face of ambiguity and the unforeseen" (p. 66). They explicitly recommended leaders develop those skills to equip Generation Z. Schroth (2019) echoed the need for leaders to manage expectations for Generation Z as they expect clear targets and positive attitudes from employers. Among the list of leader attributes important to Generation Z, Schroth (2018) listed: providing a checklist, facilitating communication, reinforcing culture, clarifying their specific purpose, explaining the significance of their position, and giving feedback. Both generations expect their ideas to be appreciated and considered (Bako, 2018; Schroth, 2019).

Clifton (2017), the Chairman and CEO of Gallup, encouraged employers to be aware of how a range of benefits, effective managers, and meeting employees' basic needs can improve productivity and engagement. Clifton's 2017 study on the State of the Global Workplace detailed how benefits, company branding, and managerial practice contribute to worker retention. School leaders can mirror these practices in an educational setting. Clifton noted that recruitment and training costs are high, so attention to retaining employees is critical. As Clifton expected, the predominantly sought benefits can be differentiated by demographics such as age and gender. Millennials are primarily concerned with their job being purposeful (Clifton, 2017). Clifton found that well-branded companies offering targeted work experiences that balance work and personal well-being attract younger generations. Newer trends show workers seek flexibility in hours and location (Clifton, 2017). Whether meeting financial or emotional needs, benefits are important and clarified by the employer (Clifton, 2017).

Robinson's (2021a) research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on millennial employees mirrored Clifton's earlier findings. According to Robinson (2021a), the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in millennials becoming more engaged at work. Robinson (2021a) reported an increase from 35% to 75% in 2020 in work engagement, although he mentions working from home could be part of this causality. Robinson discussed how engagement is measured by delineating five variables: the flexibility of remote work, how employers communicate a plan of action, preparation for remote work, shared information, and well-being. Robinson pointed out millennials want to be in the loop, understand their role and expectations within the organization, and have a knowledgeable sense of its vision.

Teacher Assessment, Evaluation, and Feedback

As with most professions, school districts mandate yearly performance evaluations for teachers as part of the terms of their employment (MCSD, 2021). The teacher performance assessment is the task of the administration of a school, and teacher evaluation is one tool used to assess a teacher's quality (Hinchey, 2010). Robinson (2021a) explained that teacher evaluation is beneficial because student learning is linked with teacher quality, and the evaluation process increases practice accountability and effectiveness. The primary purpose of teacher evaluation is to differentiate exemplary teaching practices from mediocre or poor practices (Robinson, 2021a). Although teacher growth and performance must be assessed, teacher evaluation systems should focus on strengthening professional knowledge, teaching skills, and classroom practices (National Education Association, 2021).

Hinchey (2010) categorized teacher assessment into three categories: teacher quality, performance, and effectiveness. Teacher evaluation models assess how teachers perform in these

areas. Hinchey (2010) explained that teacher quality included teaching experience, educational background, credentials, pedagogical knowledge, and the ability to understand specific learners and cultures. Teacher performance included instructional uses and strategies, classroom management, and how teachers may serve the community (Hinchey, 2010). Robinson (2021b) and Hinchey (2010) pointed out a stronger relationship between teacher quality and student achievement than other factors, including curriculum. This relationship increases progressively as a student age (Hinchey, 2010). Understanding the importance of effective teacher evaluations, six goals for teacher evaluation emerged from a study conducted by the National Council on Teacher Quality (Robinson, 2021b). First, teachers needed to understand the purpose of evaluation which included recognition of excellence, opportunities for improvement, and student achievement gains. The following goals included prioritizing collaboration among stakeholders, using common verbiage, familiarizing with measurement and data collection, effective feedback, and using multiple evaluators (Robinson, 2021b).

However, Robinson (2021b) noted controversy with some teacher evaluation practices, including the validity of assessing a teacher based on the time an administrator is in the classroom. Often evaluator inter-rater reliability is questionable; the NEA (2021) suggested that influences often influence evaluator ratings and teacher performances outside their control. At times administrators' feedback or lack of meaningful feedback, failure to address inadequate performance, and shortage of professional development opportunities devalued the evaluation process (Robinson, 2021b). The National Education Association (2021) posited that the best teacher assessment systems failed if districts did not provide appropriate teacher support to acquire needed skills and pedagogical knowledge from the onset of their professional career.

School leaders with detailed rubrics and explicitly trained in evaluation tools do not necessarily ensure evaluators' ratings will positively correlate to student achievement (Hinchey, 2010). Therefore, using many assessment artifacts, such as lesson plans and teacher portfolios, provides a more reliable teacher evaluation (Hinchey, 2010; National Education Association, 2021). Hinchey (2010) warned against the excessive emphasis on standardized test scores for assessing teachers as it has led to counterproductive practices by educators. She suggested assessing teachers from many sources and analyses such as classroom artifacts, student and parent surveys, and non-academic outcomes should be part of the assessment process as they also contribute to student learning.

The National Council on Teacher Quality described the core principles included in a successful teacher assessment system which included multiple measures, student surveys, objective measures of student growth, a minimum of three rating categories, annual observations, professional development, and meaningful feedback (Robinson, 2021b). Teacher evaluations comprise only one component of teacher growth and development systems and should be an ongoing formative process of assessment that neither promises rewards nor threats of punishment (National Education Association, 2021). A teacher's evaluation should include what a teacher knows and if a teacher can maintain a positive learning environment, communicate well with all stakeholders, and provide productive feedback (Hinchey, 2010). To appropriately assess teachers' effectiveness, the state of Georgia piloted and adopted the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). This assessment system has multiple components, including teacher evaluations (GaDOE, 2021).

Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

Georgia's common teacher evaluation, the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), was designed to ensure consistency and comparability in evaluating teachers throughout Georgia to build teacher effectiveness (GaDOE, 2021). TKES comprises three components, Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), Professional Growth, and Student Growth. Figure 2 depicts the weight of each category.

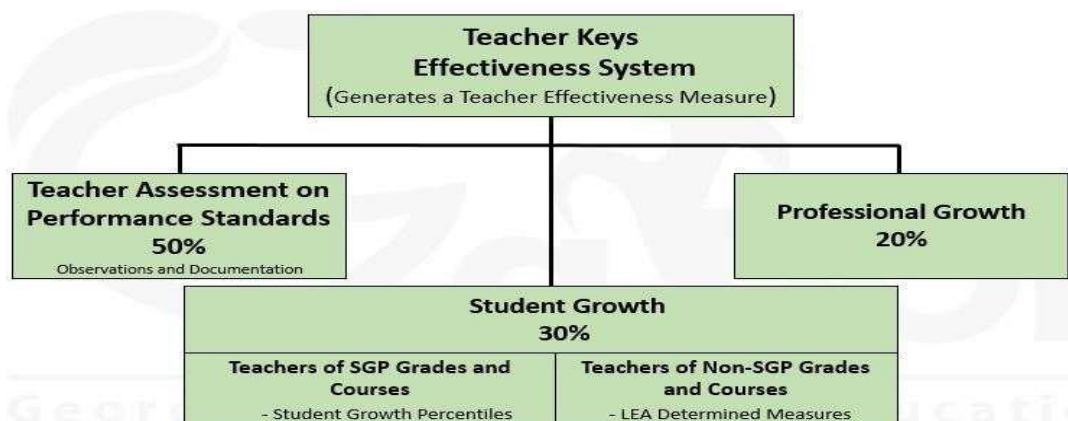


Figure 2. TKES Weighted Scores (GaDOE, 2021b)

Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS)

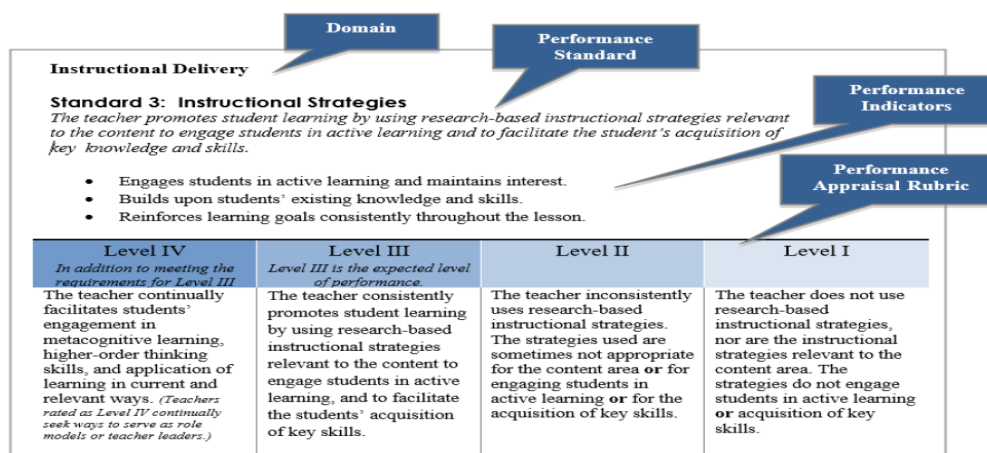


Figure 3: Relationship between essential parts of TAPS (GaDOE, 2021b).

GaDOE (2021b) designed TAPS to promote equity and provide detailed standards for teachers and their evaluators. They outlined five domains and ten performance standards in TAPS as teacher expectations. Teachers are provided with the performance standard, performance indicators, and rubrics to guide appraisal (see Figure 3).

Performance Standards

GaDOE (2021b) labeled the primary duties performed by teachers as performance standards. I list each of the domains and standards in Figure 4, and evaluators use these standards to rate teachers during formative 10-minute walk-throughs and thirty-minute observations (GaDOE, 2021b). These performance indicators provide tangible and observable behaviors for every standard to help teachers meet each criterion successfully. Typically, the TAPS process begins with an orientation, familiarization, and self-assessment in the TKES platform within the Statewide Longitudinal Data System. Teachers complete this process during the first weeks of the school year. Evaluators meet individually or in groups for a Pre-Evaluation Conference to discuss professional learning goals or plans and the teachers' self-assessment of the performance standards. The formative assessment process lasts throughout the school year with an individual or group mid-year conference and individual summative conference and performance evaluation. Full assessment models include two formative observations and four walk-throughs followed by a summative evaluation. TAPS provides evaluators with a qualitative rubric measuring teacher performance on the ten standards scored from 0 to 3 (GaDOE, 2021). Figure 5 shows the Summative Cut Scores for this rating:

| |
|--|
| Planning |
| 1. Professional Knowledge The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences. |
| 2. Instructional Planning The teacher plans using state and local school district curricula and standards, effective strategies, resources, and data to address the differentiated needs of all students. |
| Instructional Delivery |
| 3. Instructional Strategies The teacher promotes student learning by using research-based instructional strategies relevant to the content area to engage students in active learning and to facilitate the students' acquisition of key knowledge and skills. |
| 4. Differentiated Instruction The teacher challenges and supports each student's learning by providing appropriate content and developing skills which address individual learning differences. |
| Assessment Of And For Learning |
| 5. Assessment Strategies The teacher systematically chooses a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment strategies and instruments that are valid and appropriate for the content and student population. |
| 6. Assessment Uses The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress, to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents. |
| Learning Environment |
| 7. Positive Learning Environment The teacher provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all. |
| 8. Academically Challenging Environment The teacher creates a student-centered, academic environment in which teaching and learning occur at high levels and students are self-directed learners. |
| Professionalism and Communication |
| 9. Professionalism The teacher exhibits a commitment to professional ethics and the school's mission, participates in professional growth opportunities to support student learning, and contributes to the profession. |
| 10. Communication The teacher communicates effectively with students, parents or guardians, district and school personnel, and other stakeholders in ways that enhance student learning. |

Figure 4: TAPS Performance Standards (GaDOE, 2021b).

| Final Ratings | TAPS Summative Cut Scores |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| Level I | 0-6 |
| Level II | 7-16 |
| Level III | 17-26 |
| Level IV | 27-30 |

Level I ratings = 0 Level II ratings = 1 Level III ratings = 2 Level IV ratings = 3

Figure 5: TAPS Summative Cut Scores (GaDOE, 2021b).

Professional Growth

GaDOE (2021) intended TKES to be a tool to assist leaders when working with a teacher. Clifton (2017) mentioned the importance of leaders as coaches; this tool enables evaluators to coach teachers to pursue professional rigor. Teachers and leaders can set concrete goals that reflect school and personal professional aspirations (GaDOE, 2021). The Professional Growth Goal(s) or Plan(s) often reflect the School or System Improvement Plan, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) goals, or the school's vision. These goals may not align with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission [GaPSC] (GaDOE, 2021). Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to determine the criteria for this component. The LEA in Georgia's identified large comprehensive high school gives schools the autonomy to provide professional learning goals as long as they align with the district's Core Four area of Personalized Learning. The Georgia Department of Education recommends that Professional Growth reflect the GaPSC's recertification requirements. Professional growth goals consider the following for rating teachers (GaDOE, 2021):

- Weaknesses identified through the TAPS process
- Individual teacher professional goals
- School Improvement Goals

- District Improvement Goals
- Any other district or school identified need.

Figure 6 depicts the rubric used by the Ga DOE to assist in rating the PGG.

| Level IV | Level III | Level II | Level I |
|---|--|--|---|
| The teacher leader continually applies the knowledge and/or skills in classroom practice and provides evidence that the professional growth experience has been extended to lead others in acquisition and application of the knowledge and skills. | The teacher provides evidence that classroom practice has been changed. The knowledge and/or skills is (are) applied in the classroom on a consistent basis. | The teacher provides evidence of use of knowledge and/or skills acquired through the professional growth activity in classroom practice. | The teacher participates in a professional growth activity. Sign in sheets verify attendance. |

Figure 6: TKES Professional Growth Rubric (GaDOE, 2021)

Student Growth

The final component of TKES is student growth, comprised of Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) from student state assessments for teachers and LEA determined measures for non-SGP grades and courses (GaDOE, 2021). There is a minimum of one growth measure for each teacher. The GaDOE calculates SGPs based on assessment data, such as End of Course tests (EOC), to describe student growth relative to other academically similar students throughout the state as reported in SLDS. A growth percentile ranges from 1 –99, with lower percentiles indicating lower academic growth and higher percentiles higher growth. Only the SGP of EOC from students with 90% attendance will count toward the teachers' SGP numerical score. The growth model uses data from two years of preliminary test data. Due to the Covid-19

pandemic, no state tests were administered for the 2019-2021 school year, and students were allowed to "opt out" during the 2020-2021 school year if attending school virtually (GaDOE, 2021). Thus, this research has not calculated SGPs for those two years in the large comprehensive urban high school. Typically, SGP evaluations are used with TAPS scores to assign an overall Teacher Effectiveness Measure rating (GaDOE, 2021).

Teacher Effectiveness Measure

The summation of all of the components of TKES provides a Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) score for every teacher in Georgia. Figure 1 depicts the percentages of each weighted component of the TEM score, TAPS is 50%, Professional Growth is 20%, and Student Growth is 30%. Teachers receive an overall rating of Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Development, or Ineffective (GaDOE, 2021). See Figures 7 and 8 for the TEM Determination and Rating Rubric:

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| TAPS Rating | Level IV | Professional Growth Rating | Level III | Student Growth Rating | Level II |
| TAPS Weight | 50% | Professional Growth Weight | 20% | Student Growth Weight | 30% |
| Calculations | 4 x 0.5 | Calculations | 3 x 0.2 | Calculations | 2 x 0.3 |
| Results | 2.0 | Results | 0.6 | Results | 0.6 |
| Sum of Component Parts | 2.0 + 0.6 + 0.6 | | | | |
| TEM Determination | | | 3.2 | | Proficient |

Figure 7: TEM Determination Example (GaDOE, 2021b).

| TEM Rating | Sum of Component Parts |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Exemplary | ≥ 3.5 |
| Proficient | ≥ 2.5 and < 3.5 |
| Needs Development | ≥ 1.5 and < 2.5 |
| Ineffective | < 1.5 |

Figure 8: TEM Rating Rubric (GaDOE, 2021b).

Conclusion

Researchers studying teacher retention in the past decade agreed that a study of relational leadership, employee well-being, professional development for administrators, and the causal role of culture is needed (Jones & Watson, 2020; Lasater, 2016; Van der Vyer et al., 2020). Smit (2018) summarized the need for more research on relational leadership in educational settings and theorized that researching relational leadership in schools would improve its effectiveness. Smit (2018) also felt studies of relational leadership through narrative inquiry contributed to qualitative research methodology and benefits in educational leadership practices.

In addition to exploring relational leadership and teacher retention, Lasater (2016) and Van der Vyer et al. (2020) advocated studying the effects of professional development for leaders in relational leadership styles and how to support new teachers' well-being. Notably, Abiable (2019) concluded it was the principal's responsibility to encourage effective teachers to remain in education. If teachers decide to leave, conduct exit interviews to determine specific administrative behaviors contributing to attrition. Wigford and Higgins (2019) also suggested a further study on principals supporting a culture of belonging that affects transition or mobility. In

my research, I intend to focus on these issues and, as Jones and Watson (2017) suggested, explore the causal relationship between principal leadership style, school climate, and teacher retention through the communication of school leaders with performance feedback.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I discussed retention, Relational Leadership Theory, leadership qualities, the culture and climate of schools, the characteristics of new teachers entering the field of education, and a summation of the Georgia teacher evaluation system. In this chapter, I will discuss the qualitative research design I implemented to investigate the perceptions and life experiences of new teachers who work in Georgia. The focus of the study was on the impact of leader feedback on performance on teacher retention, leadership style, school climate, and teacher well-being.

Nearly half of all new teachers leave Georgia schools within their first five years (Owens, 2015) and teacher evaluations are second only to mandated testing in reported reasons for attrition. This study aimed to examine how leader feedback on performance impacted teacher retention through teachers' perceptions within the first five years in a public school. Additionally, this study sought to examine the career experiences of those teachers to determine if leader feedback supported them in doing their jobs more effectively and reducing attrition. This chapter outlines the qualitative research design, sampling, participation selection, data collection and analysis, validity, and other relevant ethical issues.

Research Questions

Seidman (2019) stressed choosing research topics in sync with personal passions and highlighting significant problems. As part of a community of educators in a comprehensive urban identified Georgia public high school, I understand the district's employees' culture and

hierarchy and have a unique view of this system's workings. I immerse myself in the lives of building-level administrators and teachers, and I have been part of that community for three decades. I developed these research questions based on the literature review and my experiences:

RQ 1: What career experiences of new teachers in Georgia support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive high school in Georgia?

RQ 2. Do relational leadership practices and leader feedback on classroom performance support teachers to do their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

RQ 3. How has the application of feedback from school administration impacted teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

Research Design and Rationale

Jones (2010) suggested researchers use the qualitative research approach to comprehend participants' social settings from their perspectives rather than making predictions or testing hypotheses. Creswell (2014) also discussed choosing a methodology by considering the study's problem, personal experiences, and the audience critiquing the research. In qualitative research, the researcher is often personally immersed, observing, and gathering data to understand and describe a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Likewise, Patton (2015) defined qualitative research as interpreting humans' meaning-making process with personal experiences. He encourages in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observations, and written communication to interpret and understand experiences in context with fidelity wholly.

Owens (2015) cited that leadership style and teacher performance evaluations are two aspects affecting teacher retention and attrition. Merriam and Grenier (2019) also suggested that researchers identify factors influencing the study's focus before measuring each's prevalence. I attempted to analyze the specific effect relational leadership and the leader feedback on performance had on teacher retention by identifying themes from interviewing teachers within their first years of teaching about their experiences and perceptions of support. Qualitative researchers can study issues in great depth regarding contexts, such as specific times in history and settings (Patton, 2015, p. 257). Qualitative researchers describe obscure, unclear, or unfamiliar phenomena, understand the differences between stated and implemented policies, discover contextual variables previously undetermined, and make sense of processes (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The qualitative researcher looks for patterns, themes, and relationships from data gathered from immersion in the place of study.

I used narrative inquiry as my qualitative methodological approach. "Narrative inquiry," Smit explained (2018), "aims at understanding and making meaning of experience through conversations, dialogue, and participants in the ongoing lives of the research participants" (p. 79). Patton (2015) defined narrative inquiry as examining human life through a lens that characterizes human life experiences to illuminate the culture from which it came. Similarly, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) characterized narrative inquiry as "the study of how humans experience the world" (p. 2). They suggested that educational research, in particular, should focus on the participants' stories. They claimed that life narratives are the context for making meaning in school scenarios. Stories from teachers capture the complexity of the lived experience of teachers and inform others about how to prepare for the profession (Carter, 1993).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggested narrative inquiry involves a relationship between the researcher and the participant and recommended that researchers have shared experiences during field operations and interviews to provide needed constructs. They explained that narrative inquiry consists of personal and shared narratives, and the researcher tells the research story beyond the lived experience. Furthermore, Connelly and Clandinin continued, distinctions between researcher and participant are less valuable than trust, relationships, story, and restory telling during this collaborative process. Smit (2018) explained that in narrative inquiry studies, meaning is co-constructed by the researcher and the participants based upon the experiences and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Smit also emphasized an interpersonal dyadic relationship between the researcher and participants. As established, narrative inquiry is a dyad of storytelling, yet Connelly and Clandinin (1990) outlined the importance of the researcher ensuring the participant is the first to tell the story.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) warned researchers to be sensitive to the setting during the narrative inquiry process. They understood the narrative story as an argument of a human life experience in the community context. With this understanding, they insisted that attention must be given to the surroundings and timeframe when writing narratives; researchers should describe the environment(s) of the participants, including classrooms, offices, or school buildings. Setting the scene adds dimension to data collection. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) added that the participants' physical characteristics add depth to the narrative context. Stories are inherently temporal, so the researcher should also know the "plot" or timeline (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Generally, researchers report interviews in the present; however, in analyzing data, the researcher needs to consider significant points in the past tense and express value in the present

and future tense to convey intention (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). They cautioned researchers to analyze narratives with a global perspective of explanations discovered from the entire tale rather than as a tale told chronologically to avoid becoming steeped in minutia.

Smit (2018) warned that the ethical responsibility of narrative research went beyond institutional review board requirements and even past the study's timeframe. Researchers conducting a narrative inquiry must focus on the participants and their stories and be aware of their part of the process without becoming self-absorbed (Smit, 2018). Casey (1995) concluded that studies of the narrative had a basis of accurate self-awareness, although warned against participants' proclivity toward prevarication in their stories, not from the intent of deceit, but based on human nature and self-preservation. With deep regard for these cautions from researchers who have been part of the narrative inquiry journey, I respected participants' stories, performed self-checks for bias, and gave purposeful regard to plot, timeline, and setting.

Setting

I conducted this study in a large public school district in Georgia with 31,899 students. The population of the city is 189,296. The district student ethnicity is approximately 58% Black, 26% white, 5% multi-racial, 8% Hispanic, and 3% Hawaiian or American Indian. Males make up 51% of the student population, and seventy-nine percent receive free and reduced lunch. Special Education students make up 12.74% of the student population, with 67.98% of that population male. There are approximately 2,245 full-time teachers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020; Niche, n.d.). There are similar graduation rates between races, and the district has traditionally higher graduation rates than the state averages.

The city has been declining in population in the last decade. It is adjacent to one of the world's largest military bases, contributing to its diversity. According to the Niche website, there is a 16:1 teacher ratio, and teachers have an average salary of \$54,200, compared to an average household income of \$63,902. The median house value is \$141,700, and rent averages \$877 per month. Poverty is a significant factor in the area, with a poverty rate of 21.15%. The district spends an average of \$11,716 per student, 59% on instruction, 35% on support services, and 6% on other expenses (U.S. Census Bureau & Niche, 2020).

Although there are relatively equal numbers of high school graduates among different ethnicities and races, Caucasians are twice as likely to have a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau & Niche, 2020). The city was once rich in cotton mills, which supported a wide middle-class base. It is now home to several large companies but plagued with "white flight" to neighboring counties and private schools.

The identified public school in Georgia, which served as the site for this study, is a large, comprehensive public high school. As with the participants, the school also was given a pseudonym, Martinville. I illustrate the student enrollment summary in figure 9, which I obtained from Infinite Campus, the information access point for public school shareholders to include grades, attendance, assignments, and school announcements:

| Grade | 2: American Indian | | 3: Asian | 4: Black or | | 5: Native Hawaiian | | 7: Two or more races | Total |
|------------|--------------------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|-------|
| | 1: Hispanic/Latino | or Alaska Native | | African American | or Other | Pacific Islander | 6: White | | |
| 008 | - | - | - | - | - | 2/0/2 | - | 2/0/2 | |
| 09 | 20/22/42 | 0/1/1 | 4/11/15 | 58/63/121 | 1/0/1 | 74/93/167 | 15/11/26 | 172/201/373 | |
| 10 | 28/17/45 | - | 5/4/9 | 52/47/99 | 1/0/1 | 79/87/166 | 11/9/20 | 176/164/340 | |
| 11 | 18/24/42 | - | 8/6/14 | 51/54/105 | - | 73/82/155 | 7/23/30 | 157/189/346 | |
| 12 | 30/16/46 | - | 8/6/14 | 42/49/91 | 2/0/2 | 96/90/186 | 14/14/28 | 192/175/367 | |
| All Grades | 96/79/175 | 0/1/1 | 25/27/52 | 203/213/416 | 4/0/4 | 324/352/676 | 47/57/104 | 699/729/1428 | |

Student Population Excluding White not of Hispanic Origin

| School | Total | Percentage |
|------------|-------|------------|
| [REDACTED] | 752 | 52.66% |

Figure 9: Student Population by Race/Ethnicity and Grade Level (Male/Female/Total) Infinite Campus, 2022

This school has 92 teachers, 19 paraprofessionals, and four administrators and is the largest of the eight high schools in the district. Seventeen teachers are within their first five years of teaching. Of the 17 teachers, only two of those teachers are minorities. Eight percent of the teachers at the identified school are African-American, 4% are Hispanic, and 2% are Pacific-Islanders. Only 33% of the teachers are males, and the administrative staff is white, with two females and two males. According to the local district website, this school's overall performance is higher than 83% of schools in the state and is the highest in the district (GaOSA, 2021). The graduation rate is 96%, and 61.5% of graduates are considered college and career-ready. The School GaDOE (2021b) calculated Climate Star Rating from the Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0, Georgia School Personnel Survey, Georgia Parent Survey, student discipline data, and attendance records for students, teachers, staff, and administrators. The CCRPI of this school was 86.1 in 2019, with a five-star school climate rating.

The administrative staff at the identified school make relationships a priority for students and staff. The teachers enjoy a coffee house that serves coffee throughout the day and tea and

lemonade during lunch. The administration cooks breakfast for the staff every nine weeks, works with the PTO to provide opportunities for food trucks to come to the school, encourages participation in all school events, and provides non-threatening meetings for teachers to voice their concerns. The principal is known for his integrity and character. All administrators have an open-door policy, welcoming non-scheduled interactions whenever possible. The principal is aware of the specific needs of his staff and assists them professionally and personally if possible. The administrative staff meets weekly to discuss weekly events and address concerns for the staff and their families.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher in this investigation hopes to gain insight into new teachers' perceptions of leader feedback using relational leadership styles. Although I am an administrator within the school studied, the participants in the study were not under my direct supervision. I did not evaluate them or have a direct supervisory role in their employment. I eliminated my supervisees to minimize the appearance of researcher bias.

Participant Sampling and Participant Selection

Maxwell (2013) described purposeful sampling as a procedure used to select informative research representatives as experts in an area in which one is studying. He listed five goals of purposeful selection: achieving representativeness, capturing the heterogeneity in the population, deliberately selecting participants critical to the research theory, establishing comparisons to show reasons for differences between settings or individuals, and selecting participants who will provide a productive relationship, or enable the researcher to answer the research question. I implemented group characteristic sampling for this study to evaluate “a

specific information-rich group that can reveal and illuminate important group patterns” (Patton, 2015, p. 267).

The participation criteria for this study were that teachers were current public-school teachers in their first five years of teaching due to this population having nearly a 44% attrition rate in Georgia (Owens, 2015). Due to the narrow field of inquiry, I surveyed the 17 new teachers in an identified Georgia public high school to find appropriate diversity to achieve representativeness best. Patton (2015) maintained that the researcher determines sample size by the purpose, consideration of time, and credibility needed for a qualitative inquiry. I interviewed two participants in Generation Z and three new teachers in other age brackets. Patton (2015) suggested strategically selecting participants to provide substance that illuminates the research question under investigation.

I chose participants deliberately to provide data relevant to teacher retention and relational leadership. All participants were current teachers in the identified public school in Georgia. As a community member, I am privy to a large sample of teachers currently employed by the school district. Merriam (2019) wrote that sample size is based on data saturation based on questions gathered and analyzed. Initially, five participants were selected based on their willingness to discuss the school’s culture and the role building-level leaders have in teacher attrition issues through leader feedback on performance. Participants for this study met the following criteria: 1) participant age to include Generation Z, millennials, and older teachers in their second profession, 2) experience with leader communication on performance, 3) fewer than five years’ experience as an educator, 4) level of education. Data saturation occurred with the proposed sample size, so I did not increase my sample size.

I discussed and emailed the school district superintendent, the head of Research and Accountability, and the school principal and outlined the purpose of the study, participant criterion, and guidelines for interviewing and data collection. I submitted my proposal to the local Institutional Review Board (IRB) and received permission to conduct my study. After approval from the district and university IRB, I emailed the qualifying participants individually, collected permissions, and scheduled interviews and observations. Finally, I obtained verbal informed consent during the interview process.

Qualitative Methods of Data Collection

I collected data through the following methods: interviews, feedback from TKES evaluations, and observations of teachers and school social media representations.

Interview Process

Mishler (1995) said, “we do not find stories; we make stories” (p. 117). In the dyadic nature of narrative interviewing, I essentially coauthored the participants' stories. I used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions for this study. Semi-structured interviews allowed for more flexibility for the interviewer and interviewee to follow important angles during the interview process to ensure a more knowledge-producing experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Open-ended interview questions allowed for more individualized, in-depth, and contextually sensitive understanding (Patton, 2015).

I developed interview questions based on the study's conceptual framework and research questions. I used a narrative interviewing approach and conducted two interviews with each participant. The participants' life experiences were the object of the analysis, and the interviews were often “slow and painstaking, requiring attention to subtlety; nuances of speech, the

organization of a response, relations between the researcher, social and historical contexts” (Patton, 2015; Riessman, 2003, p. 342). Due to the tremendous work expected from new teachers, the likelihood of agreement to several interviews is very low; therefore, I hoped to capture each participant’s story from two 60 to 90-minute interviews.

Seidman (2019) suggested focusing on personal information and acquiring details from the issue outlined in the research questions in qualitative interviews. He explained that understanding the context of a participant’s life experience is necessary to analyze their “lived experiences” and help reconstruct experiences to create meaning. My goal for the interviews in this study was to clarify the educational background and experiences, concentrate on relationships between teachers and school-based administrators, and discuss professional futures. Seidman (2019) suggested focusing on personal information during the first interview, acquiring details from the issue outlined in the research questions in the second interview, and reflecting on the meaning of answers from previous interviews in the last interchange. I used a variation of Seidman’s three interview techniques, combining the first and second interviews to clarify educational background and experiences and concentrate on relationships between teachers and school-based administrators. The following interview will include discussions about professional futures based on data collected in the previous interview.

I scheduled interviews over a two-week interval allowing appropriate time between interviews to explore the experiences studied, put them in context, and reflect on the meaning. Interview protocol included listening carefully, probing when answers were unclear, avoiding leading questions, and being conscientious about bias. Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, giving specific attendance to appropriate pauses, a lack of leading questions, and time

considerations. I allowed participants the choice to interview in person or using Zoom. I conducted interviews from my home or school computer or in person at the identified large comprehensive urban high school, including a Logitech camera, and using the school district's Clever Portal. Zoom or computer video devices provided downloads of the audio portion of the interview and a video recording. HappyScribe, a computer-generated transcription site, initially transcribed the interviews conducted on Zoom. I made corrections based on reviewing the zoom recordings within a day of the interview. I used Microsoft Word for transcriptions and saved them in a secure computer file under a password-protected computer to which only I have access. Field notes were memoed after interviews within a reflective journal also housed in a secure computer file. I used MAXQDA for transcription software and coding organization.

Georgia Leader Performance Model

I completed a document analysis from data concerning the Georgia performance evaluation tool from the GaDOE. This data will provide norms and procedural data concerning the implementation and application of the Georgia teacher evaluation system.

Observations and Social Media

During the school day, I observed teachers during meetings with administrators as they participated in faculty meetings or professional development activities. I used these opportunities to record the environment's details and more natural, unstructured responses to the research question. In meetings and observations at the school, I made detailed notes on the settings, participants' reactions, body language, and discussion topics and gathered visual representations. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) suggested researchers consider the narrative field data additions as a sketch that contributes to the story's scene. I included field notes of my observations of the

participants during a school event to construct a thorough description of the climate and interactions with administrators. Ravitch and Carl (2021) encouraged fieldwork throughout the data collection process to include memoing interactions with participants and gathering information to understand the connectedness of space and the environment. I took notes on the school's use of social media to observe and interpret culture and school climate. Patton (2015) wrote that the center of narrative analysis is the participants' stories, and he also suggested that social media may be considered a narrative tool. These stories included participation in programs, relationships, and how they connected and interacted on social media.

Data Analysis Procedures

Successful data analysis begins with the first interaction between the participants and the researcher (Patton, 2015). An in-depth examination of data allows the researcher to identify categories and themes and provide detailed descriptions of settings, participants, and interactions (Patton, 2015). Qualitative researchers analyze the data inductively by working back and forth between the categories to establish themes. Patton (2015) stated that data analysis begins at the most individualistic level: interview data, observations, documentary data, impressions from other participants, and contextual information. He also emphasized the difference between capturing a participant's story as data and the narrative as analysis involving interpretation and contextualization. Individuals' information can be very personal and specific. Patton (2015) highlighted constructing a narrative for the reader that takes them into the situation balancing detail with relevance. Ary et al. (2017) provided a synopsis of qualitative data analysis strategies from five renowned qualitative researchers' (Creswell, Marshall, Rossman, Maxwell, and Wolcott) into three specific stages: organizing and familiarizing, coding, and reducing, and

interpreting and representing which the I plan to implement. I gathered all this for each story that went into the study as a unit.

Stage 1: Organizing and Familiarizing

As each part of the data was collected, I placed it into specific folders on my personal, locked Windows computer. Working through this project involved viewing individual recordings on the Zoom software within 24 hours to make additional comments and reflections on the Happy Scribe transcriptions. I typed field notes into a word document and added reflections immediately after the observation's conclusion. Reflections included reflexivity concerns; comments consisted of non-verbal cues and setting descriptions.

Stage 2: Coding and Reducing

During data analysis, the primary purpose was to bring order to the voluminous data collected during the research (Maxwell, 2013). First, I fractured my data into open codes such as humor, well-being, and feedback. Next, I used axial coding to chunk open codes into more extensive codes. Finally, I chunked axial codes into categories or themes. In a pilot interview, two themes emerged from the data; supportive leadership builds capacity and promotes growth, and school climate is directly related to the school building administration. I used these themes as the basis of the discussion of findings for this study.

Stage 3: Interpreting and Representing

After collecting data, I connected the main themes discovered in the categories. As I transcribed narratives, I gave special attention to protecting identities by using pseudonyms and reporting findings from data collected, not selecting data that supported the initial hypothesis. I

described participants' narratives holistically to visually represent appropriate outcomes and rich, descriptive detail and tables to represent findings (Patton, 2015).

Credibility

Denzin and Lincoln (2017) argued that trustworthiness, understanding, and authenticity replace qualitative research's internal and external validity criteria. Patton (2015) suggested that triangulation of qualitative sources gauges the consistency of research, thus enhancing credibility. He suggested comparing observations with interviews, checking the consistency of comments over time, and checking performance documentation as sources that may be used in the triangulation process. Data must be first credible to establish trustworthiness. Second, in successful qualitative studies, the researcher discusses bias in the research and employs other components of establishing trustworthiness, including audit trails, peer review, and reflexivity (Ary et al., 2017.) I was transparent in my research methodology throughout this study, including its development and the records of findings to establish an audit trail. Graduate students within my leadership cohort assisted me in peer review research methodology. I remained acutely aware of the importance of examining my beliefs through journaling during this process to address reflexivity. Third, credibility is the standard for the rigor that aligns with internal validity in quantitative research addressing the study's findings' accuracy and believability based on the researcher's ability to address contextual problems (Ary et al., 2017). In this study, the participants were part of member-checking, increasing credibility by consensus. I gave the study participants access to their interview transcripts and allowed feedback; considering their feedback in my study—the participants' agreement with the research findings aided in establishing research credibility (Jones, 2010).

Researcher Bias

One of the essential components of establishing credibility is the control of bias. I hope I controlled some of this with reflexivity or negative case sampling (Ary et al., 2017). England defined reflexivity as a “self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as a researcher (Patton, 2015, p. 70).” I kept a journal that notes personal reflections and studies emerging personal themes and biases throughout interviews and fieldwork. Maxwell (2013) included negative case sampling or identifying and analyzing discrepant data as key factors in establishing validity in qualitative research and having teachers who participated as interviewees examine data produced in this research reduced researcher bias. Ravitch and Carl (2021) reminded researchers of limitations from subjectivities and biases in qualitative dialogic engagement. They cautioned about the power of authority and how it affects feedback, suggested researchers pay attention to interpretations, and warned about keeping fidelity in interpretations. As the primary tool in this research process, I am also the most significant liability to credibility. I have constructed a well-known reputation in the district where the participants are employed. In this manner, I recognized the influence of my reputation in the district on the research study. Due to my subjectivity and bias, I was a threat to my research.

Transferability

In most communities, the school system is the largest employer, and local schools are the center of many family activities. Families move to school zones with celebrated and highly rated schools if there are choices within a district. Parents’ work schedules revolve around school openings and closings. Parents discuss the interactions and relationships

between children and their teachers at mealtimes. The perceived success of schools and teachers is an essential aspect of any community. The district for which I work is no exception. Although I am not from this community, my husband, his children, and my cousins are all products of the school district I used as the site for my study. The list of teachers leaving our community is growing longer every year. This research identified large, comprehensive urban high school mirrors other parts of the country; I hoped this study allowed the reader to identify with the participants.

Transferability is the degree to which the study's findings can be generalized (Ary et al., 2017). Descriptive adequacy provides an appropriate context for users to compare the similarity to support transferability. Rigorous analysis and using "rich" language in documentation assist researchers in their aspirations to create credibility and transferability (Jones, 2010). Using descriptions that transport readers to the setting establish a shared experience (Creswell, 2014). If findings from a study are similar enough to a current setting, one may apply the research. This study provided statistical descriptions describing community and school demographics for the non-disclosed public school in Georgia. I did not reveal participants' identities, but I gave each person's gender, race, age, and service years for comparison and transferability.

Dependability

Reliability is the consistency with which data measures are applicable over time. In qualitative research, it does not have the same priority as trustworthiness or understanding. From the perspective of qualitative researchers, the reliability of the study's techniques is more significant. Qualitative research results are dependable if the results are similar to other studies with different participants but in similar settings. I provided an extensive audit trail with records

of the raw data collected and analyzed, the methodology used in the study, and the process used to establish results. Consistent findings across the modes of data collection, the interrater agreement between peers on coding, interrater agreement between documents, and corroboration with triangulation supported my research's reliability.

Confirmability

The use of confirmability to establish trustworthiness assures that the data collected is objective, neutral, or free of bias. Confirmability measures how free of bias a study is compared to similar studies (Ary et al., 2017). Like dependability establishes validity, the audit trail is the predominant strategy to determine confirmability. I outlined how the study would be conducted and provided access to all resources. I also will journal to provide reflexivity.

Ethical Considerations

The validity and reliability of a qualitative study rely heavily on the researcher's ethics. Throughout this study, I faced ethical dilemmas regarding data collection and disseminating findings due to my involvement in the study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training to verify my understanding of participants' rights (Appendix D). In addition, such studies present unavoidable intrusiveness into the participants' lives and must comply with Valdosta State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Thus, participants' rights and privacy were paramount in this study (Maxwell, 2013). I kept the identity of each participant and the site anonymous and did not inform other administrators of the interviews. I asked participants to keep any information shared in the interview and observation process private. I stored all documentation from this process in an unidentified file on my computer.

Institutional Review Board

My research proposal was submitted to and approved by Valdosta State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in addition to the IRB for the school district (Appendix B). I described this study to the IRB. It included the number of participants, details of the selection process, procedures for interviews and observations, and any potential risks to the participants. I explained that data would be stored on my personal computer, locked with a passcode, and how I would provide confidentiality with pseudonyms. The participants in my study verbally consented during the interview process.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

I outlined measures taken to confidentiality in the consent form. The form included information about the methodology used in the study, including recording information and the use of pseudonyms. I outlined risks such as revealing supervisors' and leadership styles and described details about maintaining confidentiality during data collection and coding (Appendix C). Participants were given information about the nature of the study, allowed questions about their participation in the study, and then were allowed to consider their decision to participate. I added the risks, such as hackers, of using the Zoom platform to my consent form. There were no financial incentives for participants of this study, and participation was entirely voluntary. I protected the participants' confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms to specific participants.

Summary

This study aimed to investigate how the implementation and application of leader

feedback on performance impacted teacher retention rates through documentation and analysis of new teachers' perceptions. I used a narrative research inquiry approach of the qualitative interpretive method by conducting semi-structured interviews, collecting documentation from the state on leader performance feedback, and teacher observations. I outlined interviews using a specific guide with protocols. Participants included teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience in public schools. I digitally recorded interviews, transcribed them through Happy Scribe, and coded and categorized them. Ethical considerations were paramount in my research. I was transparent throughout my study with participants, worked with peers, and examined my biases and threats to objectivity through journaling. The participants' identities were anonymous, as were the school and the identities of the administrators. All documentation was in an unidentified file on my computer.

Chapter IV

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

In the first three chapters, I have discussed the problem of teacher retention across the United States. I reviewed Georgia's teacher evaluation system and described the characteristics of Generation Z and Millennials, the participants in this study. I identified the culture, climate, teacher well-being, and administrative support and feedback affecting young teachers' decisions to remain in or leave the teaching profession (Ingersol, 2004; Jones & Watson, 2017; Owens, 2015; Reitman & Karge, 2019; Smit, 2018; Tran & Smith, 2020). The methodology of this qualitative research design implemented to study the perceptions and life experiences of new teachers working in Georgia was the previous chapter.

According to Georgia's attrition report for the Georgia Department of Education, nearly half of Georgia teachers leave the profession within five years (Owens, 2015). Mandated testing, Georgia's teacher evaluation (Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, TKES), and teacher duties were the top-ranked causes of teacher attrition (Owens, 2015). Georgia educators specifically identified how administrators evaluate them as the number two reason for leaving the profession (Owens, 2015). This research investigated if leader feedback on classroom performance supported teachers doing their jobs more effectively. Furthermore, it examined the impact of relational leadership on school culture and the resulting climate on teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large urban high school in Georgia.

RQ 1: What career experiences of new teachers in Georgia support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive high school in Georgia?

RQ 2. Do relational leadership practices and leader feedback on classroom performance support teachers to do their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

RQ 3. How has the application of feedback from school administration impacted teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

I used three channels to collect data for the study. These included in-depth, semi-structured interviews, documents from the Georgia Department of Education, and observations of teachers and the school's social media. This chapter focuses on the characteristics of the participants and contextual background information gathered through narrative profiles.

Background of Participants

I interviewed five teachers at the identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia, anonymously named Martinville, who were in their first five years of teaching. Although all the participants had participated in formal teacher evaluation, only two experienced full evaluation on Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). The others began their teaching career during Covid, and TKES was modified during that period with fewer observations and without a TEMS score. Two participants resigned in March 2022 for the following school year, and three will continue teaching. The participants provided background information about their experiences during their initial interviews before beginning their teaching careers. *Table 1* depicts each of the participant's data.

| Pseudo Name | Gender | Race | Years Teaching Experience | Highest Degree | Age | Generation |
|-------------|--------|------|---------------------------|----------------|-----|--------------|
| James | M | W | 4 | Bachelors | 26 | Millennial |
| Sam | M | W | 2 | Bachelors | 24 | Generation Z |
| Holly | F | W | 2 | Master's | 25 | Generation Z |
| Sara | F | W | 2 | Bachelors | 26 | Millennial |
| Joe | M | W | 4 | Bachelors | 27 | Millennial |

Table 1 Participants' Background Information

Participant Profiles

James

James is 26 years old, born and raised in a mid-sized city in Georgia. He attended a liberal-arts high school and graduated from the local university. James genuinely enjoyed school and the opportunity to learn new things. He began college majoring in Environmental Science, but he switched his major to secondary education. James enjoyed his science classes in college and appreciated his ability to “dabble” in so many classes during his program of study. He has broad-field certification in science, emphasizing earth and space science. James added his secondary education after completing his science degree with an alternate math/science certification program. James enjoyed the certification program and feels teaching “helps me apply a lot of that [science] in a way that other careers may not have.” James felt the non-traditional certification program gave him “hands-on experience as soon as you’re getting

pedagogical knowledge.” He said the program provided classroom management strategies and the ability to implement them immediately. James described the program:

So there were, you know, philosophies of teaching focused on project-based learning.

And so they were really looking at as many newer multi-faceted, differentiated, learning instructional strategies as possible, and tried a shotgun approach to say, you know, find what works for you, find what sticks, and then use that. Try all of these strategies. At a low cost or low-risk environment where you’re student teaching just as once, and then see what kind of feedback you get.

James enjoyed his experience with the alternate math/science certification program. He felt that he used many of the strategies provided during the program. He shared, “I’m going to brag one more time about them. Classroom management is one of the things they really, really focused on.” In addition to being well prepared, James’ tuition in the program was reimbursed entirely as long as he maintained a “C” or better.

James has a challenging schedule at Martinville with four classroom preparations, including physical science, Physics, AP Physics, and Robotics. James’ mentor teacher during student teaching currently works as one of his school administrators. He has a bachelor’s degree and is teaching in his fourth year. He completed his student teaching placement at Martinville.

James’ family is “relatively stable.” His parents worked a great deal, and he has one brother who is nine years older. His parents were heartbroken for not being able to conceive a child between him and his sibling. He sees himself as very different from his much more social brother. James described the difference: “My brother surrounded himself with friends

and bandmates and seemed to enjoy the busyness, but I always found crowds gave me anxiety. I usually preferred the quiet calm of the outdoors." However, James was very active in Boy Scouts and attended a few church camps. He emphasized the importance of Scouts in his childhood, and participation in the organization filled his weekends and summers. James' parents were "relatively social people" who had friends over frequently, as did his brother, a musician with many friends. There were often bands playing at his house. James usually stayed in his room playing video games while his parents socialized and his brother practiced with the band.

James lived in the same house from birth and bought his grandfather's house when he was twenty-five. James is a very frugal young man and chose to attend the cheaper, local university. He shared, "I did a cost-benefit analysis because I was looking at places like UGA, Auburn, and other places, and I'd been accepted to several of them...but, financially, I was actually able to graduate completely debt-free within four years." His grandfather helped him with his first semester, and his parents allowed him to live at home during college. He worked several jobs but was able to focus on academics for the most part.

James was identified as a gifted student in the fourth grade and went to magnet schools through elementary and middle school, accommodating and serving gifted students. He enjoyed how his school tracked him with other gifted students and the advanced curriculum taught. James had mixed feelings about his stay in the gifted class and the very little differentiation in social settings. He neatly captured this situation's dynamics in the following vignette as: "comfortable, but at the same time any dissonant social relationships were chafing ... animosities could build after three years, for you know, lots of idiosyncrasies, just little

things that you know would bother you in a gifted group [that has] lots of idiosyncrasies.” He enjoyed having a nice break to have a traditional class with other students occasionally.

James described himself as an academic. He spent most of his childhood with his “nose in a book.” Many of his family photos have him slightly separated from the family group and reading. He sees himself as being somewhat antisocial with his head in the clouds. He achieved a 13-plus reading level by fifth grade and read college-level books. James enjoys fantasy novels predominantly but will read anything. He would “grab a tome” from the library shelf and start reading. He joked that his family often said, “James, you’re a reader,” after a phonics commercial with that line which also included his real name. He especially enjoyed Orson Scott Card fantasies and J.K. Rowling’s fame began when he was young so he read her books as well. Throughout our conversation about literature, James reiterated how context is due to “the analytical nature of [his] brain” and how he loves to “pick things apart to figure out what makes them tick.” Context, according to James, can change everything about history, math, and literature, whether prose or poetry.

James maintained relationships with friends from grade school and had been hiking with one of those friends the morning of our first interview. The friend’s father was their scoutmaster. When James began high school, he decided to become more social and got involved with theater at the end of his freshman year. He developed many friendships during this time. James liked the diversity of students involved in theater. He interacted with a cross-section of people, including jocks, geeks, cheerleaders, and academic people, describing the school as a “nice melting pot, really.”

James enjoyed science classes the most in high school and college. He liked math but did not enjoy it when teachers taught it without context. James believes physics comes with context and has a story to tell; thus, this is why he thinks teaching physics comes to him naturally. His educational preparation program at college provided the pedagogy James needed as he entered the field. He liked that he got hands-on pedagogical knowledge and classroom management strategies. James' teachers offered a multitude of philosophies based on project-based learning. They continuously introduced him to "multi-faceted, differentiated, learning instructional strategies" from which to choose. The program also was low-risk. He heard about it during a Chemistry class. Free tuition was a big incentive for James. The university promised to reimburse the tuition if the student made a C or better, and they could try a class at a time. He put aside his original goal of becoming a Forester.

James teaches upper-level physics and physical science students, robotics, works with theater, and runs the robotics club. Students enjoy his classes, and James maintains professionalism at work. He appears to be sensitive to the needs of those around him and is generally cheerful. James works in a separate building from most of the high school campus at Martinville and misses the interaction and relationships with peers in his discipline. He captured his feelings of isolation in the following vignette: "I've never much enjoyed large groups, and usually preferred reading on my own to socializing. A certain amount of peace and control that came with books which other people rarely exhibit." He has stayed somewhat reclusive in the past two years due to his father's COPD, so he might avoid getting COVID. James is not considering another degree for financial reasons. He appreciated leaders discussing future plans with him. James plans to stay at Martinville, but:

were there to be drastic changes in administration where I didn't...have those relationships that I have now...I might find myself at a point where I might want to try something else. But as of right now, there's not a plan for that. I kind of like it where I am.

James considered other occupations and said that the trade-off was the pay. He justified teaching because the “long-term benefits far outweigh the short-term loss of gains.” James noted teacher retirement and health insurance as excellent benefits and compared them to the few choices he sees his parents have available to them. He likes the sense of security teaching gives and says, “it justifies everything else.”

Sam

Sam is one of the two participants in this study who are part of Generation Z and is in his second year of teaching mathematics. Sam grew up “in the dead middle of the state” and jokingly added that his town would be at the crease if you folded the map of Georgia both ways. Sam believed his high school had around 1,200 students. Like James, he lived in the same house for the first eighteen years of his life and had a “pretty stable, consistent life, growing up with the church twice a week, if not three times.” Sam was active in his church youth group, and his father was a deacon. His father worked in the land surveying and civil engineering field and had a 45-minute commute, so he was often gone before Sam was awake in the mornings. His mother had a house-cleaning business but did not graduate from college. Sam mentioned that his parents worked a great deal, yet they were together throughout his childhood. Like James, Sam had a half-brother almost a decade older, and Sam described himself as the less rowdy sibling. His half-brother caused a “ruckus” growing up, and Sam

learned not to follow the brother's example. He jokingly remembered teachers saying, "Oh, you know, you're his brother? Okay, this will be fun."

Sam's father piqued his interest in mathematics and inspired his career choice. Sam described situations where his father taught him the practicality of number manipulation. "One of the most vivid memories I have is so my dad's huge into math." Sam's father explained the "importance of tips and...how different people get their money...like a salary [versus] an hourly worker." Sam remembered being at Waffle House and his father explaining how waitresses were paid and making him figure the tip at six years old. His father would ensure Sam's calculations were correct, and then he would question if they should leave a tip that exceeded 20% based on the service. Sam also recalled a trip to his grandmother's house where his father had him calculate if they had enough gas to make the trip without stopping, "considering it was a six-hour trip; the tank held gas for 300 miles, and they drove 50 miles per hour." Sam said he would have liked to be playing Nintendo rather than calculating tips and fuel tank capacities, but it was a fun way to pass the time. He said his father also asked the classic "if two trains are going to the same spot, what time would have to leave in different time zones" when he was only eight years old and would say, "Come on! Figure it out!" Sam said these are core memories for him. "I love both my parents. My dad is largely the reason why I am who I am. I even have some of his mannerisms," he said, "it makes me shiver!"

His parents had high expectations for him and considered C's as F's. They expected him to take advanced placement classes, encouraging and supporting academic rigor. Sam said he had a strong adult community with many examples of success. His parents maintained

an open dialogue with him and showed a good work/home balance. Sam participated in recreational sports but mainly involved in the high school math team and key club. He tried band briefly and was part of the drumline. He ran track and cross-country in high school and coached those teams at Martinville.

Sam's friends as a young person were from his church, with the music minister's son as his best friend who lived a couple of doors down from him. The friend was four years older and was "notoriously a preacher's kid, kind of bad." He explained this experience:

Growing up in the church was an overwhelmingly positive experience. Every year we took a 9-day trip with the youth choir across the country to a variety of destinations, singing to people in other churches, nursing homes, and even in the middle of restaurants. I got to travel to Chicago, Toronto, San Antonio, and lots more places with this trip, and it really solidified the relationships that formed me growing up. I remember biking around Toronto with my friends as a freshman in high school, mind you, with no adult supervision, eating at Uno's pizza in Chicago, and walking down the riverwalk in San Antonio. I got to do things and go places that meant the world to me. It was the highlight of my year, every year.

Sam remembered being several years younger than most of his friends. He described making childhood mischief, such as blowing up a bunch of fireworks, but nothing illegal. Sam described a retreat from church:

The same group of church choir friends, which usually was the entire youth group, went on a winter retreat on MLK [Martin Luther King] Day weekend every year to a camp where we would meet up with a lot of other churches in the state and learn some new

songs then put on a concert that Sunday morning. This was when most of the mischief was managed. We almost planned it all year just to get it out this one weekend. All the boys would be put up in a cabin that had three bunk rooms, a common room, and an adult bunk room. There was usually only one or two male adults on the trip and some 20 boys. We would pack loads of fireworks to fire off at night, we would set up boxing rings with the firm camp mattresses as the walls, and we would pull pranks on each other at every opportunity. The most memorable shenanigan was at the closing ceremony one year; a few of the senior boys left early to set out a large fountain firework on the other side of a large wall that was head-to-toe windows in the main room where we were rehearsing. They planted the firework and came back in time to where it seemed like they had just gone to the restroom; it was one or two of them. The next phase of the plan needed a completely different type of person, so it wasn't suspicious, a younger, gullible, innocent type kid, me. So, I "went to the bathroom," snuck out of the building, and lit off the firework. I thought the plan was foolproof except for the fact that while I was gone, the choir directors changed. It wasn't my home church's anymore; it was another church's because they were going to start rehearsing another song. So, my music minister went to check on me and make sure I wasn't up to no good, and low and behold, when I came sprinting back in after lighting off what felt like a firework display worthy of Disneyland, he was waiting for me.

Sam had another group of peer friends separate from his track and cross-country teams from the church. He liked to play video games and hang out at friends' houses. Sam was health-conscious, so he went to bed by ten, which, he said, "reduced time spent with friends."

There were two elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school in Sam's town. The town was racially divided, and he said he "grew up in the predominantly black side of the school district." Sam shared that a new middle school was built while he was in school, and he felt it furthered the racial divide. Statistically, he remembered it closer to 60/40 and said:

It wasn't even that bad. I never actively noticed a racial divide growing up until high school. After my middle school years, I learned that I went to the "poor" middle school. I have since learned that it isn't necessarily a poorer side of town, but it is more predominantly African American. I grew up in it, so I didn't know any different. I never thought about a racial divide until kids from the other side of town talked down on me and my peers when we came together to go to high school. I was in the top of my class, and the valedictorian of my graduating class [also] went to my middle school. Probably 75% of our top 10% in the class did. But there was a stigma around us, and it even carried until we graduated. We were at graduation practice, and people would look at the Val and say, 'didn't she go to [name of middle school]?' which was the middle school I went to.

However, Sam said the most prominent middle school memory was a conversation with a math teacher:

I said, "Hey, I don't understand how to do this." She replied like, "Yeah, it's in your notes" I was like, "Yeah, I don't understand it." She said, "Did you read the book?" I was like, "the textbook?" you read it?" She's like, "Yeah, read it," but I don't like I don't know what this is saying." She's like "all right," ...stuff like okay, all right, I guess I'll

figure it out. Thanks. My teacher was just brutal. It was her style. You were going to fend for yourself, and it was an honors class, so we were capable. But it was a jarring experience from a very caring and approachable 7th-grade math teacher. You earned every point; you fought for everything you learned in that class. The middle school itself was awesome. I loved all my teachers, except for her; she was just the worst, and everyone knew it.

During a faculty meeting the week before his interview, how CCRPI (College and Career Readiness Performance Indicator) is calculated was explained to the faculty by a teacher on the leadership team. He emphasized the importance of standardized test scores and climate rating. Sam looked up his high school CCRPI and said the school had improved since he attended school there. He lamented how everyone knows everything about everyone in a small town and explained how teachers often move up in grades with their students. Sam laughed about how there was one high school and 16 churches in his town, and it was a place where you know all the people shopping at Walmart. His older brother's reputation haunted him, and in a small town, one could not become a student at another magnet school to avoid comparisons. However, Sam described his high school experience as "largely positive."

Sam attended college at the local university in the same city as Martinville. Although he and James both went to this college and attained their education degrees through the alternate stem education preparation program, they did not attend at the same time, nor did they have the same experience with the program. Sam did not think the program prepared him well and did not mention the financial incentives. He was not satisfied with his experience and viewed it as a waste of time. However, he also mentioned that it allowed him "to take a lot of

math classes and very little teaching classes, which was prime for me, because I really enjoyed math classes, and you hated my teaching classes.” He felt the professors in the education courses were “shoehorning” him into using inquiry-based learning where they “discover the math,” which he felt was ineffective. Sam explained:

The whole big thing was that they needed to discover the math. You don’t need to teach them the math; they need to figure it out. You need to give/teach the lesson in a way where you’re not math forward. You’re not like content forward with the stuff. It’s more like buried in the lesson, and then at the end of it all, you’re like, you know, drawing the curtain back and realizing. Okay, guys, look office math that you did! And through these three weeklong projects covering one content standard that we definitely have time to do every time [said sarcastically]. And that was kind of the thing with the education program was.

Sam was considering changing out of education before this because of the “fru-fru” style of pedagogical instruction in the alternative math and science teacher accreditation program.

Sam explained his philosophy about math instruction, “We’ll translate this Greek into a language that makes sense, and I understand that you can’t read this Greek. But I can read this Greek, and I can translate this Greek into a language that makes sense to you.”

Sam’s first positive experience with education came with his student teaching at Martinville:

I got paired with one of the most old-school teachers I’ve ever seen; and he’s relatively young, and he showed me how to do things. I got really discouraged and in college I was like, I’m not doing this. This. This is not it. This is not fun. You know I thoroughly enjoy

explaining complicated math concepts. Clearly, but I don't like doing it with a lot of fru-fru and a lot of extra.

Sam felt he disagreed and “buted heads” with his education professors, and they would tell him that his approaches were wrong. He wanted to teach students like one of his mathematics professors who “walked up to the board said ‘Good Morning,’ started writing, explained things clearly, and then we would just kind of practice some problems, asking questions, practicing problems, ask them questions back and forth.” He said:

And I was like, I want to do this, like this right here. I want to translate it, practice some stuff, make it make sense, and then, like, watch them, make it make sense and develop a skill that is math, and not like focus so much on them—Discovery of half of things.

Sam recalled spending more time working on the preparation for lessons than “the time spent actually teaching anything.” He remembered the college requiring excessively long lesson plans where every moment was micromanaged. Rather than lesson planning, Sam said he would rather:

Focus on how to build relationships with kids this year; really focus on getting a good rapport with the kids, because if they respect me to listen, especially if I'm so close in age and I don't think about leading questions or transitioning from the first 15 minutes of class, where it's like the inquisitive-based learning strategy or whatever. Focus on how to build relationships with kids this year, really focus on getting a good report with the kids, because if they respect me to listen, especially if I'm so close in age and I don't think about leading questions or transitioning from the first 15 minutes of class.

Relational pedagogy sparked Sam's interest in subjects he felt he had shortcomings. His favorite teachers used Socratic method. His English teacher demanded higher-order thinking skills, and his United States History teacher was a master storyteller. Sam discussed putting his spin on relational storytelling in the math classroom. He said, "it takes a unique skill set with a passion for that kind of learning and content because nobody likes math like that, but I like math like that."

Sam struggled with enforcing school rules such as allowing students to leave, the attendance policy, dress code policies about hats and hoods, cell phones, and eating in the classroom. He saw it as a weakness he needed to work on to be compliant but thinks the older guard ("old and crotchety") should reconsider the rules. He worried that some of the rules' enforcement ruin relationships that might keep students from learning. He lamented:

If I see a kid who is already bouncing in and out of ISS [in-school suspension], missing lots of class time, who I can see is taking notes or working on a problem, and he has his hat on, and I have to decide between telling him to take his hat off which would disrupt his work, he might retaliate, we might bicker a little, and he might give up for the day or let him work in peace, I am 100% of the time going to let him work. I had a lot of kids, who I know are routine troublemakers, tell me they appreciated me not being on their case for every little thing. I had the same kid in summer school last summer after his 8th-grade year, and he didn't do a lick of work, but by the end of the year, I got consistent "Yes sir"s, and if I asked him to do something he'd do it. But I firmly believe that's because I led with kindness; I met them where they are at. Their home, whoever they are, might not have the same social expectations that a middle-class, church twice a week,

white kid like me grew up with, and that's okay. I need to read his social cues, not demand he conforms to mine. Eventually, I will lead with example and have honest talks about being punctual to class or with assignments. How dress code can change how people perceive you, and you want to be always your best, but that doesn't develop if I don't meet them where they are at and grow a positive, honest, and firm relationship with the student.

Sam had observation and student teaching experiences in other schools with more stringent rules and felt concerned about students suspension for extended periods for behavior offenses. Sam recognized the students' access to apps that solve math problems but felt he could usually outsmart them. He tried to work around it so he would not have to write referrals for cheating.

I construct the master schedule for the school where Sam is employed. He is the most requested math teacher by students. Although students like his easy-going style, they repeatedly mention that he makes "math make sense." Sam does not socialize with his work peers but has had classes with a few math teachers in the hallway. His first-year teaching was during COVID, and he enjoyed the small in-person classes. Sam considers his strengths as compassion and communication with kids. I, too, consider these as Sam's strengths.

Sam will not be returning to the educational field. His educational future was the reason for his attrition. He stated his belief about professional advancement, "The only way to get more money is to do two things: teach longer and get more degrees." Sam took the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), a standardized test utilized by universities to place graduate students, and sent it to a prestigious school in Alabama. He did well on the GRE, received a full academic

scholarship, and was granted a graduate assistantship. Sam looks forward to:

being a normal College student again for a few years. I'm about to get married semi soon, so I'm going to do it. Do it now. No kids. I don't have a mortgage yet. Life-wise, it fell into place in a really good spot. It's easier to do this at 24 than it is 34. So if I'm going to do it, I better do it now. So influence-wise, it was just timing. There wasn't even really a person or anything. No one pushed me. It was just like the timing was perfect.

Sam felt that financially there would be little difference between the money he made as a beginning teacher and the financial perks he was getting from the university. He said he likes teaching high school and enjoys coaching. However, he does not “know if I can pull my hair out every day for forever. So I don't know if age maturity opens the door back up into a 28-year-old being in a high school classroom. It's completely different than the 24-year-old.”

Holly

Holly grew up in the same city where she now lives and works and is one of the two Generation Z participants. Like all participants, Holly's parents are still married, and she has two older siblings, a brother and an older sister. Her sister-in-law is a science teacher at Martinville with Holly, and her parents are middle school teachers in the same district. She remembers spending pre and post-planning at school with her parents. Her father was a coach; she helped with lockers and spent time at the ball field and on the basketball court. Holly described her family as a “family of educators.” Her aunt teaches elementary school, and two cousins are teachers as well. Holly was the only participant who began college, intending to become an educator.

Holly loves sports in general, but her focus while a student in high school at Martinville was softball. She tried various things during middle school and the beginning of high school, including volleyball, track, soccer, and cheerleading. Holly's family revolved around sports:

We all played sports. So we grew up in the ball field and all the things. And my dad coached basketball, so I grew up on a basketball court, And that's it, basically, sports and schools. I grew up playing softball mainly. That's been a constant. I kind of tried with a little bit of everything, especially in middle school, played volleyball, track, soccer cheerleading. And then, in high school, I had to pick.

She went to a magnet school as an elementary student, where an entrance exam chooses only the brightest young people, and then the middle school, where her parents worked. As a student, Holly participated in the yearbook, National Honor Society, and Junior and Senior Council at Martinville. Her friendships generally revolved around softball, but she also had friends from her neighborhood. She reminisced:

So I had a lot of softball for friends, of course, and then I also had my friends outside of that. We would go to the movies, and we like to go bowling and just right around and listen to music. And one of my friends had, like, a creek in their neighborhood, and we liked to swim in the creek and walk around your neighborhood. And that was about it.

Holly graduated from Martinville, where she now works.

English, which she now teaches, was her favorite subject. Her favorite teacher was a first-year English Language Arts teacher whom Holly had in seventh grade. The teacher still teaches with Holly's father at a neighboring middle school. She coordinated Holly's wedding,

and they have maintained a close relationship. Holly also loved her high school Advanced Placement English teacher. She recalled how “blessed” she was to have him for two years in a row. This teacher retired from Martinville just before Holly started working and recommended her for the job. This teacher “was my favorite English teacher at Martinville because he is wonderful, and I got to have [him] for two years in a row, which I was very blessed with that,” Holly explained.

Holly followed her sister to a state university for a couple of years because her sister had a softball scholarship. She then returned home and finished her degree at the local university. She majored in middle grades but became secondary education certified by taking the Georgia Assessments for Certification of Educators (GACE) exam. Holly was the only participant in the study to complete a traditional education program. She was not very satisfied with the middle grades classes she took but did not feel well prepared for her role as an educator. One professor taught most of the classes, and Holly felt the teacher “clashed” with most of the students in her cohort. Holly said:

Yeah, she’s not there anymore, but she was from somewhere up north, and she moved down here, and she had like gone through a divorce. Almost as though she moved for a fresh start. But she was like a drama teacher or something along those lines, so she was really big on cross-curriculum, which is great. But everything that we did had to have another subject involved; like any lesson we talked about, it had to have another subject and an elective. So, whether it be drama, or art, or theater, and so we don’t see an English head of some kind of history component, which is great. But when you’re first starting, it’s really hard to hit all your learning targets and your standards, and that kind of thing,

and your assessment, and try to hit all those other things at the same time. I had a close friend who, [the teacher] for some reason (I don't remember the specifics), but, she put her a semester behind because she didn't feel like she was ready for student teaching, and so she ended up graduating a semester late and but there was only like five of us we had a very small middle grades class.

Holly did not mind occasional lessons having those ties but focused on English. She felt it was challenging to meet all standards while tying lessons to other disciplines. Holly's cohort was very small, with only five teachers graduating in middle grades in 2018. Holly is in her second year as a teacher. She is certified in English and math for middle grades secondary English and attained her gifted certification during her first year of teaching.

Holly is a positive person and considers positivity her motto. She described faculty and student relationships as such and felt the overall sense of positivity at Martinville remained constant in her experience as a teacher and a student. She said, "Martinville was always a positive place, and I am a positive person. I wanted to work there, and the administration makes that [positivity] happen." Holly had favorite teachers but shared that "there s a special bond between the faculty. They always seem to get along well, and of course, they have their professional differences." Her freshman year at Martinville had a different principal, and the current principal started her junior year, whom she described as faithful. Holly "lives her life for God" and loves that her principal does as well without "stepping over the legal limits." It makes a difference to Holly. Holly is a Young Life leader, an organization that focuses on relational evangelism for young people. She described being a Young Life leader:

I love being a Young Life leader because I can be a part of something bigger than myself. As a teacher, we are not always allowed to share parts of our faith that we would like to with our students inside of the classroom. Young Life allows me to build stronger relationships with my students and share my love for Jesus with them and see them experience Jesus like never before. It also pushes me out of my comfort zone because it involves silly games, dance parties, skits, et cetera.

Besides her sister-in-law, Holly rarely socializes with people from work, although she considers them friends. She enjoyed the collegiality and helpfulness of teachers in her department and described the climate as helpful, friendly, and welcoming, with abundant resources. She imagines that the administration takes things off teachers' plates:

I think [the administrators] carry a lot of the weight of the things that teachers at other school, that admin passed down a teacher at other school and I don't think a lot of teachers, of course, I realize that for how much [the administrators] do, and how much [the administrators] like keep from us [and] don't keep from us, like hiding, but hold on elo[their] own shoulders so that we don't' have to.

Holly began teaching at a fine arts school as a SPED inclusion teacher. Two months after she started, the school went virtual because of COVID. Holly felt utterly unprepared as she only had one SPED class in college. She did not get a cas ad of students, which would have required writing Individual Education Plans, but she spent much time figuring out ZOOM. Navigating 504s and IEPs was difficult and caused her anxiety, "I had to change a lot to help my kids with their IEPs and 504s and all the things. She described the experience:

I only worked for two months until Covid happened, then, we had to stay home, and I didn't have a caseload. I didn't really know what I was supposed to be doing, I would kind of check-in with my students and check in with the lead teachers, and they'd go, "No, we're good."

Holly teaches Honors 9th grade literature and Honors American Literature at Martinville. She remembered her first year at her current school as difficult but was given resources by peers and assistance from her department head. However, although the current year "has its struggles," she said it is not causing her the anxiety she experienced the previous school year. Holly credits a better balance between home and work-life as the main reason for reduced stress. However, she did have a baby the previous year and had to teach online and in-person simultaneously.

Holly desires to create a welcoming environment and accept each child for who they are regardless of race and background. She wants to create a comfortable classroom and be considered approachable. Holly described the importance:

Creating a warm and welcoming environment is part of my many responsibilities as a teacher. It is so important to me that each of my students feels accepted and appreciated for who they are and where they came from, regardless of gender, race, culture, or history.

Holly feels as if everyone should have equal opportunities and believes in equity, and gets frustrated with parents who do not respond to emails or check their child's progress. Holly wishes parents would set high academic bars for their children at home. She captured her frustration in the following vignette:

I feel like the parents play a large role in their children's education, and sometimes I feel like when parents are keeping up with their infinite campus or anything like that like, that's kind of frustrating when you've reached out over ten emails, and then they say Well, I didn't know that they were failing with the 52. Well, and you've called, and you've emailed, and that's frustrating, and sometimes it's frustrating when you're trying to hold the kids to a certain level and a certain bar, and the parents are not holding them to that bar and say you don't really have that support from home.

She does not believe in taking late work unless it is a major assignment that might cause them to fail the class. Holly loves "watching their (the students) eyes light up when they learn something new or finally get something they've been struggling with all year." Mostly she loves talking to them. "They're hilarious. They make me laugh," she said while grinning.

The English department works together to "lighten one another's loads," explained Holly. Sharing lesson plans and units helps each teacher. She tries to leave work by 4:30 and grade at least ten papers a day so she can finish within two weeks and give feedback while students still remember what they wrote. Holly does not feel she has many duties besides hall duty but attends sports events out of enjoyment. She also coaches track for the middle school. Unlike Sam, Holly prefers strict dress codes and rules about cell phones and attendance. She commented on the dress code specifically:

It's necessary. It's definitely, I mean, a requirement, especially in the leggings era that we live in. I hear complaints from students who say, I don't understand why my shoulders are a distraction or whatever, and I've also heard the complaints of, "Why can't we wear

a hat? I feel like they shouldn't be able to wear their short shorts and low-cut, tanking tops to school because it could be a distraction for somebody.

Holly is a positive person who is always cheerful. She has an excellent work ethic and works well with her peers in her department. Holly is always smiling. Students respond well to her, and she communicates well with the parents. Holly assumes responsibility for the school's social media presence and trains students to maintain the school's Instagram and Facebook accounts. With so many ways posts on social media can go awry, this is a big responsibility for a second-year teacher. When asked, Holly said, "I am so excited to help with this!" Holly meets every challenge and request with this same enthusiasm. Holly has a new baby, and her husband is in graduate school. She is considering a master's degree after her husband graduates. Holly, the only participant with traditional education training in college, is pleased in her career and has never considered leaving.

Sara

Sara is twelve days shy of being a part of Generation Z; thus, she is considered a "cusper." She is a science teacher in her second year, and like James and Sam, she obtained her education degree through an alternate degree program. Sara grew up in the suburbs of a large town in the Midwest. Like all participants, her parents are still married, and she has an older brother and younger sister. Sara's father was the primary breadwinner working as an engineer, and her mother was a stay-at-home mom. Her mother went back to school when Sara was in elementary school and obtained a master's in art. She worked as an elementary art teacher for a couple of years until her school district cut the art program. Sara's mother tried to be a substitute teacher for a few years but eventually decided to stay home as she did not

need to work as her father was financially successful. Her father traveled and often would be gone for over three weeks. However, Sara's mother quickly "put a stop to that,":

We were fine off of my dad's salary... he's like the President of project management for a company called [left out for anonymity]. They design, manufacture, and install aluminum can lines. And he's been with that company almost from the very beginning. So he's happy doing it. He travels a lot. He traveled a lot when we were growing up. So mom was always home. I remember there was at one point he was gone for three weeks. He'd come home for a week, and then he'd leave for another three weeks. My mom put the kibosh on that within a year because she was like, I'm not going to single parent while being married. That's not how this works. But yeah, now he has always loved his job. He's still doing it. He's looking at retiring in the next couple of years,

Sara met her husband in college in the same town where she attended college. They lived apart for six months after they married for her to finish school. Sara shared:

It's just me and my husband right now. He's in the military. He just made captain in the US Army. And so we're just kind of doing my thing. We're getting ready at PCs again. So we'll be moving at the end of the school year. And just me and him and the two dogs are working on trying to have a kid right now. It's going about as well as it can.

Sara and her husband will move back to the midwest at the end of the school year. Sara commented about her husband, "He's always there. He listens to me complain, and he listens to my triumphs, and he's always been very supportive of whatever I wanted to do."

The community where Sara went to grade school had several school districts within the same county, different from the local structure. She lived in the same district throughout

her childhood, and the county became less rural and more developed with rapidly changing demographics as she grew up. However, when she was in school, she said there were “only white students and very little diversity” and described it as “bland.” Sara’s lack of exposure to diversity made her anxious about teaching at first. She wondered how she would handle certain situations:

Towards the end of my undergraduate degree, my professors spent a lot of time trying to prepare us for interviews, and I think the question that always made me the most nervous was about our experiences with diversity. I don’t view my experiences growing up as very diverse, so I was never sure how to answer the question. I was not opposed to working with diverse populations, but I knew my experiences were not going to match theirs, so I was nervous about being able to relate to and understand some of the behaviors of my students.

Sara was a competitive gymnast in high school and participated in the marching band’s color guard. She “destroyed her body with gymnastics” but continued in the color guard into college. Sara reminisced:

I did continue to color guard up and through, at least, like the first part of College, I actually ended up marching in a drum and bugle corps up in Boston for a summer, and then I taught my old high school color guard for a couple of years. And then, I also wrote choreography for my university at one point. So I continued to do that. And then I also danced and did a couple of other things. I was involved in a service sorority, so it wasn’t like the big social sororities that everybody hears about, like Kappa Delta. It was a small group based at my University. It was a group mostly focused on doing like service

events. And our philanthropy was our local animal shelter. So we do fundraisers for that and whatnot.

Sara also joined the National Honor Society in high school but admitted it was “just to wear the stole at graduation.” In college, she served as secretary and president of the student chapter of the state teachers association.

When Sara was very young, she wanted to teach kindergarten because of a strong relationship with her sister’s teacher. She spent her recesses with the teacher and kept the relationship with this teacher throughout elementary school. This relationship sparked her desire to teach. In high school, her band director “had a big impact on me, kind of where I get my view of professionalism from and how important that is in life.” She explained:

People always ask teachers to think about their favorite teacher and what made them the favorite teacher. Every time, my first thought is usually about my band director in high school. Part of it was just that he taught a class and led an activity that I loved so much, but a bigger part was just that he always expected more from us. He always talked about professionalism and how he expected us, even as high schoolers, to behave professionally. He kind of set the standard for professionalism for me. It was more than just how you dressed and show up to work on time, but how you engaged with others and set expectations for the kind of behavior we should engage in. I also had the pleasure of working for him as the color guard director while I was in college, and he helped guide me through the transition from student to teacher and helped me lay the foundation for the type of teacher I wish to become.

Sara always liked science and especially enjoyed her physics teacher. She student taught with him at the end of college. Sara described this time:

I needed to save money because I couldn't work at the time. I moved back in with my parents because my husband and I also had a mortgage down here that we were paying. So I moved back in with my parents and did my student teaching at the high school that I went to with my physics teacher for two years in high school. I was like, I knew he was a really good teacher, and then I could learn a lot from him. He would be very supportive, and I knew I loved the environment at my high school. And so I just had asked to be placed back there, and they got me in. So that's what I did. I was the first student teacher he had ever had because most people don't choose to torture themselves with a degree in physics and then go teach.

Sara went to a large state university specializing in science and technology in the midwest. The population was 75% male and focused on engineering. Most of Sara's professors were okay "with the female thing," but there was one she "wanted to smack due to some of his comments." She began her education as an undetermined engineering major, although she initially applied for physics and secondary education. She was worried about the negativity associated with teaching, and peers said, "you're so smart, you can make so much money, you can do all these things," so she decided to give [engineering] a try. Even her professors told her it would be a "waste" if she became a teacher. Sara described that experience:

My undergraduate degree was in physics, and in college, I had quite a few physics professors who did not understand my desire to teach. They frequently would make well-

meaning comments that were not supportive of my decision to teach. I had one professor tell me that it was such a waste that I was going to be a teacher because I could be such a good experimentalist; I had another professor the next semester have a whole debate with me about me how he could not understand that I wanted to teach high school because ‘that physics is so boring.’ Regardless of how often I told him that it was not about physics; it was about the kids, he just could not get over how “boring” base-level physics is.

Sara repeatedly told me that her “degree is physics. I have a physics degree. It’s physics with an emphasis on secondary education. So I got the degree in physics with the teaching certificate on top of it.” She bragged about the teaching college at the university despite its reputation for engineering, “[name of college] has actually got one of the best teaching colleges in the state. It’s highly ranked. We have a lot of really good teaching staff there.” After spending a summer at her father’s company, she knew she did not enjoy engineering and went back to education. Georgia’s Professional Standards Commission reciprocally accepted her accreditation as a serviceman’s wife from another state. However, she added that the military would pay for recertification if a state did not reciprocate. Sara’s husband is in the military, and her certificate from the mid-west transferred to Georgia. She explained:

Most states for military are pretty open to transferring certifications just because they’re understanding that we don’t have; it’s not an option on our point, as we didn’t choose to go wherever we are going. We were told to. And then, even if I couldn’t transfer my certification, the military would pay for me to get recertified.

When reflecting on the preparation she received from her university, Sara described changes she felt were needed:

There are definitely some things I would have changed about my program, and that was a discussion that I had with the new department chair right before I graduated because after we student taught, why not? I think the big issue we had with my program was that secondary students had so many content classes because we all have our degree in our field and then certification to teach on top of it. So I don't have like a degree in teaching. I just have the certification on top of it.

Sara's department chair solicited input from her graduating class. Sara did not hesitate to ask that secondary education students needed more time in the classroom to address classroom management deficits. Sara admitted that classroom management, a skill most traditional programs focus on, has been difficult for her at Martinville.

Sara described Martinville as supportive, "I really appreciate the administration that I've gotten to teach under because I've had a lot of autonomy in my classroom, but I've also been thoroughly supported when I've got issues." She said the school has a sense of home. She felt secure about asking for help and said it was readily given. Her teaching peers have been welcoming and supportive as well. Sara mentioned the assistant principal, who had been recently promoted within the school but was the previous science department head, providing her with all the lesson plans for the year, printing out the course standards, and setting up her classroom on Canvas. The administrator also visited her classroom often and assisted with discipline when needed.

Sara struggled to balance her teaching responsibilities when teaching virtually and in-person simultaneously. She considers most students part of the overall positive environment, but there is a sub-group that “does not see the beauty of the family atmosphere and can be quite negative.” Sara has a core group of friends from the science department:

It’s not the entire department but our hallway. Most of us on the hallway will periodically get together or go get I don’t even want to call dinner because 330 is a little early for dinner, but we go out after school or whatever, or we’ll have a bonfire on the weekend. We do. We hang out not a ton because we’re all busy, but we periodically eat lunch together, and it’s very supportive up in that hallway, and I appreciate that environment. They are busy, so it is not very often, but they eat lunch together each day.

When reflecting on a recent faculty meeting, Sara agreed with the principal about not budging on high expectations. She felt students would rise to meet them; if they do not, they must deal with the consequences. Structure, to Sara, is essential, especially for the high school developmental period where they are pushing boundaries. Students need to know what is acceptable and unacceptable and the consequences of their choices. Sara was glad the administration would not set a low bar and realized how well students could perform. Sara described Martinville as “a welcoming environment. And all the kids...know the program. They understand the expectations and consequences for their actions, and they’re supportive of each other and kind to other students.” She hopes the school continues not to budge on academic and behavioral bars despite parent or community influences.

Personally, Sara struggled with setting expectations and figuring out how to hold students responsible. She remembered its impossibility when students chose to attend school

virtually and learned she had to pick her battles. Sara felt she struggled with classroom management, felt defeated at times, and worried about the rampant cheating as Sam did. Sara shared, “it’s demoralizing when students are not concerned with missing assignments.” As a Summa Cum Laude graduate in high school and college, Sara expressed that it was hard to understand a lack of effort from students. Sara described her first year as managing two classrooms at once. She said she reflected at the end of the year and concluded, “I’m going to throw that year away. That is not my first year teaching. I am going to have a new first year.” She enjoyed the students back in the classroom and the conversations she had with them. Although most parent interactions have been positive, Sara recalled several parents who attached her discipline choices and made excuses for their children. She was shocked at the bad grammar in the emails she received:

Just got one parent that comes to mind who can’t write in English. It’s a first problem. There’s no grammar going on there whatsoever. So trying to decipher the email is one thing, and then it’s just a constant attack. And I got to the point where I was like, I’m just sending these to [discipline principal]. These are not my problem anymore. Yeah, one of them was like, it was a student in my first period, and I was repeatedly marketing her tardy because she was *always* tardy. And so her mom kept sending me emails like, ‘Don’t mark her tardy because of X-Y-Z. And I’m like, this is the tardy policy. She’s getting ISS because she’s on Tardy number seven. If you have questions about it, you can talk to [principal]. And I honestly have not heard from her since then, and that’s been really nice.

Sara has been disappointed with administrative feedback on classroom performance.

When evaluated:

He came in, he did not pick up my lesson plans, and I'm like, I put those together. Can you at least pretend to look at them? And then he sat in the back, and he did not seem to be paying attention. I was like, okay, honestly, in that exact period, it was probably for the best because it was a little bit chaos...But, yeah, it's one of those things where I wish I could get a little bit more constructive feedback. I appreciate the positive reviews, but I want to know what I can do better, how I can do things, or even if it's just like, " Hey, I saw this happen.

Sara wants to be a better teacher and admits to not having everything figured out. She planned on reorganizing her course if she were staying at the school. Sara is working on her master's degree in education from another midwestern university online and does not find the program very helpful, much like her undergraduate classes. She expressed her frustration:

It seems like I'm writing a new paper every week, but I haven't learned anything, so I don't even know what I'm supposed to be writing this on. My teacher has been Mia, and I'm like, I don't know what's happening. We haven't gotten grades back in three weeks. I'm like, is this how my kids feel?

Sara does not feel that she balances work and home life well and shared that her peers make fun of how late she works. She is working on it and realizes that everything does not have to be immediately graded, and her husband is encouraging her to draw lines. Sara believes in mobility and does not do desk work, so teaching can be physically exhausting

some days. She lamented, “It’s been a bit too much, and there’s no break in the day because those are hard classes to teach, and they’re just exhausting.

Sara is currently working on her Master’s degree and strategically chose a university because they do not charge out-of-state tuition. Her husband’s military career might require her to move; thus, online is also preferable. Sara was not sure if she would have to make another move around November of the following year, and she did not “really want to take a whole year off, but with the way we're moving and what's going on, it's just kind of looking like that's what I'll have to do." Sara also shared that she and her husband are trying to have a baby, so she “is not looking too hard.” She said she might consider being a long-term substitute teacher.

Sara believes she will return to teaching after a year’s break. She said:

I do think I'll go back. I do enjoy teaching. I do like my job. I like that I engage with kids, and I enjoy the time when I actually get to have conversations with them, whether it's about my content or otherwise. I do enjoy that. I'm not completely burnt out yet, but because of the timeline, I think I will have to take a year off and then keep going.

Sara knew she had options other than teaching and described herself as “overqualified to do many different jobs,” including engineering. However, Sara said she wanted to teach. She mentioned teaching at the university level instead of secondary education, but only if she taught education classes. Sara believes she could:

be very real with them and let them, because I think that's the other thing is right now because we don't want to lose anybody, it's all like sunshine and daisies, and this is the ideal world. And you get to do all this differentiation, and everything will be great, and your classroom management will fix all the problems. And if you have relationships with

your students, you will never have behavioral issues. And it's all BS, and some relationships will help a lot of things. However, you can have the best relationships in the world, and you're still going to have a couple of students who just aren't going to behave the way they're going to behave. And there's nothing that you. And there's nothing you can do about it because there's some other issue.

Sara considers herself a people pleaser, so it was hard for her to tell the principal that she would not be returning the following year. He reassured her that he knew from the beginning that she would have to leave because of her husband's military placements. I found Sara to be driven and a little frustrated. She expressed that she struggled as a new teacher. She has a ready smile and genuinely likes her students and peers.

Joe

Joe is a twenty-seven-year-old special education teacher in his third year of teaching. He is a Millennial who attended a total liberal arts magnet high school for one year, then transferred as a sophomore to Martinville, where he currently works. Joe graduated from Martinville in 2013 and came from a stable family. He commented that Martinville "got the rep for a not as high level of academics." Still, once he transferred, he found it was "no different...you can go as high academically over here as you want to, depending on the classes you choose to elevate yourself with as far as advanced placement and honors." His father is in real estate, and his mother was a teacher for thirty years at two different middle schools in the area and currently substitutes at his school. Joe described his childhood experience as "a good family environment, a lot of positivity, strict discipline. My mom was a teacher, so constantly on top of me about school and making sure academics come first, because I played sports as

well.” Joe’s younger sister is also a teacher. He loves sports and coaches volleyball and baseball. When he was younger, Joe participated in “every sport you could name,” including karate, soccer, baseball, basketball, and football. His father coached him in basketball and baseball but was “just dad” for the rest. Joe was in the National Honor Society and volunteered at the Boys and Girls Club.

One of Joe’s high school science teachers, who has retired but currently works as a paraprofessional in a Community Readiness class for special education students who have graduated, was his favorite. He loved that she did hands-on-type activities, although he feared she would only remember him as a talker. As Joe did not originally intend to be a teacher, he did not have a person who inspired him toward his career. However, he remembers many teachers fondly.

Joe went to a small liberal arts college in Georgia for a year and then transferred to a more prominent religious-based university to complete his undergraduate degree in Business Administration and play baseball. When Joe graduated, he started applying to large local corporations. The head baseball coach at Martinville called and told him there was a coaching position open and he could teach. Joe did not hesitate. He “didn’t even second think it.” Joe immediately began his master’s degree in special education from the same local university Sam, Holly, and James attended. Joe taught at Martinville with a provisional certification for three years before attaining complete special education certification. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Joe’s supervising teacher from the university did not visit the classroom during his last year and only once or twice in the previous years. Joe did not student teach, so he had on-the-job training. When asked about his program’s preparation, he said:

I do feel like I was prepared to teach by them, but at the same time, I do feel like because of the stage I was at, where I was already in my profession, working every day, that it did get to a point, especially about halfway to the latter end that it was kind of just a hoop process where I was jumping through hurdles to get there. Not that it was teaching me a ton of new information, because like I said, a year in, I kind of knew majority of what was required of me.

Despite Joe's initial job intent, he has adjusted well to teaching and reports no issues with content or classroom management.

The experience Joe had at the local university was like on-the-job training. He felt it was probably easier for him as he was teaching simultaneously. It took Joe three years to complete the program, and he taught on a provisional certification until graduation. This year is his first year with complete certification. He had a supervising teacher throughout his college and described these interactions:

I did that little teaching internship program through Miss Deborah, and she would just come and watch. I think she did it last, but she did it the full year, and she would just come and watch me teach a couple of days a week, or actually, we ended up doing recordings because of Covid. So I think she only came once. I think she's supposed to come in the building four or five times, but she couldn't because of code regulations.

Joe, also cannot imagine another career. He is currently working on his Specialist's degree in Special Education but thinks it would be the last degree he earns unless he decides to be in administration. Joe's professional goal is to become a head baseball coach at a high school.

Coaching and teaching are similar to Joe. He hopes to make a positive impact on students. He realizes he often sees students he teaches and coaches more than their parents. He wants to be a “positive voice in their lives and push them to be better people.” Joe never imagined going into teaching before it happened.

Nevertheless, he feels as if it were “the best thing because [he] feels like [his] personality...is the best fit that could have been thrown at [him].” Joe sees his strength in relating to students as he is one of the younger “individuals in the room and [is] able to relate more towards this generation and bring it on their level a little bit better to understand where they are coming from.” Joe explained that he knew the current slang better than older teachers, not the bad words he emphasized. “I am a little closer in age, so I can relate to them better in certain situations by not being so directive and using their vocabulary.”

Joe does not consider classroom management or discipline problem areas. Teaching is his primary duty, and coaching is his secondary assignment. He said, “the best thing I never thought I would go into was teaching.” However, he is willing to do anything for the school and the students. He has parking lot duty in the afternoons but often misses it for coaching duties. Joe described Martinville as inviting, from the administration to the students. He described Martinville:

It’s just an inviting place. And especially coming from admin down to students. And it’s clear as day you understand when you walk in that building what is expected of you, students, teachers, any kind of staff, you know what’s expected and you know what you’re going to get. And then that being echoed, it is directly, I think, directly acted out by our teachers and staff, administration, and everything.

Joe loves working at his school and considers it the best workplace. He tries to balance work-life with home life, but sports, especially baseball, are time intensive. He married two years ago and has two dogs, a German Shorthaired Pointer, and a Beagle.

Joe appears to be an earnest young man and frequently volunteers to assist others. He readily accepts instruction with a smile and cheerful disposition. I frequently ask Joe to cover classes, proctor tests, and assist with various duties. He got along well with his parents and described these interactions:

I'd say it's good. For the most part, I consider myself a pretty good people person. So usually, when issues do arise because, you know, there are several meetings, you can get those parents that will try to Buffaloe [trick] you, but for the most part, they go smooth. And that may have to do with being at North Side. And because most of our parents are great parents, they just want to be informed. And I feel like if you stay informed with them, then that keeps the problems from arising because I feel that consensus throughout parents is just knowing what's happening.

Joe has a good sense of humor and genuinely enjoys his job and coaching. He works well with peers and wants to improve in his career. Joe hopes to be a head baseball coach but sees that as the only reason he would leave the school.

Summary

Four participants in this study did not initially intend to become teachers. Sara, Sam, and James acquired college degrees in science and mathematics and added teacher certification near the end of their studies through alternate teacher preparation programs. Ingersoll et al. (2012) estimated that 40% of teachers enter the teaching profession from a non-traditional route, and

teacher enrollment programs in the United States declined by 35% between 2009 and 2014. This drop aligned with my findings that four participants did not attain a teaching certificate in a traditional program (Sutcher et al., 2019). Ingersoll et al. (2012) posit pedagogical losses contribute to the most significant discrepancies in new teacher success. Two of the five participants, Sara and Sam, do not plan on returning to teaching the year after this study. Both teachers reported pedagogical difficulties, especially with classroom management. The participants' consensus was that their most significant pedagogical gains were made within the classroom with the help of peers, mentors, and administrators. Holly and Joe, the two participants, trained in more traditional educational programs, reported far less stress than the other participants.

Owens (2015) listed teacher compensation in the top five reasons teachers leave the educational profession. In his study, the interviewed teachers were satisfied with the benefits. Still, he concluded their salaries were one factor that added to a feeling of disrespect and de-professionalization of their work. When asked about their professional future, the participants discussed attaining advanced degrees for financial supplements and dissatisfaction with pay. Although the pay was only directly referred to by one of the participants, each noted how benefits or retirement influenced their decisions to remain in the educational field. Sam and Sara were adamant about liking teaching but felt their best life choice was to leave the field at least for a season.

The participants' profiles described in this chapter characterized in-depth details of their lived experiences from childhood to the present, their educational background, teaching disciplines, and career experiences. These profiles allow the reader to identify with each

participant, their childhoods, schools, and current professional experiences. Using a narrative inquiry approach allowed me to understand the participants' experiences through conversations better and participate in the participants' daily lives (Smit, 2018). The following chapter will focus on analyzed data related to the research questions associated with their responses.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION OF THEMES

In previous chapters, I have summarized and discussed the perceived contributions to teacher attrition. I presented literature relevant to the culture and climate of schools, leaders' support and feedback, age-group characteristics of new teachers in Georgia, the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) evaluation system, and Relational Leadership Theory. Qualitative methodology strategies were discussed concerning investigating new teachers' perceptions and life experiences in Georgia. This chapter will provide an overview of the process used to analyze data in this study. I outline the coding process used to identify significant themes across participants' comments, social media, and Georgia Department of Education documentation. I present the codes used to fracture data and reconnect them, discussing each theme in detail. The findings connect to the literature and address new teachers' responses to leader feedback, relational experiences, and career experiences. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ 1: What career experiences of new teachers in Georgia support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive high school in Georgia?

RQ 2. Do relational leadership practices and leader feedback on classroom performance support teachers to do their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

RQ 3. How has the application of feedback from school administration impacted teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

Data Analysis

Narrative inquiry was the qualitative methodological approach used in this study to explore and make meaning of the participants' lived experiences through conversations about their current teaching position. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest, narrative inquiry requires relationships and shared experiences between participants and the researcher to provide necessary constructs. I used five teachers from the identified, large, comprehensive urban Georgia high school within their first four years. I choose these participants from my school district to provide relevant data for relational leadership and teacher retention and their willingness to participate.

I used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions based on the study's conceptual framework in a modified Seidman (2019) interview process. All interviews were conducted by Zoom, recorded, and then transcribed. I obtained verbal conformed consent from each participant at the beginning of each interview after reading the oral consent agreement approved by Valdosta State's Institutional Review Board outlining the purpose of the study. I implemented Happy Scribe software to transcribe the audio interviews, and MAXQDA software to code the interview transcripts. I placed data and transcribed interviews in specific folders organized by type or participant pseudonym. I rewatched the interviews, commented, and made reflections within 24 hours to identify reflexivity concerns. During the first round of coding or initial coding, I fractured my data into open codes such as discipline,

family support, and well-being. Next, I used axial coding to chunk open codes into more extensive codes such as relational experiences, culture, and climate. Finally, themes emerged from these codes.

Data analysis began immediately after the completion of the interviews. In addition to interviewing the participants, I analyzed documentation from the Georgia Department of Education and the local school district to outline the formal process and timeline of implementing the Georgia performance evaluation tool for the school years during the new teachers' employment. Field notes from observations of the participant's environment and the school's social media supported the accuracy of data interpretation (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). This documentation was added to the data collected from interviews, coded, and placed in categories. Table 2 outlines a sample of the initial coding process.

Table 2

| Code | Code Description | Participant Response |
|------|--|--|
| NT | Non-Traditional—the pathway to educational licensing other than university educational programs | Sam: I wasn't an education major; I was a math major. |
| PSE | Past School Experience—school experiences of the participants as students | Sara: I graduated Summa Cum Laude from both high school and college |
| C19 | Covid-19—participants' experiences of teaching during the pandemic | Sam: A lot of the student body got kind of weird with Covid. |
| CC | Culture and Climate—participants' perceptions and comments on the culture and/or climate of the school | Holly: It (the school) is a positive place, and I'm a positive person. |
| WB | Well-Being—the social-emotional health or parameters implemented by participants to ensure well-being | Joe: I try to make my weekends my weekends when I can. |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| M | Mentor—teachers or professors who supported the participant | Sam: I got paired with one of the most old-school teachers I've ever seen. |
| RE | Relational Experience—Social experiences with friends and colleagues | Sara: We (her department) go out after school or whatever. |
| A | Attrition—participants' choices to remain or leave the education field | James: I don't have enough backup to just jump ship and find something else to do. |
| RP | Relational Pedagogy—participants' use of relationships with students to improve instruction | Holly: I love watching their eyes light up when they learn something new. |
| RL | Relational Leadership—Relationship experiences between participants and school administration | Joe: I feel a personal connection with (the principal); we connect on several different areas, mainly sports and baseball. |
| PF | Professional Future—decisions by participants to further their education | Sara: I'm getting my master's from the University of Kansas. |
| FS | Family Support—how participants' families influenced career decisions | Holly: We have a family of educators. |
| FB | Feedback—discussions from administration or mentors on participants' performance or career | James: There's a little stress up front...then you are on your toes until it (the evaluation) happens. |

Table 2 Sample of Initial Codes

Background—Georgia's Response to Education During the Pandemic

The participants of this study began their careers during the Covid-19 pandemic. To better understand the departure from traditional teaching pedagogies and the truncated role administrators had for the execution of evaluations, the reader needs to be aware of state and local mandates during that time. The pandemic impacted how school leaders assessed instruction and interacted with teachers. The Georgia Department of Education, and Martinville's local school board, to mitigate the turmoil caused by Covid-19, declared

procedural changes for teacher evaluations and virtual responses to classroom presentations. On March 27, 2020, Governor Kemp signed an executive order enabling the State Board of Education to waive state rules, regulations, policies, and procedures allowing school districts to forego state testing and teacher evaluations (GA Code Section 20-2-210). State School Superintendent Richard Woods suspended TKES requirements after the governor's announcement. He asked leaders to no longer enter evaluation data on the TKES platform. Information was sent to all administrators from the identified Georgia school district in an email on April 6, 2020, with instructions to suspend evaluation for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. Students and teachers were sent home for the last nine weeks of the 2019-2020 school year and were allowed only to remediate. Teachers averaged the first three nine-week grades for the students' final grades. Martinville was no exception.

Martinville's district superintendent sent correspondence to school administrators on October 13, 2020, outlining the update they received from the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). The previous week, on October 8, 2020, the GaDOE confirmed the requirement for TKES is outlined in state law and could not be waived. However, the GaDOE made the following recommendations (GaDOE, 2020):

- Teacher Effectiveness Measures (TEM) will not be determined due to the suspension of student growth scores for the 2020-2021 school year.
- All conferences should be conducted focusing on professional growth and not punitive.
- The self-assessment expectation was suspended but encouraged.
- The Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) Summative ratings cannot be determined and thus cannot be required.

- State law requires multiple observations, which the GaDOE interpreted as two per year.
- Professional learning was still required.

Clifton (2017) likened the role of a leader to a coach. The memo focused on relational practices and encouraged leaders to conduct observations in-person and "not during an online or blended instructional environment (GaDOE, 2020)." The school district provided additional instructions to provide coaching during the spring (March 1 – April 23) both informally (ongoing) and with a formal coaching session. Documentation from the Georgia Department of Education and the local school district also outlined how administrators should build a relational support system to coach and mentor teachers. For the participants at Martinville, this meant a 60% reduction in formal observations by administrators and no standardized measurement of student growth in two of their first few years of teaching.

Themes

I used the qualitative research approach to comprehend participants' social settings from their perspectives. The researcher is often personally immersed, observing and gathering data to interpret humans' meaning-making process with personal experiences (Creswell, 2014; Jones, 2010; Patton, 2015). I sought to remain open and unbiased to the emergence of themes throughout my data analysis. While reading and rereading data, reviewing transcripts, field notes on observations and social media, and documents from the GaDOE, common themes emerged through the analysis of open and axial codes. While reconnecting the codes used in the open coding process, themes emerged, revealing several unexpected patterns. The data yielded three major themes: relational experiences and classroom support, school climate and teacher relationships, and administrative presence and feedback frequency. I discussed these

themes using direct quotations from each participant and data from supporting field notes on social media and the Georgia Department of Education documentation.

Relational Experiences and Classroom Support

Relational experiences, administrative interactions, and the impact of school climate were prominent and somewhat intertwined throughout my data. The participants' feelings of successful classroom practices were often tied to relational experiences from their past with their peers, mentors, and administration. Uhl-Bien (2006) explained relational leadership as an emergent process as the behaviors, approaches, or values are constructed based on the ongoing relational dynamics between people in an organization. Within a school setting, these processes include the social and professional interactions between teachers, students, peers, and administration. Thus, I developed the theme relational experiences and classroom supports from participants' descriptions of relationships with their peers and school leaders and the effect these relationships had on classroom practices. The challenges presented with instruction and interactions during the pandemic played a significant role in the formative teaching years of the participants. Thus, their stories often reflect these experiences and how they affected perceived support from peers and leaders.

To put this in context, one must understand how relational leadership works in an educational setting. Uhl-Bien (2006) explained that relational leadership emerges from ongoing behaviors and values constructed based on an organization's relational dynamics and noted that an organization's culture is a prominent factor in building these relationships. Healthy experiences create a foundation for building and maintaining this culture. The participants in this

study had healthy experiences as students, which added to their professional experiences at Martinville.

All the participants enjoyed their past school experiences—several described the personal relationships with former teachers contributing to their decision to pursue teaching. James, who teaches physics, recalled a college physics professor with an open-door policy he admired. James said he had "a lot going on." He was grateful for communicating with her so freely, especially in her role as a professor in the alternate route to the certification program. Sam remembers wanting to emulate a Socratic teaching style based on his high school history and English teachers' ability to connect with students. He said, "It was like magic for everybody, and we were completely enamored by the stories...and I was like, I want to do that." Sara attributed her final decision to become an educator to her sister's kindergarten teacher. Sara remembered spending recesses in her classroom helping her through 5th grade. Holly still maintains a relationship with her middle school English teacher, who coordinated her wedding and works with her father. Holly and Sam graduated from Martinville and commented on the positive relationships between students and faculty when they attended high school. The participants had relatively good relationships with educators, setting the foundation of positivity about education.

In addition to positive childhood relational experiences between the participants and their teachers, they also reported good social and professional relationships with their peers. These peer relationships became especially important with the decrease in administrative contact during the pandemic. James and Sara are in the science department, and although James does not currently socialize due to his father's health, Sara often socializes with her department peers. James sits with his department at faculty events but explained that the proximity of science

classrooms prevents him from more frequent interaction. Sam knew a few other math teachers from college but did not "hang out with anybody outside of school." However, he feels comfortable talking to "his neighbors" and knows whom to talk to when he needs something. Holly and Joe are the most outgoing participants. Although Holly does not socialize with her teaching peers outside of work, she eats lunch with them and "sees them daily, all day long, like on the hallway." She played softball with another teacher at Martinville, and her sister-in-law is a teacher in the science department, so she often socializes outside of school with those peers. Joe, like Holly, is very positive and is friends with his co-teachers and fellow coaches.

The covid pandemic challenged relationships between principals and their teachers. The lack of professional interpersonal relationships strained the flow of proper teacher evaluation and the critical feedback to help them improve teaching and learning. Sam, Holly, and Sara began their teaching careers during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. When Martinville went to complete virtual learning in March 2020 and continued with options for students to be virtual students or traditional students simultaneously during the 2020-2021 school year, these teachers had to manage their students with limited evaluation and feedback. The following year, this situation continued when the district asked teachers to teach each class using Zoom for the virtual students while also managing and engaging students within the classroom. Each participant reported the difficulties and strain of teaching during this time. Sara lamented, "I just really struggled. It was too much all at once with online and in-person and simultaneously trying to manage essentially two classrooms at the same time." The school district administration asked teachers to limit physical socialization and leaders to communicate virtually with teachers. In-person classroom support was limited.

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Martinville school district required students and teachers to follow the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) everchanging quarantine mandates. Many were quarantined for up to ten days and had to teach from home with paraprofessionals monitoring their classrooms. The district also required teachers to teach students virtually and in person. School-based leaders were burdened with contact tracing, a labor-intensive task taking time from classroom visits and teacher interactions. These cumbersome tasks took time from leaders' ability to support teachers. The administration required seating charts for close-contact tracing, which happened every day. Due to the pandemic, the school district was unprepared to evaluate and provide critical feedback to teachers. Holly remembered details about close-contact protocols:

I mean, the emails are really easy, especially with so-and-so has tested positive please send the names for the past two days. I think [the administrators] carry a lot of the weight of the things that admin passed down to teachers at other schools, and I don't think a lot of teachers. Of course, I realize that for how much [the administrators] do, and how much [the administrators] like keep from us... don't keep from us like hiding, but hold on your shoulder so that we don't have to answer those questions.

The school district mandated and trained teachers to use Canvas, a web-based learning management platform. All students would work on Canvas at home or in the classroom. Holly said it was difficult "having to do in person and Zoom I was trying to get stuff on Canvas." Holly got frustrated with managing questions from both sets of students while on Zoom:

They would put questions in the chat that I didn't see until 10 min later when I was past that, and then sometimes I would start teaching, and then they would type in the chat,

"you're on mute, or you're muted, we can't hear you," and it [simultaneous instruction] just had its own difficulties.

Holly found last year more mentally draining than the current year. Yet, having graduated from Martinville, Holly was familiar with the school, teachers, and administration, an advantage that other participants did not have. She felt comfortable asking for assistance, whereas the others often felt like they were on an island. However, school leaders at Martinville were also navigating new waters during the pandemic. Often the participants leaned on one another instead of the daily classroom presence of school leaders.

Covid-19 was a "social dampener" for James, forcing him to "infrequently" socialize with the people in the science department. James and Joe are in their fourth year in the profession and were the only participants who experienced traditional teaching before the pandemic. James missed his peers and described the infrequency of interaction as:

not necessarily normal. The first two years where things were, you know, relatively normal as far as social norms were concerned. Before Covid, I definitely would say that we would do something as a department, maybe once, if not, the semester, whether that be a potluck or go to someone's house and kind of like get together and just you know to be social and have a commune or, you know, go out to lunch, or something like that. I find I really enjoyed those opportunities, and I have even found that I don't eat lunch with people around me nearly as much, and that's just me trying to self-quarantine; my dad is high risk, and he's got COPD.

James' classroom is in another building far from most science teachers. Conversely, Sara, a science teacher, often socialized with her peers during this time. Her peers were young females in the same age range and in the same hallway.

Holly and James taught academically advanced students during the trying pandemic year. Sara taught physical science classes with regular and inclusion (co-teaching with special needs students). Sara and Sam struggled more throughout their first year during the pandemic. Many of Sara's students struggled with learning, and their parents chose for them to attend virtually, which created more learning and behavior gaps. She battled student accountability given the lack of feedback:

I think the hardest part was setting the expectations and trying to figure out how to hold kids accountable. It was just impossible because with them being at home, there were too many battles to fight, and I couldn't fight all of them. So, trying to figure out which ones were worth the stress, which ones were worth the argument, and which ones weren't...I don't know that I picked the right battles necessarily.

As a leader at Martinville, I struggled with giving consequences to students who attended school virtually. Suspending the students pushed them farther behind academically. The participants struggled with engagement, and often there was little administrators could do to support them. Sara felt that the experience showed her that the classroom management techniques she observed while preparing for her career were not appropriate or effective for the students she taught. She did not anticipate student apathy:

I get the not doing work, but it's the entitlement. I think it's what really gets me that they think they should not have to do work and how dare I ask them to do that? And then they

fail my class. That still boggles my mind how they don't understand that. And then I get a lot of I can get a lot of this, and I don't know why they go, can we have a free day? And I'm like, no, you came to school to learn today. I intend on teaching you. And they're just like, why don't we ever get a break in this class? And I'm like, you get breaks. It's called Saturday and Sunday. I thought this was a school. I thought you came here to learn.

Yeah, I get a lot of that, which I find very frustrating.

In addition to being frustrated with the lack of student motivation, Sara described student interactions as often combative when asking them to engage during class. She hated that the students thought "they should be able to get away with not doing anything." Sara suggested that students "had a couple of weird years and were unable to get past being able to mute their teacher" when bored of class as they did when learning virtually.

During the pandemic, teachers lacked feedback on classroom management and professional duties. Students struggled from this lack of routine as well. Sam also described the Covid years as "weird" and felt it would take a while for students to return to a routine. Sam was more hopeful and upbeat than Sara and felt that "kids fell out of the school routine, and now falling back into it. But the culture still around it is a lot of them want to do well." Sara viewed it a little differently:

I think it's just that they got away with a lot for two years, and now that they're being held accountable, they don't know how to cope with it anymore. And it's frustrating. It's like pulling teeth. Now, the dentist didn't sign up to pull teeth.

Sara described the experience as demoralizing, "I can give zeros left and right, but they didn't seem to care."

While most participants struggled with the lack of leader engagement in their daily classroom experience, Sam enjoyed some aspects of teaching during Covid. He had no problem adapting his class to the online format and enjoyed the small class sizes of the students attending in person. He explained:

The best part [of 2020-2021] was small classes. I'm not going to go around that; I'm going to be 100% honest. If my class size were 15, I would be in heaven all day. Every day, all teachers would, obviously, there's just not enough resources to do what we need to do with having that number of students in a class, I'm aware. But that's the pipe dream.

Small classes were awesome.

Sara also mentioned large class sizes as a detriment to effective teaching but considered it unlikely with the teacher shortages. As a new teacher, Sam said he was not in a routine, so he was not worried about the timelines as he "was creating everything from scratch anyways."

Unlike Sara, he experienced good student engagement and "loved it. There was no babysitting. All teaching was great."

Although the participants had different experiences during the 2020-2021 school year and the Covid-19 pandemic, each was glad for the return to traditional practices. They battled a lack of student engagement and poor social behaviors and continued to see learning gaps. Sara lamented, "It's not how I wanted my first-year teaching to go. I'm going to throw that year away. I'm going to take a new first year because it was not fair to me." Sara is much happier now that she is "actually teaching and not just putting information out to be swallowed up by the abyss." Holly did not view sitting at a desk as good teaching practice but did not want to be "harping on the negative [because] then [she] wouldn't be a very good teacher." Though they continue to

battle the socialization and academic gaps created by working during the Covid-19 pandemic, the difficulties incurred affected the participants' early teaching experiences. Despite traditional relationship leadership styles, the lack of leader feedback during this time, did not support the participants as well as in a conventional, non-pandemic school year.

Reitman and Karge (2019) explained the need for strong leadership and solid teacher support from mentors and school leaders. The participants were grateful for the opportunity to develop professional and social relationships with peer teachers. All participants described classroom support during their first years as a function of teaching peers rather than school leaders. Holly described how the English teachers in her hallway share resources, plan and collaborate, and have served as a mentor to her. She said, "there are so many resources, and everybody's helpful and friendly and welcoming." She appreciated the department head's help but noted that a fellow honors teacher had been constructive with planning to address learning gaps from "the Covid year." Holly never feels as if she "is on an island" alone. Like Holly, Joe enjoyed the interaction with his co-teachers. He described it as informal, but "it's feedback on a weekly basis, really, whenever we're talking and chatting and figuring out what works best with each of us, and what we're doing individually and as a unit in the classroom."

Sara wished for more frequent collaborative interactions and relationships with peers. She regretted not being able to plan collaboratively and share materials with James and another Honors Physical Science teacher. Although most teachers plan collaboratively without designated times, Sara wished the district would provide specific days each week to send students home early so teachers could plan collaboratively. Sara explained:

So, like me and the other teachers that were teaching physical science at the school, we could share our materials and kind of plan. Like, "this is where I'm at. This is what I'm probably going to be doing this coming week. This is where we're looking to test and doing," things like that. And it wouldn't be that we would necessarily be doing the exact same thing at the exact same time. It'd be amazing. But it would have been nice to have other teachers that we could talk it [lessons] through because they've all been teaching longer than me. They would have been able to be like, hey, that's a dumb order. Don't do it like that.

Sara was assigned a mentor teacher but had not been given much support from this teacher. She did feel as if her department head was available but did not teach the same subject, therefore not particularly helpful with content. James remembered drowning the first year of teaching with classroom management, a new work environment, and the new procedures and expectations. He also wished for a more productive and active mentor program. There once was a strong mentor program at Martinville. New regulations and certifications reduced the number of formal mentor teachers leaving only one to serve all twelve new teachers at Martinville. Although department heads were encouraged to assist the new teachers, there was little consistency, and administrators did not oversee the process.

Clifton (2017) described the role of a leader as having the attributes and style of a coach and concluded relational leaders were effective in engaging workers and knowing an employee's strengths. As Clifton (2017) concluded, the participants who coached engaged their athletes academically, socially, and in sports through relationships. The participants reflected on the

importance of relationships between students and coaches. For example, Joe coaches girls' volleyball and baseball. He shared about coaching:

I feel like I have already made an impact on certain kids as far as just constantly being there for them. They see me more sometimes, especially if I have them in class and stuff, sometimes more than they see people at home. So just constantly being a positive voice in their life and pushing them just to really be better people, not even worrying about what comes on the playing side of it.

Joe, Holly, Sara, and Sam were all athletes in school, and each mentioned the importance of the relationships and skills learned from participating in school athletics. Sam sponsored an e-sports team and described why he believes having this relatively new genre of team sports is critical for student growth:

Team sports teach you more about life than anything in your formative years. Your parents talk to you and teach you all day, but you learn how to be a teammate. You live through what it means to be accountable for your friends and yourself and to be competitive and to want more from yourself, and to have an edge. A lot of life lessons are learned on the field, and a lot of kids don't ever go on a field. I know these kids don't play sports, but these kids work together on a daily basis, and they're learning how to communicate. They're learning how to talk to each other. They're learning how to work together. They're learning how to set goals and be competitive and expect a lot of themselves.

James, who is not athletic, also discussed the importance of coaching and athletics:

I did not realize how much sway coaches could have. But it is true, and to see that interconnectedness, where, if you know the student well enough, you could say, "well, this coach needs to hear about this," and that changes everything, and it's like a new door has opened. It shows a high level of respect from the students toward their coaching staff and a high level of excellence on the coaches to have earned that respect

Like coaching, relationships between teachers and leaders are equally valuable. Sam felt comfortable with all of the administrators. He said, "I think that they would listen to me, and even if they don't know what the heck I'm talking about, would probably give me some kind of advice or tell me who to go to for potentially better advice." He thinks that leaders make an effort to not add to the teachers' already full plates and give deadlines with appropriate notice. Holly does not feel "friendship close" with administrators at Martinville but is "comfortable enough to go to them in school." She was close to the principal's wife, who worked with her dad, but generally felt close to all four administrators and found them helpful. Joe is closest to the principal as they are both Auburn fans and played college baseball. He said they talk sports almost every day. He mentioned the benefits of having "personal side conversations that have nothing to do with work and being able to connect on a different level" as a barrier cutter between teachers and leaders.

Several participants mentioned the how the actions and expectations of administrators sets up the culture of the school. "Martinville has a feeling of family," James said, "and I think administrations help with that message. So, it starts from the top down there; modeling anything starts from the top down." Holly relied on her department head and commented, "I feel like her leadership on our hallway streams down from your [the administration] leadership across the

school." When talking about the administrative team at Martinville, Joe described it as a 'positive administrative unit' that reaches the "pinnacle of culture and climate." James elaborated:

A bar of excellence is set [by the administration], and then you hold your upper echelon to that, and everybody falls in line toward that goal. And I really felt that from the beginning. It's the same way in a family. There's a comfortability with that; it's not just like we're in this together, but like you're you can be comfortable here.

Jones (2020) found that successful relational leaders conceptualized teachers' emotional and psychological states as showing empathy, balanced school climate, rigor needs, and recognized transparency and communication obligations. The principal of Martinville was hired in Holly's junior year. She remembered how he added a sense of community and faith "without, you know, stepping over the legal limits." Sara appreciated the autonomy in her classroom despite her struggles with pacing. She felt supported by the assistant principal, who is over discipline and thinks, "the administration as a whole is very supportive, and I probably don't utilize him as much as I could." Another assistant principal, the previous science department head, often checks on Sara and provides her course standards, helping with Canvas and unit plans. "She comes in all the time. She's wonderful. They [the students] behave so much better when she's in there. Most days, it's sheer chaos," Sara explained. Holly described administrative relationships as "not necessarily like friendship close, but I've definitely felt ..., comfortable enough to go to them in school." Holly, like Sara, appreciated support from assistant principals when communicating with parents about conflicts. James also mentioned communication as a relational aspect of leadership. James and Joe appreciated the helpfulness given by the administrative staff, being timely and unassuming. James likes that administrators are willing to

find answers even if the question is not "in their zone." Joe also mentioned administrators, "help me out whenever, if there is ever anything, you all work with me and get it taken care of ASAP."

Although the participants had different experiences during the 2020-2021 school year and the Covid-19 pandemic, each was glad for the return to traditional practices. They battled a lack of student engagement and poor social behaviors and continued to see learning gaps. Sara lamented, "It's not how I wanted my first-year teaching to go. I'm going to throw that year away. I'm going to take a new first year because it was not fair to me." Holly did not view sitting at a desk as good teaching practice but did not want to be "harping on the negative [because] then [she] wouldn't be a very good teacher." Though they continue to battle the socialization and academic gaps created by working during the Covid-19 pandemic, the difficulties incurred affected the participants' early teaching experiences.

Summary

Primarily due to Covid-19 restrictions, the participants lacked classroom support from the administrative staff at Martinville. Administrators were burdened with contact tracing and told to limit classroom observations. However, the participants developed relationships with peers within their disciplines and expressed how beneficial these peer supports were for academic content and behavioral management. The leaders, who traditionally frequented classrooms, were limited to two formal observations and rarely visited classrooms. Virtual students did not get consequences for some behaviors, and the participants were frustrated with a lack of student engagement. The mentoring program, which suffered from a certification change, was not implemented well and fell to the wayside during the pandemic. Despite mentioning the infrequency of direct classroom support, the participants described the school leaders as

supportive, set a bar of excellence for Martinville, and encouraged peer relationships. Joe captured the importance of relationship-building in the following quote:

If you can kind of somewhat personally connect with the people you're working with every day, it's going to make not only that environment easier for you to work in every day and be a little happier, but it helps you to connect with the students better if you can connect a little bit and be able to relate to one another. I feel like the personal relationships on that end are of high importance.

Lasater (2016), Reitman and Karge (2019), and Wigford and Higgins (2019) echoed similar sentiments about relational leadership as transformational for school climate. The next theme focuses on how relational leadership supports teacher relationships, intertwined with school culture and climate.

School Climate and Teacher Success

This theme focuses on relational leaders' role in creating a school climate conducive to teacher retention and student success. School leaders have a direct, positive effect on school climate (Dekawati et al., 2020; Hindle, 2004). Peterson & Deal (2016) defined school culture as the interactions that bind the school staff and provide collegiality norms, shared vision, purpose, rituals celebrating student accomplishment, innovative teaching practices, and parental commitment. Participants described Martinville as a positive place with a sense of family. They believed the administration had high expectations for staff and students and was sensitive to the working conditions and well-being of staff, and wanted students involved with many opportunities to contribute to the culture and resulting climate of Martinville.

Jones and Watson (2017) supported this study's findings that providing a positive culture is necessary for the success of all teachers in the building. James felt a sense of family at Martinville since the day he began teaching there and believed the administration had a priority of sending that message to students and staff. Holly described it as a "small-town community." Sara thinks "the kids enjoy coming to Martinville, and most kids have this sense of home there." Participants often remarked that Martinville had a positive environment. Holly believes "faculty and staff build relationships with each other, which transitions to building positive, school-appropriate relationships with our students."

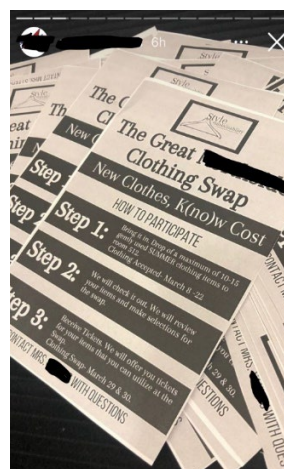
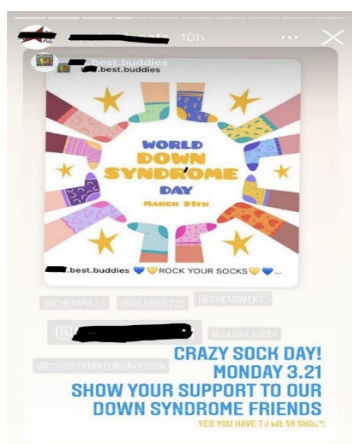
On March 4, 2022, the administrative staff provided lunch in the school's courtyard for the faculty and staff. A local bar-b-que restaurant provided baked beans and potato salad, and the administrative team grilled chicken and served the teachers. I observed the participants visiting with peers and leaders. This activity, and those similar to it, suggest the leaders' value in maintaining a positive environment for staff. All participants they enjoyed this event.

In addition to maintaining the cultural norms put in place for staff, Martinville shows a social media presence to meet the communication needs of its students. A school Instagram account highlights activities and announcements collectively for Martinville, and there are over 25 classroom, club, and sports accounts (see table 3).

| | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Band | Chick Fil A Leadership | Soccer Girls and Boys |
| English | Academy | Tennis |
| Guidance | Sisterhood | Wrestling |
| Health Care Science | P3 (school store) | Baseball |
| FBLA | Younglife | Volleyball |
| Theater | FCA | Football |
| Spanish | National Honor Society | Softball |
| SPED Class | Praying Martins | Basketball |
| Best Buddies | | Varsity Cheer |
| | | Track |

Table 3: School Instagram Accounts

Posts from these accounts include encouraging remarks such as "Every day we get better because our team shows up and gives high effort. Shout out to these ladies for their relentless spirit and hard work at practice. Thank you for making us better every day." They also highlight school experiences such as World Down Syndrome Day, the Fast Fashion Campaign, student scholarships, athletic signings, new teacher biographies, and upcoming school events.



Sam posted a video of him pretending to interview a student to the track Instagram account, and Holly showed a pencil drawing a child made of her child.



Although Martinville has a broadcast and daily announcement, Instagram is the most used communication tool at the school.

Relationships between students and teachers are the foundation of relational pedagogy (Crownover & Jones, 2018). Crownover and Jones (2018) described relational pedagogy as "the systematic construction of appropriate relationships embedded within the schooling process" (p. 18). The participants of this study understood the significance of positive student-teacher relationships and were eager to share their experiences.

Sara mentioned a sub-group of students who "don't see the beauty" of the climate of Martinville. She believed they could not see how welcoming the school was and how everyone cared for them because of deficits within their home lives. Sam recalled observing other schools in the area and described one as a "train wreck" and the other as a "prison." He believes Martinville is "the best high school" for teachers and students. Although Sam is leaving to pursue higher education, if he does come back, he would want to return to Martinville, "the climate is good, the culture is great, the leaders are great. I don't have any complaints." Joe sees Martinville as inviting, and Holly said that had she been at any other place, she would have "thrown in the towel."

Sam and Sara recounted that not all students behaved badly. Sara recalled, "a lot of my students do what they're supposed to, and they get their work turned in, and we have good conversations." Sam described the return from synchronous and asynchronous teaching:

The culture part's kind of odd. Because it's kind of rebuilding now, like rebuilding the blocks of state and school culture because last year was weird and this, you know, a little bit of this year's kind of been kind of odd, but I think just to add to it largely kindness, but

met with like sternness, when it would I'll say kindness with a bar of expectation, right so without lowering the bar, so kind to them but you still expect the world out of them.

Sara and Sam pointed out that relationships with the students were vital to success as the students returned to all in-person learning. Sara said, "I do enjoy that the kids are back, and then I actually get to kind of have those conversations with students."

James, who had the most experience of the participants, shared how relationships with students, "knowing what is going on with them...checking in with them, and [letting them] know that you are holding them accountable," affects both the teacher and the student:

The more I teach, the more I see that if you are very impersonal, very out of touch with the students, you just kind of show up to pull your paycheck and go home, which is very easy to fall into because the day-to-day grind can definitely wear you down, let alone what's going on outside of work, the students kind of disengage with you *and* the material.

James thinks that if students are aware of their struggles and has a relationship with them, they will have fewer excuses for academic and behavioral shortcomings. He understands the line of decency but feels teachers should:

keep meaningful relationships with students, make sure that they know that they are safe, and make sure that they know that they are respected as much as you expect them to respect you. I feel like that's sometimes one of the fallacies teachers fall into is they feel like the role is deserving of respect, simply because there's an authority figure; and you're the adult in the room, but without you showing a student that they should respect you, it's sometimes setting yourself up for disappointment.

James uses self-deprecating humor with the students for fun and classroom management. He enjoys being likable but realizes how easy, especially at his age, it is to become too approachable by students and worries about having to act as a mandated reporter. James wants to be accessible and succeeds in this goal. He desires to earn the trust of his students and believes teachers "hold a very important adult role" students' lives. "The human aspect [of relational pedagogy] is a little bit draining," James added.

Martinville's School Improvement Plan and professional development center on relational practices. Teachers must conference one-on-one with their students on academic, attendance, and socio-emotional goals. I witnessed Sam conferencing with one of his students about her options for future math classes. He believes in being very forthcoming with his students and has high expectations but honest conversations about their futures and strengths. The hardest part of a relational pedagogy for Sam is:

getting used to the idea that some kids are going to fail, and you can push a kid and push a kid and push a kid, but if they don't even want to do it, then, at the end of the day, their 50 is going to be a 50, and you just have to go home at 4...You can't save everybody, and you have to pull your heart out of it, which is not good. But also, you have to not take everything so personally, and if the whole class makes an F on a test, You're not a bad person; you're not a bad teacher. It's just getting the emotions out of it on a daily basis was hard.

Like Sam, James is also often weary from relational pedagogy's emotional toll on teachers. He explained, "Kids come to you with some random stuff, and it's some heavy stuff, and you have to not let that dampen your whole day and pull the emotions out of it." James pointed out that

meaningful relationships with students help with classroom management. If teachers have a relationship with their students, disappointment with not meeting an expectation is a motivator.

Contrary to other participants, Sara was frustrated with relationships with students. She does not feel obligated to pay attention to students' activities outside of school. She "calls it a win" if students learned "nothing else from [her] this year but [their] actions have consequences."

Holly and Joe, like Sam and James, enjoy relationships with students. Both were athletes and attended many sporting events. This finding suggests a close relationship between physical education and interpersonal relationships. It is plausible to speculate coaches do hands-on instruction during athletic training, which means it's essential for them to have advanced interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills include making genuine connections with others. Sam and James may see things from their students' perspectives and are sensitive to their emotional needs. I speculate these teachers intuitively understand how to convey respectfulness, positivity, and cooperativeness. Joe relates well with students because of his age, which is helpful with instruction as it makes him relatable to their concerns and more cognizant of needs. Sam coached cross-country and track and discussed how he built relationships with boys from the track team over the past two years. Sam, like Joe, values the impact of coaching on student-teacher relationships:

And just watching them grow up and nurturing anything and everything they need, we've gone on runs, rode bikes with them, and we just talk about life. And I let them just get off their chest whenever they get off because that's what my coach did for me. Coaches do more for kids than they realize by just being there. And I love just being there.

Except for Sara, student-teacher relationships discussions elicited the most excitement for each participant. They all valued these special connections with their students and athletes.

MacNeil et al.'s (2009) conclusion that school leaders are essential components, even if indirectly, of student academic success and organizational health and influence schools' culture and climate by setting clear goals confirm findings of this research. In line with MacNeil et al., Joe said the administration's expectations for teachers and students were "as clear as day when you walk into the building" at Martinville. James is comfortable with the consistency of expectations and what he needs to do to meet those expectations. He believes Martinville holds high academic, social, and sports performance standards. James, who considers himself an academic, thinks Martinville has the best culture for him to thrive due to the expectations of academic rigor.

Sam said Martinville is a "genuine community of people who want people to be better. There is a high standard for kids to be happy, decent adults." Sara said the kids at Martinville "know the program; they understand the expectations and consequences for their actions, and they're supportive of each other, and they're kind to other students." Sara and Sam mentioned the principal speaking at a recent faculty meeting about maintaining high student expectations without budging, regardless of parents or other outside influences. Sara said, "I just feel like this is a better environment because the students know that the teachers care and believe in them. They're not going to set the bar low because they know they can achieve much higher."

The pandemic negatively affected the entire staff at Martinville High School. I observed that Covid-19 protocols decreased morale among faculty, students, and staff during the spring of 2020 and the following school year. The school administrators frequently canceled social and

sporting events due to quarantines and social distancing. Due to health regulations, the district forbade traditional faculty events such as the pancake breakfast and Thanksgiving potluck. However, it allowed for cultural changes simultaneously. The leadership team at Martinville focused on ways to mitigate strategies to meet students' and faculty's social and emotional needs. Drive through graduations, parking lot pep rallies with fireworks, and a catered Thanksgiving meal were some examples of new traditions.

Sam believes Martinville has to work on climate due to the cultural norms that changed during the Covid-19 pandemic. He was concerned about students getting out of their routine. All participants worried that students would have their cameras on the ceiling fans rather than on their faces and feared a lack of engagement while zooming during the 2020-2021 school year. Sara was happy to return to regular school routines and she see her students' faces this year after lifting the mask mandate. She said, "there's a face to the name and not just some ceiling or window." Teachers and staff will have to have "kindness, met with sternness" to keep the bar of expectations high. Sam explained, "You don't have to lower your expectations just because you're nice to them, and so that like I think that's largely where I see Martinville different from a lot of schools."

Although academic and behavioral goals and expectations at Martinville are set high, the participants all felt students had a wide range of opportunities to be involved and enjoy their high school experience. Martinville has over forty clubs and organizations, fine arts classes, and sports teams. The principal often tells students to "plugin," and there is something for everyone. James echoed this sentiment and mentioned how helpful the school broadcast was in relaying all the information about those activities. James was impressed with the self-contained special needs

classrooms and teachers' efforts ensure their students "don't get left behind and are included." He said this inclusivity represented Martinville as a whole.

Holly loved the administrators' celebration of victories and achievements for clubs, sports, and staff members. She recalled the students' celebratory parade honoring their school receptionist who survived Covid-19, got off the ventilator, and got out of the hospital. Staff and students bought t-shirts for the occasion and cheered as she rode "through as we celebrated her life."

The notion of cultural symbols and events is consistent with Bolman and Deal's (2013) symbolic frame, which suggest that organizations exist to serve human needs. They contend that when employees find work satisfying, organizations will get the talent and energy they need to succeed. In this research, rituals and ceremonies offered participants direction, faith, and hope which fired their imagination and deepened faith, releasing creativity. It is plausible that school leaders at Martinville recognized this need for faculty and students and worked to provide activities to impact culture. Significant cultural events included pep rallies, bonfires, and fashion shows, sporting, and fine-arts competitions. James said, "there is a hum in the air" surrounding these opportunities. He captured the effect of these activities on the school community in the following vignette:

I think having events where the student body comes together and has a collective enjoyment in something is always really helpful. So anything along those lines allowing us to do things like have the fashion show or things that incentivize students to do what they're supposed to do to stay on track, to have the PBIS [Positive Behaviors,

Interventions and Supports] system to where if you're doing what you're supposed to do you get to attend these things I feel like as an overall system that helps decrease stress. A review of the school's website and other related documents revealed that the administrative staff makes a concerted effort to continue advertising events, celebrating student and faculty achievements, and keeping parents and students informed on social media and in-school announcements. They provide several opportunities for the staff to socialize and build relationships during the school year. The administrative staff cooks a pancake breakfast for the teachers and staff every nine weeks. It provides or cooks lunches to allow them to build relationships throughout the school and show appreciation for their hard work.

CooperGibson, (2018), Farmer, (2020), Ford et al., (2019), Peronto, (2013), Webb, (2018), and Wigford & Higgins, (2019) confirm the need for leaders to promote employee well-being to increase retention and reduce stress. They argue that leaders who build school climates supporting emotional and professional needs influence teacher retention. Likewise, leaders in Georgia at the GaDOE included a section devoted to supporting teachers' mental health and morale in their documentation on mitigating measures for retaining teachers during the pandemic (GaDOE, 2020). Holly captured her appreciation of the sense of community in the following vignette:

I enjoy those times to go hang out with other teachers and just sit around and not necessarily have to be doing any work at that point in time. It'd be nice to have a longer time period to do that instead of the 30 minutes of lunch. I do enjoy doing those. I do think those are stress-relieving.

The participants recognize Martinville's administrator's role in not burdening teachers with non-classroom obligations. Holly and Sam appreciated not having to cover teachers during their planning period like friends at other schools did. Participants paused when asked about their duties and could only think of hall duty.

Participants devised strategies to create successful work/home boundaries. For example, James tries not to take work home but struggles with not responding to emails, especially when assignments are due or when he knows the student worked late. He extended his work schedule to Sunday afternoons, as did Sara, to get ready for the next week, tweak lesson plans or assessments, or complete last-minute grading. Sara did not do well at time management. She adjusted when her husband complained about how stressed she seemed. She captured the tension in the following vignette:

It wasn't working for me and my husband. So I just kind of had to draw the line and say, if I'm not at school, then I'm not going to do schoolwork. And I had to be okay with not grading everything. I kind of had to figure out when it's okay to just put something in the blue filing [not grade it]. I don't know. I still don't think I've got it figured out.

Sara teaches freshmen and does not feel she can give them a task while she grades like the teachers of upperclassmen. Sara is not returning, but she commented:

If I was here next year and I got stuck with a full load of physical science inclusion again, I would probably just cry. It's been a bit too much, and there's no break in the day because those are hard classes to teach, and they're just exhausting.

Sam and Holly, the youngest participants, reported the least stress. Possibly, their ability to extend themselves is because of their love for the profession. Sam attributed his ability to balance to a peer with whom he student taught:

I learned this from [the cooperating teacher], and he taught me this like my second week there. I don't even know if he remembers telling me this, but he told me, he said, "Look, you get here at 7:30, and you leave to go to practice at 3:45. Your work will be here at 7:00 a.m. You leave it at school. You leave it; you leave it at school. It'll be here. Those papers will get graded, whether today, tomorrow or the next day. They'll get in before the deadline. But when you're at school, you work.

Sam took those words to heart, remembering a manager he had at Starbucks saying, "If you have time to lean, you have time to clean." He tries to work all day and calls it time management.

Holly struggled with balancing work and stress the previous year with teaching in-person and virtually. However, she admits it may have been because she was also pregnant and getting gifted certified. Holly feels as if she manages better this year. She tries to leave by 4:30 and grades only ten essays each day. Joe has late hours from coaching but does not generally bring work home. He values time with family and "makes his weekends his weekends."

Summary

The theme of school climate and teacher success captured participants' view of an organization that values its human resources in an environment where people share a common purpose and are willing to sacrifice to achieve that purpose through symbolic actions. In the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, symbols helped them find direction and anchor hope and faith, such as the receptionist's survival from Covid-19. Participants valued people and their school's

needs for each other. The data suggests that they found meaningful and satisfying work and needed the energy to succeed. They discussed the sense of family, the consistency and application of high standards, opportunities for students to connect, and how they managed stress. Social media examples supported the experiences of the students and the teachers. Each agreed that Martinville had a solid culture with a favorable climate and unanimously preferred their experiences at the school over other teaching or observing experiences. The participants accredited the school's climate to the leadership, expectations, and attention to detail in school culture. The school climate provided a working environment that supported their social-emotional needs as well as the needs of their students. The next theme focuses on leader feedback and interactions with new teachers and their effect on new teacher retention.

Administrative Presence and Feedback Frequency

Coleman (2017) postulated that teachers who received positive feedback from school leaders were less likely to leave the profession. Young teachers, especially those in Generation Z, listed meaningful feedback as one of the most desirable attributes of a leader (Bako, 2018; Schroth, 2019). Relational leaders recognize achievements and provide focused feedback (Clifton, 2017). The participants in this study desired more interactions with leaders and wanted feedback on performance. Thus, the theme of administrative presence and feedback frequency emerged from the participants' focus on the disruption Covid-19 played on the infrequency of school leaders' presence in the classroom, interactions with participants, and lack of performance feedback.

The Georgia school district where the identified large, comprehensive, urban high school resides has required a modified Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) evaluation for the

2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022 school years. The district only required two formal Teacher Assessment on Professional Standards (TAPS) for the last two years. They did not calculate Teacher Effective Measure (TEM) scores due to state testing exemptions and the inability to calculate student growth accurately. Three of the participants never experienced a complete formal evaluation from the Georgia teacher evaluation system. Evaluations from administrators have been informal and infrequent.

James experienced at least one complete evaluation in his first year of teaching and has missed the detail and feedback from leaders in the past few years. He shared that having frequent formative assessments from the administration was helpful. James added that having an administrator in the classroom kept students and teachers "on their toes." Before the pandemic, an administrator's presence in the classroom aided student accountability, leading to improved learning stakes. James liked it when administrators would "pop their heads in the classroom" for several reasons. James believed it lets students know that administrators are "not just this big figurehead to be feared" and that we are "there helping to hold them accountable." Students see their teachers being evaluated and held accountable also.

James mentioned several areas where he would like specific feedback about performance, such as relatability, although his reputation for student engagement and care is high. He considers himself "a little too high in the stratosphere" and believes he talks too much. James would like more specific feedback about curriculum details and planning. He acknowledges that the evaluation tool helps outline standards and ways to achieve proficient scores. During the evaluation, James focused on the week's curriculum and how to achieve the "golden standard." He still gets "pre-show jitters" the week of evaluations, not because of the administrators, but

from the "edge of something different." James regarded evaluations from the last few years as ineffective in providing useful feedback for improvement in classroom performance. He could not remember the number of observations in a traditional TKES setting from his first year of teaching.

James believes evaluations should be "low-risk enough not to cause undue stress or harm" and that how administrators conduct evaluations depends on the evaluator rather than the tool. According to James, if a teacher is consistently at the proficient level and gets the same message, the evaluation tool is not helpful. He thinks it is effective in knowing what a teacher is lacking. James suggested more frequent conversations with administrators on performance and input from students and peers. At Martinville, school leaders required teachers to conference with students about performance and goals. James wished administrators would model this requirement with teachers and give direct feedback in formal interviews. He suggested asking the counselors for their input on how teachers might improve or as a source to "bolster that they [the teachers] are already good." Sam enjoyed leaders "bounc[ing] in and out of classes for a little bit," but worried if he had missed something or if there was a problem. Sam's evaluator praised him for his job performance and Sam appreciated it "because kids aren't going to tell me that!" Teachers, Sam noted, reassure students all day and would appreciate the same from leaders "even when we don't need it."

James remembered his administrators evaluating him in the traditional TKES format. He suggested leaders meet with teachers "frequently and cordially" for a type of check-in." He felt that formal evaluations were "impersonal" since the evaluator acted as if they were "a fly on the wall." However, he joked, "that might be the goal." Usually, evaluators try not to disturb the

learning environment. James reiterated the importance of affirmation and reinforcement to do the best possible in the following anecdote:

In conjunction with that [the formal evaluation], a personal interview...having a conversation...What's going well? What can we do to you know keep supporting you? I would find conversations like that very helpful, just because feedback, whether positive, negative, or neutral, will give you information to work with, but in that context, okay, so how was your year? How did that go? Almost like coaching to get a debrief for how they feel, are they overwhelmed?

James saw informal conversations as a way for teachers to "feel a little more in touch with administration" and improve interpersonal relationships with the school leaders. He said it is easy to be out of touch due to the "tiering of the workplace." Sam agreed with James and suggested that leaders should also have one-to-one conversations with teachers, especially new teachers. The gesture would "be cool" if administrators brought a coffee to his classroom during planning, asked how school and class were going, and asked how they could offer support without formal observation. Sam shared that he did not know what he could ask for as a new teacher and wished the administration would ask him what he needed and discuss it. Holly agreed with Sam and James that a personal conversation about how each observation would be more beneficial than just having written feedback.

The participants felt a disconnect with administrators and professional feedback on classroom performance. School leaders spent very little time in the classroom during evaluations and the participants did not feel as if they were given significant feedback or assistance in connection with the evaluations. Several participants shared a desire for more informal, personal

communication from school leaders when discussing administrative feedback. James described the interactions he would like with leaders in addition to evaluations:

I feel like in conjunction with an evaluation, a personal interview where you know you just kind of having a conversation almost like what we're having like. What's going well? Can we do to you know keep supporting you? What do you feel could be added, or what do you feel like? Maybe it doesn't work, and I would find conversations like that very helpful, just because feedback of inequality, whether positive negative neutral, will give you information to work with.

Sam also recommended more communication with administrators. He said that administrators often come to his room for just a few minutes but do not say anything. When a leader comes into his room, he would like them to say, "Hey, you're doing a good job, thanks." He mentioned the expectation for teachers to reassure students regularly and how that would also be beneficial for teachers. Holly also would like more reassurance.

James thinks evaluations help teachers avoid complacency. The anticipation of evaluations causes teachers to be consistently aware of classroom practices due to fear of inadequate assessments in their evaluation. As such, James believes that teacher evaluations are the catalyst that prevents apathetic instruction. Sara wanted more feedback this past year because she was "so new to teaching" and did not feel that she received constructive feedback in her teaching program and that her master's program lacked that same component. She is "trying" to become a better teacher and does not always know what she is doing. Sara received more feedback during the "Covid" year than this year. She said, "this year, it seems a little not there." She wondered if feedback might not be necessary because "the things in her classroom are

good." Sara, having not experienced a traditional TKES evaluation, did not know how truncated the evaluation times requirements were from pre-Covid years. She yearned for feedback from school leaders and wanted to hear the positive reinforcement that things were going well, which she said would be "nice to hear, I'm a bit of a perfectionist, and I want to be better." Sam added, "the biggest thing about being young is that I don't have enough experience to be sure of myself quite yet. So having a little reassurance helps a lot."

Sam valued the feedback from peers more than school leaders. His peers are dealing with similar issues and better understand his struggles. He felt that talking to younger teachers might be preferable to his department head because, although she is "awesome," he feels as if she has routines in place and has forgotten what "it is like to be dumb." Sam has not had a positive experience concerning discipline practices with the administrator in charge of discipline, whom he feels does not like him, and his department head, whom he described as antiquated. They both have insisted he be "harder" on his kids. Sam believes they might be hard on him because they want him to do better. However, Sam "did not have the emotional energy" to deal with those issues.

Sam thinks the Georgia teacher evaluation system is "usually pretty good, but not super in-depth, and somewhat general." Holly has only been evaluated twice in the past year. She longs for more care from her leaders and wants them to check on her. She captured this longing in the following anecdote: "How do you think that went? Do you think that could have been better?" As a teacher, she wants "to evolve and change and get better." Joe received "good and sufficient" feedback. He thought six evaluations were enough, and teachers should strive to meet standards,

even overachieve if possible. Ultimately, Joe reflected, it "goes back to making sure we meet the kids' needs," and he feels we have enough feedback to ensure that process.

James had the most experience with the evaluation process and was comfortable with expectations. He feels comfortable with his evaluator, who was previously a science teacher, and stated they had a good rapport. However, Sara had the same evaluator and did not share the same experience as James. Sara does not see the value in the sham evaluation she received. She said:

But I don't want to call him out...especially this year. Last year it was better. He seemed really distracted. When he was in my room for my evaluation, I was like, "Am I being evaluated or not?" He came in, he did not pick up my lesson plans, and I'm like, I put those together. Can you at least pretend to look at them? And then he sat in the back, and he just did not seem like he was paying attention. But, yeah, it's one of those things where I wish I could get a little bit more constructive feedback. I appreciate the positive reviews, but I do want to know what I can do better or how I can do things, or even if it's just like, hey, I saw this happen.

Sam's evaluator is a new assistant principal who previously taught science and mathematics at Martinville. She was helpful to Sara but "scares the begizzes" out of Sam. He does not know why, but he gets scared when she enters his classroom. The evaluator tells Sam to "continue doing what you're doing." He believed this vague feedback was not helpful. Sam also shared that he received good feedback from parents and students about his performance. However, he wishes the administration would be more specific, give suggestions, and evaluate more frequently. Sam also wishes the evaluator would interact with him during evaluations, even if it was a sentence or two. Holly mirrored Sam's thoughts and was disappointed that the evaluator

did not return after she found out the class was only reading silently. She wanted feedback from a more critical rather than surface-level instruction. Holly and Sam think administrators do not have much time to work with them. Joe was not sure who evaluated him. The administration team evaluates by department, and Joe has worked within several disciplines.

Summary

There were commonalities among the participants regarding leader feedback and interactions. They are concerned that evaluations and interactions with administrators in the classroom are not as effective as they would want them to be and are not comfortable with the process. Participants desired more frequency and specificity of feedback, one-on-one conversations, and a modicum of immediate feedback. Participants wanted leaders to be more personable in their relationships with teachers. The modified feedback mandated by the state was largely ineffective, and the current evaluation system improved classroom performance, teaching pedagogies, and management strategies. Although the two participants who decided to leave did not directly mention teacher evaluation as an influence on attrition, a lack of support within the classroom and infrequent leader monitoring and interaction was frustrating for all of the participants and may have indirectly influenced their decisions. Each mentioned a desire to improve as a professional and wanted more assistance from school leaders.

Chapter V Summary

Chapter V presented the themes that emerged as participants shared their career, relational, cultural, and mentoring experiences as new teachers. The themes became evident from the intensive analysis of interview transcripts, the Georgia Department of Education documentation, and field notes from participant observations and social media in an identified

comprehensive urban high school in Georgia. The three major themes that emerged were (a) relational experiences and classroom support, (b) school climate and teacher relationships, and (c) administrative presence and feedback frequency. Through these responses, participants provided detailed descriptions of their relational and feedback experiences with school leaders attributing to their decisions to remain or leave the field of education.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Georgia has an attrition rate of 44% for teachers within their first five years (Owens, 2015). This chapter discusses the themes analyzed from data gathered from the lived experience of five teachers in an identified, comprehensive urban high school in Georgia. This analysis statistically mirrors this attrition rate, with two of the five, 40%, leaving the profession. I used Uhl-Bien's relational leadership theory to understand and describe the social processes of leaders' influence on new teachers' career experiences. I investigated the participants' lived experiences through the qualitative method of narrative inquiry during interviews allowing me to interpret their perceptions of leadership style, its contribution to school climate, and the specific needs of new teachers from Millennials and Generation Z to reduce teacher attrition.

In a review of the literature, I found that researchers studying teacher retention agreed that a study of relational leadership, employee well-being, and the causal role of culture was needed and may reduce attrition (Jones & Watson, 2017; Lasater, 2016; Smit, 2018; Van der Vyer et al.; 2020). During this study, I documented and analyzed how leader feedback, contributions to culture and climate, Georgia's requirements for administrative evaluations, and social media influences impacted five teachers' teacher attrition rate and teaching experiences in an identified, comprehensive urban high school. In-depth descriptions of these participants' profiles with details of their childhood, educational and professional experiences were gathered and documented through interviews.

In the previous chapter, I provided an overview of the process used to analyze data. I also outlined the coding process used to identify major themes across participants' comments,

informal observations, social media, and Georgia Department of Education documentation. I collected the stories of the five participants and used those stories as data in this narrative research analysis (Patton, 2015). I used a modified Seidman (2019) approach, implementing semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. I conducted the interviews on Zoom, recorded them with HappyScribe, and coded them using MASQDA software. I fractured the data into open codes and used axial coding to chunk the open codes into more extensive codes that I used to develop conceptual themes. Coding the data allowed me to condense large amounts of data by identifying patterns and drawing meaning from these patterns to build a logical chain of evidence. Fieldnotes of documents and correspondence from the Georgia Department of Education and the local school district were analyzed to outline the formal process and timeline of implementing the Georgia performance evaluation tool for the school years during the new teachers' employment. I added this documentation to the interview data, coded it, and placed it in categories. Field notes from observations of the participant's environment and the school's social media supported the accuracy of data interpretation (Merriam, 2019).

The study aimed to determine if a relational leadership style and leader feedback support teachers to do their jobs more effectively and the impact they have on teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia. The study intended to analyze the career perceptions of young teachers and if relational leadership and administrative feedback affected attrition. I recruited five teachers within their first four years at the identified high school to participate in this research study.

Three themes emerged from the data: relational experiences and classroom support, school climate and teacher relationships, and administrative presence and feedback frequency. I incorporated direct quotations from each participant, data from supporting field notes on social media, and Georgia Department of Education documentation to support my conceptual themes. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ 1: What career experiences of new teachers in Georgia support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive high school in Georgia?

RQ 2. Do relational leadership practices and leader feedback on classroom performance support teachers to do their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

RQ 3. How has the application of feedback from school administration impacted teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

Research Questions: Summary

Participants shared their personal histories and how relational leadership practices and leader feedback supported their careers. Furthermore, I learned about the participants' application of leader feedback and future professional plans.

Research Question 1

RQ 1: What career experiences of new teachers in Georgia support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive high school in Georgia?

Participants in the study shared many similarities as young children. All participants were raised in two-parent homes, excelled in grade school, and did well in college. They all described supportive families, and three of the participants had parents who were educators. Four of the five participants completed a non-traditional educational pathway to teacher certification. While developing the conceptual map, which focused on relational leaders' impact on school climate and teacher retention, I did not consider the impact of career preparation. Two participants struggled with pedagogical skills and consequently left the profession the year of this study.

Eighty percent of the participants entered the teaching profession through a non-traditional route, almost twice as many as Ingersoll (2004) estimated in his study. There are thirty non-traditional routes to certification in Georgia (GaDOE, 2022). Holly was the only participant to pursue an education degree but had to attain further certification to teach at the high school level. Sam and James participated in the same program that focused on math and science but had very different experiences with the program. Sara completed her certification in another state, and Joe decided to pursue a master's degree in education after completing a degree in Business Administration. The Georgia Department of Education validated the importance of these programs and prioritized mitigating the time it took to complete the process of certification (GaDOE, 2022). Sam, Austin, James, and Sara spent less than a year completing the alternate certification in their programs with few classes mandated in educational pedagogy. The others commented on difficulties navigating classroom management and content organization except for James.

Joe started teaching before he began his master's degree in special education. He felt that he had on-the-job training and adequate support from peers and leaders and saw the certification

program as "a series of hurdles." Aside from minor issues with special education paperwork, he has had minimum content or classroom management problems. Holly has also thrived as a new teacher, even in her brief time as a special education teacher. She felt well prepared for the classroom. Like Holly, James reported feeling prepared for a position as a new teacher with the alternate math and science credentialing pathway. He benefited financially from participating and saw benefits from the pedagogical training.

Sara and Sam were not as prepared for the classroom. Both participants repeated that their degrees were in science and math, respectively, and not education. Sara spoke well of her university and its education program and attributed her frustrating experiences with classroom management to a lack of student academic diversity in her training. Sara wished for classes and observation opportunities targeting classroom management.

Sam and James completed the same non-traditional program, but Sam did not find it beneficial and did not mention the financial incentive for the program. Sam valued his math classes at the university and thought the education classes were ineffective and time-consuming. Sam based his philosophy on building relationships with the students and not the "fru-fru" is a "lot of extra." Each participant made the most pedagogical gains within their classrooms.

When first developing my conceptual framework, I also did not anticipate the far-reaching effects of Covid-19 on teachers and students. Three of the participants have only known teaching during the pandemic. Beginning in March 2020, Martinville's school district transitioned to a completely virtual format for the remainder of the school year. Teachers were required to teach traditionally and online simultaneously the following year to accommodate health recommendations from the Center for Disease Control. In line with Georgia's governor,

the state school superintendent modified the expectations for the Georgia teacher evaluation tool, the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, which remained adjusted throughout the 2021-2022 school year (GaDOE, 2022).

Each participant reported difficulties in managing teaching traditional students simultaneously while instructing virtual students on Zoom in the 2020-2021 school year. Sara and Holly found the year mentally draining. Each participant mentioned the rampant cheating and battled only seeing the students' ceiling fans when delivering instruction during that time. Sam and Sara described the Covid year as "weird" and mentioned how the lack of routine for students during the previous year affected the apathy they were currently experiencing. Sam was the only participant who did not seem to mind the dual-teaching experiences as he "was creating everything from scratch anyways."

The participants missed the social interactions with their peers in their department during Covid. The school district canceled social events for teachers and students, affecting morale. Sara described it best when saying she would "throw that year away." The participants mitigated their way through classroom management strategies. As teaching exclusively through Canvas, the online instructional platform used by the school district was new to all employees, the participants had few opportunities for mentoring.

Research Question 2

RQ 2. Do relational leadership practices and leader feedback on classroom performance support teachers to do their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

Relational leadership is a dialogue between members of an organization, including a shared decision process that is nurtured and supported toward a mutual goal (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Uhl-Bien (2006) commented that teacher empowerment was characteristic of organizational culture and concluded that strong relationships between teachers and principals resulted in the empowerment of teachers. This relationship is especially critical as young teachers seek to improve their practice. It relies strongly on efforts made by school leaders to communicate through thorough feedback and the development of a supportive school climate (Smit, 2018).

I uniquely intertwined the relationship and school climate themes and the participant responses and observations of school climate. The participants succeeded in interactions between peers, mentors, and school leaders. Even during the pandemic, the Georgia Department of Education, realizing the impact of relationships and communication, included guidelines for administrators to prioritize maintaining face-to-face contact with teachers (GaDOE, 2021).

The participants enjoyed positive and inspiring school experiences. Each had teachers they wished to emulate and reported comfort communicating with professional peers and leaders. Although none of the participants often socialized with their peers, each appreciated the times they were able to eat together or visit socially. The science department is split geographically at Martinville, and James and Sara mentioned the difficulties involved with interactions with coworkers due to that lack of proximity. Holly collaborated with peers, and Sam did not feel the need to do so.

The participants, except Sam, enjoyed or wished for time to collaborate with peers to improve pedagogical practices and share curriculum. However, they also mentioned the absence of individual mentors, not specifically school leaders. During the pandemic years, these

participants have worked, but Martinville has not implemented a formal mentoring process. The participants shared that having a targeted mentor to check on them and answer procedural problems would have benefited their experiences as new teachers.

James described Martinville as "having a feeling of family." He attributed it to the leadership's high expectations for students and staff to excel in tasks and be kind to one another. Martinville's school improvement plan focused on relationships between students and teachers. The participants mentioned these relationships and their rapport with their students being encouraged and supported by the administration. Many see teaching as a coaching experience that provides rich experiences for students' social and emotional growth.

All the participants reported a comfort level with administration, but not on a personal level. However, the participants communicated a desire for more informal, personal communication from the administrative staff when discussing feedback on performance. Participants described the Teachers Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) as thorough but a little intimidating. Three participants had only received four formal evaluations using the tool in their two years in the profession. Thus, there was little discussion about TKES during the interviews. Several participants wanted frequent interaction with the administrative staff, and one likened it to the leaders' expectations for teachers and their students to communicate goals, needs, and accomplishments. They each desired reassurance from school leaders and implied it did not often happen individually. Sam mentioned he would benefit from a leader bringing him a coffee during his planning period and asking him if he needed anything. James echoed this by saying that observations [TKES] were impersonal, and he wanted feedback to be more conversational.

Overall, the participants felt supported by leaders but yearned for more frequent and personal feedback.

Relational leadership is transformational and has a direct positive effect on school climate (Dekawati et al., 2020; Hindle, 2014; Lasater, 2016; Reitman & Karge, 2019; Wigford & Higgins, 2019). Teachers celebrate relationships at Martinville, with school leaders actively providing opportunities for staff and students to have positive social interactions. Shared meals, cook-outs, and pancake breakfasts are examples of activities provided by school leaders for teachers to celebrate and appreciate their hard work. These events provide venues for relationship building. In an age of technology, over 25 Instagram accounts are linked to Martinville to keep all stakeholders up to date on upcoming events.

The participants described Martinville as a positive place with a family atmosphere. Additionally, the consensus among participants was that expectations of high standards for academic performance and behaviors were evident in Martinville's cultural norms. The administration communicates expectations according to the participants and enforces the boundaries necessary to maintain those expectations. These boundaries supported the new teachers' interactions with students, parents, and peers. Participants appreciated that administrators actively helped them by assigning very few duties outside of teaching and rarely asked them to cover other teachers' classes. The participants valued their emotional well-being and appreciated measures to set boundaries for work and home.

According to participants, relational practices at Martinville supported teachers in doing their jobs more effectively. To a lesser extent, and with the desire for more informal and frequent

leader feedback, participants relayed satisfaction with school leaders' communication about their classroom performance.

Research Question 3

RQ 3. How has the application of feedback from school administration impacted teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

Evaluations from administrators have been informal and infrequent. I discuss the administrators' ability to apply feedback, understanding that three participants did not receive formal Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) evaluation during their careers. During the current year, the only performance assessments were two ten-minute walk-throughs covering three standards from the TKES. The school has not calculated the Teacher Effective Measure (TEM) score due to the inability to accurately calculating student growth for several years. Although the participants felt comfortable with the informality of leader feedback, they desired more frequent feedback, which is characteristic of their generations.

Although only two participants are considered Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2015), the other three are very close in age and have many of the characteristics of the younger generation. This generation is value-driven and interested in job security, financial stability, employer transparency, and willingness to work harder than millennials (Stahl, 2021). In contrast to their drive, their parents' over-protectiveness led Schroth (2019) to speculate the need for employers to compensate for their lack of life skills, anticipate the need for frequent, positive feedback, and facilitate communication where they expect their ideas to be considered and appreciated.

Relational leaders provide focused feedback, including recognizing achievements that Generation Z considers one of the most valuable attributes in a leader (Bako, 2018; Schroth, 2019). The participants appreciated the style of the leaders at Martinville, especially with approachableness and consideration of the school climate; however, each participant specified a lack of communication on performance. Joe was the exception, but he received feedback from his co-teacher and wanted more training with special education documents. Holly and Joe attended Martinville as students and are more relaxed in their interactions with administrators. They readily sought feedback on lessons and ideas and did not spend much time discussing concerns with evaluations in the interview.

Perhaps with his isolation to protect his father from Covid-19, James felt disconnected socially from his teaching peers. He, like Sam and Sara, desired more personal conversations with administrators. James, Sam, and Sara all wanted more specific, detailed, frequent feedback and reassurance that they were performing adequately. Sam valued his peers' feedback more than his department head or the administration because he felt they understood his struggles. All participants conveyed a desire for improvement. Even the two participants who are not returning will continue to pursue higher degrees in education. Although participants have not identified evaluations as the number two reason teachers leave education, when asked whether feedback from leaders impacted their decision to remain in education or leave, all participants said no.

Sara is leaving Martinville because her husband is in the military as they relocate to another state. She has decided to take a year off to work on having a baby and completing her degree. Sara is considering changing to higher education or returning to engineering. Sara believes that teachers deserve higher pay. She shared that she and her husband use her salary for

entertainment as it is so low. The only negative thing mentioned by Holly was salary. The benefits, according to the participants, are excellent. James' decided to go into education for the secure benefits, which he described as the "trade-off" for the poor salary. Sam is choosing to because of economics. The scholarship and graduate assistant supplement he will receive while studying for his master's degree is greater than his salary at Martinville. In short, participants indicated that economics was more of a factor in teacher attrition than leader feedback.

Implications and Discussion

This study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions and lived experiences in the first five years of their profession and determine how or if leadership style and leader feedback on classroom performance influence new teacher retention. In this study, I focused on five teachers within their first four years in education at an identified, comprehensive urban high school in Georgia. This study provided insights into new teachers' struggles, expectations, and needs within this identified school district.

As Kreiner et al. (2009) noted, researchers gain epistemological assumptions in qualitative research from an interpretive paradigm through understanding the meaning of a process or experience. The five participants in this study, in their reflections on experiences as new teachers, have affirmed the following implications for administrative practice and training to reduce teacher attrition:

First, a transformative shift in administrative training requires professional development or college preparation in relational leadership. The participants described relationships with peers, students, and school leaders as critical to the culture and climate of a positive working environment. Leaders who provide opportunities for growth in this area and maintain high

expectations for students and staff are effective. Second, Millennial and Generation Z teachers lack internal reflective tools and construct meaning from external reassurance and feedback about their teaching pedagogy. Participants desired frequent feedback on classroom performance, discussions about professional goals, and individual attention from school leaders.

Furthermore, Holly, Sara, and Sam mentioned wanting immediate reassurance from administrators during evaluations. James and Sam suggested informal conversations with administrators to check-in and support throughout the school year. These requests mirrored the leadership needs Schroth (2019), and Panwar and Mehta (2019) recommended for Generation Z. These researchers noted how leaders would need to manage expectations and craft "a context for invention and inclusion in the face of ambiguity and the unforeseen" (p. 66) to facilitate this generations' employment journey. Finally, leader feedback did not influence teacher attrition in this identified school. Participants discussed the relationship between school contextual factors such as their teaching experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, teacher pay, and classroom management issues as problematic and stressful. They did not identify them as reasons for attrition.

Although this study focused on teachers' career experiences, leadership practices, and feedback application, it has broader implications for preparedness for leaders and teachers. The boundaries for student-teacher relationships are challenging to navigate for young teachers. So, in addition to a shift to relational leadership training, incorporating training for teachers in relational pedagogy during teacher preparation programs or in professional development might be beneficial to new teachers.

Based on the findings of this study, teachers entering the profession during the Covid-19 pandemic need additional leader feedback on professional growth, classroom management strategies, and instructional practices. A thorough implementation of the TKES may address this concern, but participants noted a desire for more personalized interactions with school leaders. The results from this study support the need for research on how programs in the colleges of education could prepare leaders and teachers in the practices of relational leadership and pedagogy.

Additionally, this study shows the need for school leaders to be mindful of timely, frequent feedback and support for Millennial and Generation Z teachers. Although I did not address leader feedback as a specific issue for the participants who were not returning, the research revealed that managing problem student behaviors, communication with parents, and time management are challenging and stressful. Mentoring programs within schools that school leaders monitor could reduce feelings of anxiety linked with day-to-day school operational procedures and procurement of resources. Mentors would also be able to address participants' concerns with classroom management throughout the study.

Limitations of the Study

In this qualitative study, I used a narrative inquiry approach to analyze the lived experiences of five new teachers in an identified, comprehensive urban high school in Georgia through the lens of relational leadership. As I used purposeful sampling, I also had a pre-established relationship with the participants as employees at the same school where I am an administrator. However, my role as a school administrator at Martinville was a limitation in this research. I am an assistant principal at Martinville, although I do not evaluate the participants in

this study using TKES, nor do I provide feedback on their performance. Through this process, I cannot determine the possibility that my previous interactions and questions with participants may have led them to focus on particular issues and not others.

Ravitch and Carl (2021) cautioned about the power of authority and how it affects feedback, suggested researchers pay attention to interpretations, and warned about keeping fidelity in interpretations. Extensive journaling and examination of beliefs may have limited reflexivity concerns, but I cannot assess my position as an administrator's influence on the participants. Hopefully, I controlled bias through interview protocols and allowed participants to add any additional information they felt added value to the study.

Transferability is another limitation of this study. The high school used for this study was not representative racially or socio-economically of its school district or Georgia. It had the highest climate rating possible according to the state CCRPI and is the only non-Title I comprehensive high school in the district. A third limitation is the age group and race of the participants. Like most participants, many new teachers who begin teaching as a second career goes through non-traditional educational programs. The lived experiences of older Millennials or teachers in Generation X might produce different results. The teachers in the study were also all Caucasian, so responses may not represent all schools or teachers in Georgia.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study aimed to determine if feedback on classroom performance supported teachers to do their jobs more effectively and the impact it and relational leadership had on teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia. A qualitative interpretive approach was applied to analyze and interpret the study's

results. Based on data from interviews, documentation from the GaDOE, and observations of interactions and posts from social media, I have identified several possible research opportunities for a recommendation. First, expanding the participant sample by age or race could strengthen the findings and conclusions. All of the participants in this study were Caucasian. According to Pelfrey (2020), fewer white teachers are entering the Georgia workforce, whereas black and Hispanic teachers have increased by 10%. Many new teachers begin teaching as a second career and are much older. Therefore, studies of minorities and older beginning teachers might yield different results. Second, using a Title I school, or a school with a lower CCRPI and higher attrition rates may provide different results or perspectives from new teachers. A study conducted in a more rural setting, different state, or country might also yield other results. Due to the restrictions placed on formal evaluations during the participants' teaching careers, only two remember having a complete TKES assessment. Conducting this study after implementing TKES traditionally might also provide new analysis data. Finally, studies focusing on the long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on students, teachers, and staff may provide valuable data regarding student behaviors, classroom management, and addressing learning deficits.

Conclusions

Teacher retention continues to be problematic in Georgia, especially in the first five years of service (Owens, 2015; Pelfrey, 2020). In this study, I examined the career experiences of new teachers, their perceptions of leadership practices on classroom performance, and how the application of leader feedback impacts teacher attrition. The issue of teacher turnover influences student performance, school climate, and employee morale. School leaders who

reduce teacher attrition contribute to eliminating teacher shortages and improving student achievement. The participants in this study were ages 24 – 27 and considered either Generation Z or Millennials on the cusp of Generation Z. I analyzed the research data through the lens of Uhl-Bien's (2006) relational leadership theory through a narrative inquiry process. I interviewed participants and used data from the Georgia Department of Education and the school's social media field notes to triangulate with data regarding teacher evaluations and the school's culture and climate.

Overall, the participants in this study have had a positive experience with teaching, although the attrition rate among participants closely matched the state average of 40%. The two teachers who left did not directly report that a lack of leader support or feedback led to their decisions to leave. Sara left due to her spouse's military relocation, and Sam left because he felt an engineering degree would be more profitable. However, the participants discussed frustrations with limited evaluation feedback and leader support with classroom management. Georgia's teacher evaluation assessment, the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), was ranked as the second reason for teacher attrition in Georgia. Four of the participants had only truncated experiences with TKES due to the Covid-19 pandemic and mandates from the state and local school boards. Discussions about leader feedback from this specific tool were not negative despite the tool's number two ranking of discontent in Georgia. However, during a pandemic, I conducted this research where the six formal classroom visits and TEM scores calculated from students' standardized test scores were not part of their teaching experience. During a non-pandemic time, classroom teachers have anxiety over the traditional TKES evaluation. Almost an opposite reaction came from the participants in this study. Every participant desired more

frequent feedback. Three participants shared disappointment in the classroom support they received from administrators with classroom management and detailed feedback on teaching performance.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic was unprecedented in modern times, school leaders must consider how to support teachers in times of unrest where schools may have to break from traditional evaluations and support. Based on findings from this study, administrators must make time to give thoughtful, genuine commentary on classroom performance. For example, when Sara's evaluator stayed on his phone during the classroom visit and seemed distracted, she did not feel her leader's support. Often, administrators provide generic, vague comments on evaluations. An evaluation should not be a box to be checked off casually by school leaders. New teachers, especially, need to know they are valued, and the job they perform is essential. The findings suggest that if unforeseeable circumstances force schools to be virtual or classroom visits by administrators due to a pandemic or other circumstances are discouraged, evaluators may need to spend additional time in the virtual classroom. They can use this time to assess their teachers' academic and management needs and meet with them in a virtual format to offer support. One of the most significant findings is the importance of relational leadership and its connection to teachers' instructional practices. If something causes evaluations to be changed, the relational aspects of feedback need to increase to ensure teachers receive adequate and appropriate feedback, despite the contextual parameters that caused a change in evaluation measures.

It is also essential to consider the specific needs of Generation Z. The participants in this study are in this Generation or on the cusp. They are dedicated to their profession and classroom

practices but need informal feedback in addition to formal evaluations and frequent reassurance from school leaders. Nevertheless, this may be problematic because school leaders are often much older than Generation Z, and their leadership styles may not align with the Generation Z teachers' beliefs and professional needs. Administrators should visit classrooms regularly and rotate, so each leader visits classrooms other than the teachers they evaluate to give teachers feedback from more than one source. Listening to the ideas of young teachers in this generation can benefit school leaders while giving them the voice in school decision-making to which they feel entitled. The participants suggested leaders meet informally during planning periods. Still, school administrators could also set specific dates before or after school aside where teachers know they are available and ready to hear concerns and suggestions. Leaders aware of these needs will better support their new teachers and build stronger school climates.

Martinville's mentor program dissipated during the year of this study, and although peers within the participants' disciplines offered support, the support system was disorganized. New teachers value mentors. As such, it can be less threatening to ask someone who is not your supervisor for assistance on a task. Many new teachers fear leaders because they do not understand how to accomplish a task or manage a class. A formal mentor program that pairs a new teacher with a specific experienced teacher would provide non-threatening communication and a support platform for young teachers.

The conceptual map outlining this study's original design highlighted different influences on the professional lives of new teachers and how those influences might affect teacher attrition. If I were to revisit the conceptual map, I might have included the role of alternate paths to teacher certification to affect retention. I chose a relational leadership lens to focus on the effect

of school leaders who value the climate of a school and recognize the importance of the leader-employee relationship to achieve professional goals. Balkar (2015) noted that leadership style is directly related to teacher empowerment. The participants in this study valued the culture of Martinville and the climate provided by the leaders. The participants desired a more personal relationship with the school leaders and valued their input. Where research showed TKES as a fearful experience throughout Georgia, these teachers wanted more interaction and constructive feedback from evaluations.

After analyzing the data, the most poignant discovery in this study was the desire of young teachers to be known personally by their administrators, which is antithetical to the belief of an older school leader. Generation Z explicitly expects this level of personal affiliation with supervisors. However, every participant shared that they wished a school leader had spent the time getting to know their personal and professional background as I did in the interviews. This study will change my professional practice as a school administrator. I hope that the information from this study will guide school leaders to invest time into giving young teachers time to share their professional stories and remember the importance of personal feedback. I believe that school administrators who actively pursue a relational leadership approach can affect teacher attrition rates through appropriate feedback and inclusive practices that improve school culture. Of course, there is no magic pill to alleviate teacher attrition, so we must all work together to build strong communities and relationships to support our future teachers.

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Appendix A
Interview Protocols and Questions

Appendix A

Interview Protocol 1

Relational Leadership, Culture/Climate, TKES, and Teacher Attrition

Semi-Structured, Narrative Interview—teacher, not leader

Interview I—exploring the participant's experience/placing it in context

RQ 1: What career experiences of new teachers in Georgia support teachers in doing their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive high school in Georgia?

1. Describe your family as you were growing up? What was your early life like?
2. What types of activities did you participate in? Sports? Fine Arts?
3. Who were your friends? What did you do for entertainment?
4. Describe the different schools you attended in K-12.
5. Who were your favorite teachers? Subjects?
6. What was college like for you?
7. Describe your teacher preparation program.
8. What experience or person led you to become an educator?
9. What are your teaching certifications and educational background?
10. Describe your student teaching experience.
11. Describe the culture or social norms of the school where you work?
12. Do you have work peers you consider to be friends or see outside of work?
13. Your school has a five for a climate rating in CCRPI; how do you perceive the climate?
14. How do school administrators manage issues which cause teacher anxiety?

RQ 2. Do relational leadership practices and leader feedback on classroom performance support teachers to do their jobs more effectively as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

15. Describe your first year teaching. What went well? What was difficult?
16. What is your teaching philosophy?
17. What do you find most frustrating about teaching?
18. What do you like the best about being a teacher?
19. How do you manage your time?

20. What are your professional duties?
21. What is your strength in the classroom?
22. What do you feel you need to work on? Whom would you ask to help you with this?
23. Did you communicate with an administrator in another way about your classroom performance?
24. How do you manage your classroom? Is it working well?
25. Describe interactions with parents.
26. How have school leaders or teaching peers supported you as a new teacher?
27. Has a school administrator directly been able to lift a teaching burden?
28. Describe how you receive feedback about your performance.
29. Do you receive feedback often? From whom?
30. Are there specific times you would like to be observed or things you would like your administrator to see?
31. Has feedback from leaders helped you as a new teacher to be more effective?

Interview Protocol 2—reflecting on meaning.

RQ 3. How has the application of feedback from school administration impacted teacher attrition rates as perceived by teachers at an identified large comprehensive urban high school in Georgia?

1. Have you felt close personally to a school leader?
2. Describe that relationship.
3. Who or what is influencing your decision to continue in education?
4. Did a school leader or other person lead to decisions about your professional future?
5. Did the personal relationship you had with your school leader affect your understanding s
6. How was the school climate part of your decision to continue teaching?
7. Describe the school leaders you feel have had a positive/negative impact on your career.
8. Is where you work as important as for whom you work?
9. What type of impact do you feel leader feedback has had on your profession.
10. What factors contribute to your decision to stay or leave this school?
11. What would additional support be helpful to you as a new teacher?
12. Do you feel as if you were prepared to teach by the university? Another route?

Appendix B

Protocol Exemption Report IRB 2.16.22

Appendix B

Protocol Exemption Report IRB 2.16.22



Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04264-2022

Responsible Researcher(s): Nila J. Burt

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Rudo Tsemunhu

Project Title: *The Magic Pill: A Qualitative Study of Relational Leadership, Leader Feedback, and Teacher Attrition in Georgia.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Your research study is authorized to begin at the Muscogee County School District effective **02.16.2022**.*
- *Exempt protocol guidelines **permit** recording of interviews provided recordings are made to create an accurate transcript. Upon creation of the transcript, the recorded interview session must be immediately deleted from all devices.*
- *Exempt guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings.*
- *As part of the informed consent process, recordings must include the researcher reading aloud the consent statement, confirming participant's understanding, and establishing their willingness to take part in the interview. Participants must be offered a copy of the research statement. For documentation of consent, the transcript must include the reading of the consent statement.*
- *In an effort to maintain participant confidentiality, pseudonym lists must be kept in a separate file from corresponding name lists, email addresses, etc.*
- *Upon completion of the research study, collected data (e.g., transcript, name lists, email lists, etc.) must be securely maintained and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

Elizabeth Ann Olphie *02.03.2022*
 Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
 Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Appendix C

Research Statement of Consent

Appendix C

Research Statement of Consent

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled "The Magic Pill: Qualitative Study of Relational Leadership, TKES, and Teacher Attrition in Georgia," conducted by Nila Jean Burt a student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this qualitative study will be to examine the experiences of five teachers within their first five years in a Georgia school district, determining if and to what extent the effectiveness of leadership style and resulting climate influences teacher retention or attrition. The interviews will be audiotaped to capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas accurately. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, stop responding at any time, or skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Your participation in the interview will serve as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Nila Burt at njburt@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Appendix D

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)

Appendix D

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)




Completion Date 21-Aug-2019
 Expiration Date 20-Aug-2022
 Record ID 32856036

This is to certify that:

Nila Burt

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Human Research (Curriculum Group)
IRB Basic (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Valdosta State University


 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w8d528599-1620-4ca2-b1db-923fbc4f9149-32856036

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2 COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Nila Burt (ID: 8321222)
- **Institution Affiliation:** Valdosta State University (ID: 475)
- **Institution Email:** njburt@valdosta.edu
- **Institution Unit:** Education
- **Phone:** 706-748-2920

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** IRB Basic
- **Stage:** Stage 2 - Refresher course
- **Description:** This course is suitable for Investigators and staff conducting SOCIAL / HUMANISTIC / BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH with human subjects. The VA module must be completed if you plan to work with subjects at a VA facility.

- **Record ID:** 47122505
- **Completion Date:** 01-Feb-2022
- **Expiration Date:** 31-Jan-2025
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score*:** 100

| REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY | DATE COMPLETED | SCORE |
|--|----------------|------------|
| SBE Refresher 1 – History and Ethical Principles (ID: 936) | 01-Feb-2022 | 2/2 (100%) |
| SBE Refresher 1 - Instructions (ID: 943) | 01-Feb-2022 | No Quiz |
| SBE Refresher 1 – Informed Consent (ID: 938) | 01-Feb-2022 | 2/2 (100%) |
| SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Prisoners (ID: 939) | 01-Feb-2022 | 2/2 (100%) |
| SBE Refresher 1 – Research in Educational Settings (ID: 940) | 01-Feb-2022 | 2/2 (100%) |

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?kbc082985-f82-4ab1-a2b2-9428937704ac-47122505

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
 Email: support@citiprogram.org
 Phone: 888-529-5929
 Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2 COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

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REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY

| | DATE COMPLETED | SCORE |
|--|----------------|------------|
| SBE Refresher 1 – History and Ethical Principles (ID: 936) | 01-Feb-2022 | 2/2 (100%) |
| SBE Refresher 1 - Instructions (ID: 943) | 01-Feb-2022 | No Quiz |
| SBE Refresher 1 – Informed Consent (ID: 938) | 01-Feb-2022 | 2/2 (100%) |
| SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Prisoners (ID: 939) | 01-Feb-2022 | 2/2 (100%) |
| SBE Refresher 1 – Research in Educational Settings (ID: 940) | 01-Feb-2022 | 2/2 (100%) |

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?kbc082985-ff82-4ab1-a6b2-9428937704ac-47122505

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Training Initiative