

Concordia University - Portland

**CU Commons**

---

Ed.D. Dissertations

Graduate Theses & Dissertations

---

4-21-2020

## Case Study of School Practices, Policies, and Culture That Foster Small, Faith-Based School Teacher Retention

Brian Nelson

*Concordia University - Portland*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### CU Commons Citation

Nelson, Brian, "Case Study of School Practices, Policies, and Culture That Foster Small, Faith-Based School Teacher Retention" (2020). *Ed.D. Dissertations*. 460.

<https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations/460>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses & Dissertations at CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ed.D. Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact [libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu](mailto:libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu).

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE  
CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ AND APPROVE THE DISSERTATION OF

Brian Samuel Nelson

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Chad Becker, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Leslie Loughmiller, Ed.D., Content Specialist

Okema S. Branch, Ed.D., Content Reader

Case Study of School Practices, Policies, and Culture That Foster Small, Faith-Based School

Teacher Retention

Brian Samuel Nelson

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Teacher Leadership

Chad Becker, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Leslie Loughmiller, Ed.D., Content Specialist

Okema S. Branch, Ed.D., Content Reader

Concordia University–Portland

2020

## **Abstract**

Teachers are the very foundation of a successful educational program. High rates of teacher attrition threaten the core mission of small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based secondary schools—to transform students spiritually, intellectually, and personally. It is vital that the faculty at these schools is comprised of quality teachers who return year-to-year to deepen relationships with students and continue the momentum of student transformation. The problem addressed in this single, instrumental case study is the high rate of teacher attrition that exists within small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based schools. The purpose of this study was to examine practices and policies that support teacher retention within small, private, non-Catholic faith-based secondary schools. The study was guided by the research question: What work conditions at small faith-based secondary schools support strong teacher retention? The research study was conducted at a small, non-Catholic, faith-based, private high school in rural Texas. Data was collected through on-site teacher interviews and observations and an off-site document review. The results revealed that school culture, administrative support, teacher voice, and student discipline played major roles in the teachers' decisions to return year-to-year. Additionally, the results indicated that teacher workload and compensation did not significantly impact teachers' plans to return. These results offer a foundation of understanding the work conditions that influence teacher retention in small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based secondary schools and set the stage for further research.

*Keywords:* teacher attrition, teacher retention, faith-based, private school, work conditions, school culture, administrative support, teacher voice, student discipline

## **Dedication**

Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.

—Winston Churchill

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Ashley, and my children, Maddox and Hensley. This was a long road that at times felt impossible. However, your continued encouragement and pushing to stay in it gave me the courage to continue. This is a testament to the sacrifices that you made for me. Thank you and I love you.

## **Acknowledgements**

The completion of this dissertation was the combined work of so many who readily gave of their time and talent. First, I want to thank God for His hand in this process. Through the successful seasons and the challenges, He was with me and provided me help, forgiveness, encouragement, guidance, and mercy. Next, I want to thank Dr. Chad Becker for his patience, encouragement, and push to realize that I had it in me. I owe so much to you and have been shaped by your wisdom, calm spirit, and accountability. I also want to thank Dr. Okema Branch, Dr. Cristie McClendon, and Dr. Leslie Loughmiller for your time, feedback, keen eyes, and wise words. Your guidance was invaluable. Lastly, I want to thank the teachers and administrators that I had the honor to work with during this study. You inspired me with your love for God, students, and scholarship. You are truly making a difference through your work, and it was a blessing to get to witness.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Tables .....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Introduction to the Problem .....	1
Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Research Questions.....	5
Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study .....	5
Definition of Terms.....	7
Delimitations and Limitations.....	8
Chapter 1 Summary .....	9
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	11
Introduction.....	11
Study Topic.....	12
Context.....	13
Significance.....	13

Problem Statement.....	15
Organization.....	15
Conceptual Framework.....	16
Teacher Personal Characteristics .....	18
Teacher Professional Characteristics .....	20
Work Conditions.....	21
Non-school Factors.....	22
Review of Research Literature.....	23
Compensation.....	24
Workload.....	26
Student Discipline.....	27
Teacher Input in School Decisions.....	28
Administrative Support and Interaction.....	29
School Culture.....	31
Review of Methodological Issues.....	32
Quantitative Method.....	32
Qualitative Method.....	33
Synthesis of Research Findings .....	35
Causes of Teacher Attrition.....	35

Work Conditions.....	36
Small Private Schools.....	37
Critique of Previous Research .....	37
Chapter 2 Summary .....	39
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	42
Introduction.....	42
Research Questions.....	42
Purpose and Design of the Study .....	43
Qualitative Research.....	43
Case Study Design.....	44
Research Population and Sampling Method.....	45
Instrumentation .....	46
Data Collection .....	48
Identification of Attributes.....	50
Data Analysis Procedures .....	51
Limitations of the Research Design.....	53
Validation.....	54
Credibility.....	54
Dependability.....	55
Expected Findings.....	55

Ethical Issues .....	56
Conflict of Interest Assessment .....	57
Researcher's Position .....	57
Ethical Issues in the Study .....	58
Chapter 3 Summary .....	58
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results.....	59
Introduction.....	59
Description of the Sample.....	59
Research Methodology and Analysis.....	60
Qualitative Research .....	61
Instrumental Case Study Design.....	62
Data Analysis Procedures .....	63
Type and Quality of Data Collected .....	64
Summary of Findings.....	66
School Culture .....	67
Administrative Support.....	69
Teacher Voice .....	71
Student Discipline.....	72
Presentation of the Data and Results .....	73
School Culture .....	74

Administrative Support.....	82
Teacher Voice .....	89
Student Discipline.....	92
Chapter 4 Summary .....	95
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion .....	98
Introduction.....	98
Summary of Results .....	98
Research Question .....	99
Existing Theories and Prevailing Literature .....	99
Significance of the Study and Results .....	102
Summary of Methodology .....	103
Summary of Findings.....	104
Discussion of Results.....	105
School Culture .....	105
Administrative Support.....	110
Teacher Voice .....	114
Student Discipline.....	116
Teacher Workload and Compensation.....	118
Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature.....	119
Limitations .....	124

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory .....	125
Implications for Practice .....	125
Implications for Policy.....	127
Implications for Theory .....	128
Recommendations for Further Research.....	130
Conclusion .....	131
References.....	134
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	144
Appendix B: Observation Protocol.....	146
Appendix C: Document Review Protocol.....	147
Appendix D: Observation Schedule.....	148
Appendix E: Invitation to Potential Participants .....	149
Appendix F: Teacher Interview Schedule.....	151
Appendix G: Member Checking Email .....	152
Appendix H: Statement of Original Work .....	153

## List of Tables

Table 1. <i>Interview Enrollment Table</i> .....	61
Table 2. <i>School Culture: Themes, Subthemes, and Codes</i> .....	68
Table 3. <i>Administrative Support: Themes, Subthemes, and Codes</i> .....	70
Table 4. <i>Teacher Voice: Themes, Subthemes, and Codes</i> .....	71
Table 5. <i>Student Discipline: Themes, Subthemes, and Codes</i> .....	73
Table 6. <i>Conceptual Matrix for School Culture—Personal and Relational Culture</i> .....	76
Table 7. <i>Conceptual Matrix for School Culture—Familial Culture</i> .....	77
Table 8. <i>Conceptual Matrix for School Culture—Supportive and Collaborative Culture</i> .....	79
Table 9. <i>Conceptual Matrix for School Culture—Christ-centered Culture</i> .....	81
Table 10. <i>Conceptual Matrix for Administrative Support—Support Through Presence and Availability</i> .....	84
Table 11. <i>Conceptual Matrix for Administrative Support—Support Through Active Care, Love, and Encouragement</i> .....	86
Table 12. <i>Conceptual Matrix for Administrative Support—Support Through Autonomy and Trust</i> .....	88
Table 13. <i>Conceptual Matrix for Teacher Voice—Formal Avenues</i> .....	90
Table 14. <i>Conceptual Matrix for Teacher Voice—Informal Avenues</i> .....	92
Table 15. <i>Conceptual Matrix for Student Discipline—Minor and Infrequent Discipline and Clear and High Expectations</i> .....	94

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction to the Problem**

Successful teachers make successful schools (TNTP, 2012). The effect of a master teacher is powerful. With national focus on realizing and strengthening this mission, the impact of qualified teachers on student performance is becoming one of the leading factors associated with improved academic achievement. Teacher turnover, however, threatens the overall effectiveness of schools and carries specific repercussions to curriculum, student success, and institutional finances (Sieling, 2012). According to the results of the 2008–2009 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS)—the most recent TFS to report private school teacher attrition data, private school teachers are leaving the profession at significantly higher rates than their public-school peers at a level of 16% overall and 21% among new teachers (Keigher & Cross, 2010). The lack of recent research and the potential threats presented by private school teacher attrition fuel the need for targeted research and reform.

Teacher retention and attrition have been the focus of many research studies over the last three decades. With researchers investigating the issue from a variety of viewpoints, it is vital that the current body of research is explored to gain a foundational understanding of the factors that influence teacher turnover. Early investigation into teacher turnover is focused primarily on characteristics of teachers that contribute to an increase in teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001). Moving beyond personal characteristics of employees, contemporary researchers shift the focus to job-related and school-related aspects in order to understand contributing factors and inform school reform.

## **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

Existing research offers a picture of the context, the problem, and the significance of an ongoing conversation related to teacher attrition. While differences in findings and opinions exist, a survey of the literature brings forth consistencies and trends that can be articulated and used as a foundation for further research and study. It is clear that the effectiveness of education is critical to the success of individual students and competitiveness of entire countries (Darling-Hammond, 2010). It is also agreed that quality teachers produce quality students (Shakrani, 2008). With attrition threatening the establishment of an experienced and effective faculty, research into successful strategies to cultivate teacher retention is vital.

According to existing research, teacher attrition is influenced by a variety of factors. A review of relevant studies revealed four main frameworks offered to explain this complex process (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1993; Chapman, 1984; Sher, 1983). Chapman (1984) identified five areas that influence teacher attrition—personal characteristics, training/experience, social and professional integration into the teaching profession, career satisfaction, and external environmental factors. Sher (1983) offers another model grounded in three areas—characteristics, conditions, and compensation—as an overarching framework of influencers.

Billingsley (1993) offers a model of influencers divided into three categories: external factors, employment factors, and personal factors. Brownell and Smith (1993) suggest that teacher attrition is impacted by interconnected forces, which can be modeled as nesting systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Offering a narrowed look at teacher retention, Swars, Meyers, Mays, and Lack (2009) outline a two-dimensional model of teacher retention and mobility that connects the agreement between the teacher and organization

to help predict whether teachers are more likely to stay or leave their current teaching position. While Chapman (1984), Sher (1983), Billingsley (1993), Brownell and Smith (1993), and Swars et al. (2009) all approach the organization of impacting factors differently, they are consistent in their focus on the four primary types—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, work conditions, and non-school factors. This four-part system derived from the five prevailing models will be used as the conceptual framework for this research study.

Because the focus of the current study is on influencers connected to school-based practices and policy, the investigation of factors was narrowed to work conditions. Current research demonstrates a connection between increased salary and longevity within the teaching field and decreased teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Jacobson, 1988; Murnane & Olsen, 1990). Workload is an additional factor influencing teacher retention inversely with the increase of workload causing a decrease in retention (Salazar Sojo, 2003; Sieling, 2012).

Difficult student discipline issues have a similar impact on retention in both public and private schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Killian & Baker, 2006; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005; Salazar Sojo, 2003). The support the teacher receives from the administrative team (Angelle, 2006; Branch, 2013; Waddell, 2010) and the input that the teacher has in decisions (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005) both have powerful influences on teacher retention. Finally, the culture of the school plays a role in creating an environment that fosters the desire for teachers to remain in their positions (Branch, 2013; Watts, 2016).

Teacher attrition is particularly detrimental to the mission and effectiveness of small, faith-based secondary schools. Ingersoll (2001) asserted that teacher attrition is at the highest level in small, faith-based schools when compared to all public and other private schools. Entering the 2000–2001 school year, administrators at private, faith-based schools reported a

teacher turnover rate of 23% (McGrath & Princiotta, 2006), which “is significantly higher, for instance, than the rate in high-poverty public schools, and is more than double the national average for other kinds of employees” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 516). This level of attrition is of great concern due to the potentially disruptive impact on the quality of the school programs, community, and performance (Ingersoll, 2001).

Private school teachers are less likely to report dissatisfaction with their schools; however, they exhibit a higher rate of attrition. Administrators in small, faith-based schools realize the impact of lower salaries and limited benefits on teacher retention efforts. With tight financial resources, these schools must strengthen teacher retention and satisfaction through other means. Unfortunately, little research extricating the factors that impact teacher retention, either positively or negatively, within small, faith-based schools is available; this is clearly an area of need for further research.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem addressed in this study is the high rate of teacher attrition that exists within small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based schools. Teacher attrition within these schools occurs at a significantly higher rate compared to all public and other private schools (Keigher & Cross, 2010). This level of attrition is of great concern due to the potential disruptive impact on the quality of the school programs, community, and performance (Ingersoll, 2001).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research study is to inform practices and policies within small, private, non-Catholic faith-based secondary schools that will promote teacher retention and improve the levels of attrition within this sector of schools. McGrath and Princiotta (2006) document a considerably higher teacher turnover in small, faith-based secondary schools,

reaching almost 25% annually. This phenomenon is threatening the effectiveness and quality of programs and the level of student achievement within these schools (Ingersoll, 2001). With the highest levels of teacher attrition affecting this sector of schools, it is essential that research specifically address the positive influence of practices and policies at small, faith-based secondary schools.

### **Research Questions**

The focus of the study is on the work conditions within small, private, faith-based secondary schools that promote strong teacher retention. Since work conditions, such as compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community, are connected to the practices and policies within a school, understanding these factors could help inform a positive change in teacher retention within this segment of schools. Previous research studies have focused on work conditions that support or hinder teacher retention within public and larger private schools but have not adequately investigated them within small, faith-based secondary schools. This lack of literature on factors that influence teacher retention and attrition within this type of institution was the impetus for this study. The study was guided by the research question: What work conditions at small faith-based secondary schools support strong teacher retention?

### **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

Teacher attrition is a costly problem. The financial consequences to teacher turnover are easily identified. NCTAF (2010) estimates that attrition costs school districts at least \$7.2 billion a year (p. 4). In fact, researchers estimate that the cost of teacher turnover in Texas alone carries a conservative price tag of \$329 million a year (NCTAF, 2002). The costs extend beyond the fiscal arena impacting school culture, curriculum continuity, reform efforts, student success, and

administrator involvement with staff. Ingersoll (2001) asserts that teacher attrition can reduce and stunt school cohesion and performance. NCTAF (2002) articulates the seriousness of teacher attrition by stating:

This churning staff turnover keeps school administrators scrambling to find replacements, and in too many cases quality teaching is compromised in an effort to find a sufficient number of warm bodies to staff classrooms. In the wake of this turmoil, student achievement declines. (p. 8)

Conversely, increasing teacher retention can help positively impact culture, effectiveness, and performance. Freed from the necessity of focusing financial and personnel resources on replacement of staff, schools are able to offer intentional support and development to faculty members. Darling-Hammond, Wei, and Andree (2010) argued that this is one of the differences in the educational systems of high-achieving countries. These countries adopted and implemented practices that foster teacher growth and mold new teachers into effective instructors who remain in the profession long-term. By proactively building human capital instead of reactively funding recruitment efforts to replace leaving teachers, these school systems are realizing student gains and successful achievement.

As an administrator at a small, private faith-based secondary school, the teacher attrition epidemic is a reality for me. While the goal of small, faith-based schools is student success, the mission of this sector of schools goes beyond academic performance. These schools exist to transform students spiritually, intellectually, and personally. Prensky (2014) articulates this by arguing that learning is not the goal of education. Isolated learning is hollow; education is about being changed—becoming something that you were not before. This transformation includes thinking, relating, accomplishing, and reflecting and is accomplished by way of authentic

challenge within cultivated relationships between students and teachers. It is a slow and intentional process.

The importance of continuity within the school staff is understood when faith-based education is viewed through this filter. It is vital that the faculty is comprised of quality teachers who return year-to-year to deepen relationships with students and continue the momentum of student transformation. Stability is a key ingredient. Teacher attrition is a threat to this mission, and efforts to understand contributing factors and development of proactive practices and policies schools can implement to positively stimulate retention are necessary.

### **Definition of Terms**

Focusing upon work conditions present within small, faith-based secondary schools that positively influence teacher retention, the aspects of the study include the specific factors representing work conditions. These include compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community. Definitions of these key aspects are included below. These attributes will be researched by examining their inclusion in school documentation, first-hand observation, and articulation of perceptions of teachers and administrators.

**Compensation.** Compensation is defined as the quantifiable return teachers receive for the completion of the job, consisting of salary and benefits (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

**Workload.** Workload is defined as the actual or teacher-perceived amount of work required for a certain position. This could include paperwork, teaching assignments, number of lesson preparations, number of students, and additional duties (Sieling, 2012).

**Student discipline.** Student discipline is defined as the actual number or perceived level of serious student disciplinary incidents (Salazar Sojo, 2003).

**Teacher voice in school decisions.** Teacher voice in school decisions is defined as the actual involvement or perceived inclusion in decisions related to school practices and policies (Bogler & Nir, 2012).

**Administrative support and interaction.** Administrative support and interaction is defined as the perception of involvement of administration in the daily activities of teachers, support given in the form of encouragement, mentoring, assistance, and provision of resources, and advocacy of teacher to the community at large (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

**School culture.** School culture is defined as the perceived ethos, shared beliefs and values, and sense of belonging or inclusion characterizing a specific school (Branch, 2013).

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

The study is affected by certain delimitations and limitations. Delimitations are a result of the choices made and boundaries set by the researcher. The first delimitation is inherent in the selection of the research problem. By choosing a problem, other researchable problems are eliminated (Simon & Goes, 2013). Focusing on the heightened teacher attrition in small, non-Catholic, faith-based schools eliminates the investigation of teacher attrition in other types of secondary schools.

Another delimitation present within this study results from the focus on school-based conditions and their impact on teacher retention. As presented in Chapter 2, existing research has established a variety of factors contributing to teacher turnover—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, and non-school factors—in addition to work conditions (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1993; Chapman, 1984; Sher, 1983; Swars et al., 2009). While the other factors have been shown to impact teacher retention and attrition, narrowing the

research study to only school-based factors allows for findings supporting the research goal of informing school practices and policies.

As with all qualitative research approaches, case study research design comes with specific limitations. Case study researchers are susceptible to error and bias; therefore, the accuracy of data collection and analysis is vital. Yin (2014) asserts that the strength of case study research relies on the meticulous and cautious handling of data. The implementation of a structured data collection, documentation, and organization system will assist in minimizing this limitation. The quality of the research study is only as strong as the researcher's commitment to thoroughness.

The design of this research study also carries limitations outside of the researcher. The short-term design of the study reduces the development of understanding to a defined period of time that naturally is not as thorough as a longitudinal study. In addition, the selection of a single site could limit the data available for document review making it difficult to gather adequate data from this source. Also, case study research is not as formal and structured as other approaches and is not recognized by all as a legitimate approach (Yin, 2014).

## **Chapter 1 Summary**

This chapter presented a foundation of background and contextual information related to the problem of heightened teacher attrition within small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based secondary schools. The purpose of informing practices and policies within the affected sector of schools was established, and the significance of the study was tied to the effectiveness of education resulting from continuity in faculty within private, faith-based schools. The problem statement and research questions are offered. In addition, important terms are defined and possible limitations and delimitations are outlined. Chapter 2 explores the existing body of

literature and offers a conceptual framework for the study. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and data analysis approach. Chapter 4 describes the sample in greater detail and offers an overview of methodology and data collection in the context of the research questions. A discussion of the steps taken to analyze the data using the manual coding and iterative process offered by Saldaña (2009) is included, along with a presentation of the results of this analysis and a summary of the findings are offered. Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the results, what they mean, and how they are connected to the preexisting literature. In addition, the chapter thoroughly examines the implications that the results have on the practices and policies impacting teacher retention in small, faith-based secondary schools and offers recommendations for further research related to this topic.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

The 21st century has ushered in a new era of education. The world has undergone rapid change in the last few decades, and more change is predicted. Despite this change, education in the United States has remained stagnant. Darling-Hammond (2010) stated that “the United States must shift course if it is to survive and prosper as a First World nation in the 21st century” (p. 25). This statement carries a strong warning for the United States. Asserting that successful educational reform has been achieved in other nations, Darling-Hammond (2010) recognized that a significant investment in creating a strong and stable teacher workforce is an important key to increasing student achievement and ensuring global competitiveness of future generations.

Teachers are the very foundation of a successful educational program. Excellent teachers lead to excellent students. Professional consensus points to the quality of instruction as the most powerful factor influencing student achievement (Shakrani, 2008). In addition, research suggests that teacher effectiveness increases with experience during the first 7 years (NCTAF, 2010) and continues to increase up to 20 years with experience in the same grade level (Huang & Moon, 2009). If the mission of secondary education is successful students, retaining effective teachers in schools is the means to building a thriving educational system. The answer, then, is simple. In order to increase student achievement and preparation for global competition, quality teachers must be hired, developed, and retained.

Unfortunately, the realization of this mission is not that easy. Teachers are leaving the profession more quickly than they are entering. Teacher turnover is significantly higher than comparable occupations (NCTAF, 2002) and is on the rise. In fact, it is estimated that each school day almost one thousand teachers leave the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education,

2005). The biggest hit occurs with new teachers with nearly a third leaving the profession within the first three years and half after five years (NCTAF, 2002). Teacher attrition is a significant hurdle that must be overcome in order to strengthen student achievement.

**Study topic.** According to research from TNTP (2012), successful teachers make successful schools. The effect of a master teacher is powerful. With national focus on realizing and strengthening this mission, the impact of qualified teachers on student performance is becoming one of the leading factors associated with improved academic achievement. Teacher turnover, however, threatens the overall effectiveness of schools and carries specific repercussions to curriculum, student success, and institutional finances (Sieling, 2012). According to the results of the 2008–2009 Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS)—the most recent TFS to report private school teacher attrition data, private school teachers are leaving the profession at significantly higher rates than their public-school peers at a level of 16% overall and 21% among new teachers (Keigher & Cross, 2010). The lack of recent research and the potential threats presented by private school teacher attrition fuel the need for targeted research and reform.

Teacher retention and attrition have been the focus of many research studies over the last three decades. With researchers investigating the issue from a variety of viewpoints, it is vital that the current body of research is explored to gain a foundational understanding of the factors that influence teacher turnover. Early investigation into teacher turnover is focused primarily on characteristics of teachers that contribute to an increase in teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001). Moving beyond personal characteristics of employees, contemporary researchers shift the focus to job-related and school-related aspects in order to understand contributing factors and inform school reform.

**Context.** Teacher attrition is particularly detrimental to the mission and effectiveness of small, faith-based secondary schools. Ingersoll (2001) asserts that teacher attrition is at the highest level in small, faith-based schools when compared to all public and other private schools. Entering the 2000–2001 school year, administrators at private, faith-based schools reported a teacher turnover rate of 23% (McGrath & Princiotta, 2006), which “is significantly higher, for instance, than the rate in high-poverty public schools, and is more than double the national average for other kinds of employees” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 516). This level of attrition is of great concern due to the potentially disruptive impact on the quality of the school programs, community, and performance (Ingersoll, 2001).

Private school teachers are less likely to report dissatisfaction with their schools; however, they exhibit a higher rate of attrition. Administrators in small, faith-based schools realize the impact of lower salaries and limited benefits on teacher retention efforts. With tight financial resources, these schools must strengthen teacher retention and satisfaction through other means. Unfortunately, little research extricating the factors that impact teacher retention, either positively or negatively, within small, faith-based schools is available; this is clearly an area of need for further research.

**Significance.** Teacher attrition is a costly problem. The financial consequences to teacher turnover are easily identified. NCTAF (2010) estimates that attrition costs school districts at least \$7.2 billion a year. In fact, researchers estimate that the cost of teacher turnover in Texas alone carries a conservative price tag of \$329 million a year (NCTAF, 2002). The costs extend beyond the fiscal arena impacting school culture, curriculum continuity, reform efforts, student success, and administrator involvement with staff. Ingersoll (2001) asserts that teacher attrition can

reduce and stunt school cohesion and performance. NCTAF (2002) articulates the seriousness of teacher attrition by stating:

This churning staff turnover keeps school administrators scrambling to find replacements, and in too many cases quality teaching is compromised in an effort to find a sufficient number of warm bodies to staff classrooms. In the wake of this turmoil, student achievement declines. (p. 8)

Conversely, increasing teacher retention can help positively impact culture, effectiveness, and performance. Freed from the necessity of focusing financial and personnel resources on replacement of staff, schools are able to offer intentional support and development to faculty members. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) argued that this is one of the differences in the educational systems of high-achieving countries. These countries adopted and implemented practices that foster teacher growth and mold new teachers into effective instructors who remain in the profession long-term. By proactively building human capital instead of reactively funding recruitment efforts to replace leaving teachers, these school systems are realizing student gains and successful achievement.

As an administrator at a small, private faith-based secondary school, the teacher attrition epidemic is a reality for me. While the goal of small, faith-based schools is student success, the mission of this sector of schools goes beyond academic performance. These schools exist to transform students spiritually, intellectually, and personally. Prensky (2014) articulated this by arguing that learning is not the goal of education. Isolated learning is hollow; education is about being changed—becoming something that you were not before. This transformation includes thinking, relating, accomplishing, and reflecting and is accomplished by way of authentic

challenge within cultivated relationships between students and teachers. It is a slow and intentional process.

The importance of continuity within the school staff is understood when faith-based education is viewed through this filter. It is vital that the faculty is comprised of quality teachers who return year-to-year to deepen relationships with students and continue the momentum of student transformation. Stability is a key ingredient. Teacher attrition is a threat to this mission, and efforts to understand contributing factors and development of proactive practices and policies schools can implement to positively stimulate retention are necessary.

**Problem statement.** The problem addressed in the current study is the high rate of teacher attrition that exists within small, faith-based schools. Teacher attrition within these schools occurs at a significantly higher rate compared to all public and other private schools (Keigher & Cross, 2010). This level of attrition is of great concern due to the potential disruptive impact on the quality of the school programs, community, and performance (Ingersoll, 2001).

**Organization.** Research within small, faith-based schools related to teacher turnover is extremely limited. In the absence of specific research conducted in these schools, a review of existing literature within all types of schools—mostly public—is reviewed as a foundation for discussion. Present literature and research include investigation of four areas of turnover influencers—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, work conditions, and non-school factors. Personal characteristics include demographic data, personality traits, past experiences, and personal values and priorities. Professional characteristics shift the focus to the teacher’s training, education, work experience, skills, and abilities. Work conditions encompass the aspects of the teacher’s specific position (assignment, schedule, student ability, student behavior, and workload), as well as school and district

characteristics and conditions (school culture, facilities, support, collegial network, compensation, voice in decisions, school policies, parental relations, and access to resources). Non-school factors round out the studied factors with the inclusion of opportunities in the surrounding area, the state of the economy and job market, and cultural, societal, geographic, social, political, and religious factors and conditions.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Since teacher retention appears to have a relationship to the longevity of teaching careers, an examination of the stages of teacher development is prudent. Fuller and Bown (1975) offers a three-stage approach to teacher development with a movement from self to student focus. The first stage is comprised of survival concerns related to class control, being liked by students, and pleasing administration. These concerns are based on the teacher's feelings. Next, the teacher's concerns progress to situational issues with teaching and include frustrations about number of students, workload, duties, and lack of needed resources. The third stage is focused on teacher concerns for students—identifying and meeting the needs of individual students. Building on the work of Fuller and Bown (1975), Conway and Clark (2003) assert that new teachers develop outwardly and inwardly. The outward development (teaching content and caring for students) is coupled with an internal reflective development focusing on survival, identity, development, and improvement (Conway & Clark, 2003).

Dinham and Scott (1998) add to the discussion of teacher retention by proposing a model of job satisfaction with three domains. First, teachers show the greatest satisfaction in the intrinsic characteristics of the teaching profession. These include helping students achieve, building positive relationships with parents and students, growing as a professional, and belonging to a collegial environment (Dinham & Scott, 1998). Conversely, teachers demonstrate

the most dissatisfaction as result of the aspects that are extrinsic to the teaching field including the poor opinion of teachers in culture and the lack of support for the profession. According to Dinham and Scott (1998), the third domain exists between the first two and is comprised of school-related factors such as school leadership, school culture, and voice in decisions. This domain can add to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the teacher based on the teacher's working conditions.

Existing research suggests that teacher attrition is impacted by a combination of factors related to internal and external forces. Chapman (1984) offers a model of teacher attrition built five areas of influence—personal characteristics, training/experience, social and professional integration into the teaching profession, career satisfaction, and external environmental factors. Additionally, Sher (1983) offers another model grounded in three areas—characteristics, conditions, and compensation—as an overarching framework of influencers. Characteristics encompass personal attributes of a teacher, while conditions and compensation focus on external influences (Sher, 1983).

In the 1990s, researchers continued to work to understand teacher retention and attrition by proposing additional conceptual models. Billingsley (1993) offers a conceptual model of the influences of teachers' career decisions. In this model, the influencers are divided into three categories: external factors, employment factors, and personal factors. External factors include societal, economic, and institutional influencers that are outside of the teacher and the employing district (Billingsley, 1993). Employment factors are influencers associated with the teacher as a professional, the school, and the teaching position. These factors include professional qualifications, work conditions, rewards, and teacher commitment to school, district, teaching field and teaching profession (Billingsley, 1993). Finally, Billingsley (1993) recognizes that

personal factors—like circumstances and priorities—also impact career decisions. Brownell and Smith (1993) suggest that teacher attrition is impacted by interconnected forces that can be modeled as nesting systems. The systems begin with the microsystem—made up of the immediate settings and interactions—and then progress to the mesosystem of interactions in the workplace, the exosystem of informal and formal social structures, and the macrosystem that includes the impact of cultural and economic forces (Brownell & Smith, 1993).

Offering a narrowed look at teacher retention, Swars, Meyers, Mays, and Lack (2009) outline a two-dimensional model of teacher retention and mobility that connects the agreement between the teacher and organization on two distinct factors. The first is the congruence between the teacher's beliefs and practices and the norms held by the school as established by administration or local/state/national policy. The second factor is the relational needs and desires of the teacher—specifically high or low interaction with administrators. The combination of these two factors help predict whether teachers are more likely to stay or leave their current teaching position (Swars et al., 2009). While Chapman (1984), Sher (1983), Billingsley (1993), Brownell and Smith (1993), and Swars et al. (2009) all approach the organization of impacting factors differently, they are consistent in their focus on the four primary types—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, work conditions, and non-school factors. This four-part system derived from the five prevailing models will be used as the conceptual framework for this research study.

**Teacher personal characteristics.** Early research focused almost exclusively on the relationship between teacher attrition and personal characteristics of teachers. This research set out to determine if there are certain groups or types of teachers who are more prone to leave the field of teaching (Ingersoll, 2001). Research into teacher characteristics and attrition are helpful

in informing the discussion surrounding teacher recruitment and selection (Ronfeldt, Reininger, & Kwok, 2013). Perhaps the most common characteristics studied can be grouped into three areas—demographics, skills, and values.

One of the most prevalent demographic characteristics in teacher attrition research is age. The impact of age on attrition produces a U-shaped curve, with the highest attrition occurring in younger teachers and older teachers (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Maislin, 1998; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Heyns, 1988; Schlechty & Vance, 1981; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). Borman and Dowling (2008) quantified this relationship by asserting that the odds of attrition for a teacher who is 5 years younger is 5.32 times greater than older peers; while, the odds of attrition for a teacher over 50 years of age is 2.50 times greater than peers 50 or under. While retirement is agreed upon as the reason for the attrition increase in the older population, there is no consensus on the factors leading to the large attrition rates of new teachers (Ingersoll, 2001).

In addition to age, other demographics are the focus of previous studies regarding teacher attrition. Stockard and Lehman (2004) note that previous studies show that although females are more likely to report job satisfaction, men are more likely to stay within the teaching field. These results are consistent with Borman and Dowling's (2008) report that female teachers are 1.30 times more likely to leave teaching than their male counterparts. The race or ethnicity of a teacher also impacts attrition with White teachers being 1.36 times more likely to leave teaching than non-White minority teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2004). Additionally, research shows that the family situation of a teacher—marital status and whether the teacher has a child—also influences a teacher's decision to remain in the profession (Boe et al., 1998; Borman & Dowling, 2004; Gonzalez, 1995; Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Moving beyond demographic characteristics, studies also document a connection between skills and values held by teachers and attrition (Chapman & Hutcheson, 1982; Gonzalez, 1995; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Chapman and Hutcheson (1982) assert that teachers who stay in the field exhibit higher levels of organizational skills and value recognition by administration and peers, while those who leave demonstrate stronger analytical skills and value autonomy, compensation, and professional success. In addition, teachers who remain in education exhibit strong leadership, commitment, and perseverance (Ronfeldt et al., 2013) and have well-developed coping skills (Gonzalez, 1995).

**Teacher professional characteristics.** Moving beyond personal characteristics, some researchers investigated the connection between the presence of certain professional characteristics and teacher attrition (Adams & Dial, 1994; Boe et al., 1998; Chapman, 1984; Chapman & Green, 1986; Culver, Wolfe, & Cross, 1990; Hawks, 2016; Ingersoll & May, 2012; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1989; Pigge & Marso, 1992; Schlechty & Vance, 1981). Much like personal characteristics, understanding the relationship between certain professional attributes and decisions to leave the profession can inform recruitment efforts. These characteristics include the academic ability of teachers, level of degree held, initial commitment to teaching, work experience, and specific discipline of teaching.

While many school administrators desire to hire teachers with high levels of competence in their field of study, studies suggest that teachers who exhibit strong academic ability, as measured by test scores, are more likely to leave the profession early on and in greater numbers than their peers (Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Schlechty & Vance, 1981). Teachers who instruct within specialized areas—math, science, and special education—are linked to shorter teaching careers (Hawks, 2016; Ingersoll & May, 2012; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Murnane et al., 1989).

Both high academic ability and specialized teaching field can contribute to greater job opportunities outside of education (Ingersoll & May, 2012).

Professional characteristics can also have a positive impact on counteracting attrition, both early and later in a teacher's career in education. Researchers pinpoint a teacher's initial commitment to teaching—even before entering the workforce—as a strong predictor of longevity within the field (Chapman, 1984; Chapman & Green, 1986; Culver et al., 1990; Pigge & Marso, 1992). Counter to the impact of academic ability and teaching area, the earning of an advanced degree by a teacher is also linked to lower teacher attrition (Adams & Dial, 1994).

**Work conditions.** Aside from internal factors, research studies suggest a connection between the organizational factors specific to a teacher's position and school and the decision to leave the teaching profession. Bogler and Nir (2015) asserted that the fit between the demands of a job and the teacher's abilities impacts a teacher's decision to remain in the field. Dissatisfaction or stress related to large amounts of paperwork, excessive workload, and numerous preparations are tied to decisions to leave the teaching profession (Cowan, 2010; Salazar Sojo, 2003; Sieling, 2012). In addition, Cowan (2010) also points to the specific teaching assignment—grade, subject, and curriculum—as an impacting factor on teacher attrition. Special attention is also given to the first-year experience within a teaching job, it has a powerful influence over a teacher's decision to leave or stay within education (Chapman, 1984; Chapman & Green, 1986).

There is consensus as to the power that compensation level has on teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001; Jacobson, 1988; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Murnane et al., 1989; Stinebrickner, 1998). Borman and Dowling (2008) demonstrate the influence of compensation by showing an increased attrition among

lower paid teachers as compared to peers with higher compensation. Ingersoll (2001) offers that low compensation level is linked to low job satisfaction, especially in private schools.

Within the scope of work conditions, the characteristics of a school play a pivotal role in the discussion of teacher attrition. One of the most powerful and heavily researched is administrative support or involvement. When teachers perceive administrators as supportive and involved, teacher attrition declines (Angelle, 2006; Baker, 2007; Bogler, 2001; Bogler & Nir, 2012; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Boyd et al., 2011; Branch, 2013; Hamburg, 2012; Madsen & Hancock, 2002; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005; Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Waddell, 2010). The same benefits are achieved with a strong support network of colleagues and significant opportunities for collaboration among staff (Branch, 2013; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Culver et al., 1990; Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Waddell, 2010; Watts, 2016). Finally, support in the form of a robust induction program also fosters teacher retention (AEE, 2005; Anthony & Ord, 2008).

Research also indicates that successful schools share a positive sense of community among school staff, students, and parents (Ingersoll, 2001). Branch (2013) asserts that building a culture of retention involves positive attitudes and behaviors of students. This is consistent with research linking serious student discipline issues and increased teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001; Killian & Baker, 2006; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005; Salazar Sojo, 2003). Finally, a culture of teacher empowerment that allows faculty to have a voice in decisions related to school policy is connected to teacher decisions to remain in the education profession (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005).

**Non-school factors.** Non-school factors are outside the scope and control of individual teachers and the schools and districts in which they serve. Billingsley (1993) suggested that societal and economic factors have an impact on a teacher's decision to stay or leave the

education. These factors could include competing job opportunities or regional or national economic outlook. Watts (2016) offers that teacher retention is influenced by outside conditions like culture, community, and religion. Specifically noted, teacher retention is strengthened by teacher ties to and desire to give back to the community (Watt, 2016). Brownell and Smith (1993) assert that external forces play into teacher attrition and retention through their exosystem and macrosystem comprised of the socioeconomic, cultural beliefs and ideologies, and overall economic conditions. The societal perceptions of learners, teachers, and education influence a teacher's decision to persist in a current position or the field of education (Brownell & Smith, 1993). Likewise, the economic climate has both a negative and positive impact on teacher retention. Brownell and Smith (1993) offer that a prosperous economy may foster teacher mobility, even to positions outside of the education field, while poor economic conditions could convince a dissatisfied teacher to remain in her current position. Non-school factors, as well as teacher-related and school-related factors, contribute to the retention or attrition of teachers within all types of schools. The level at which these factors impact teacher turnover is further examined through a review of existing research; the unique influencers within small, faith-based private schools is identified as an area of limited research and the catalyst of this research study.

### **Review of Research Literature**

Teacher retention and attrition are the focus of many research studies over the last three decades. With researchers investigating the issue from a variety of viewpoints, it is vital that the current body of research is explored to gain a foundational understanding of the factors that influence teacher turnover. Early investigation into teacher turnover focuses primarily on characteristics of teachers that contribute to an increase teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001). Moving beyond personal characteristics of employees, contemporary researchers shift the focus

to job-related and school-related aspects in order to understand contributing factors and inform school reform.

Among the influencers of teacher attrition, teacher personal and professional characteristics have their primary impact on teacher recruitment and hiring practices. Non-school factors have an indirect impact on teacher career decisions; however, they are also outside of the scope and control of the individual teacher or school administration. With the focus of the current study on factors that can be influenced by practices and policies at the school-level, the literature review is narrowed to studies and publications involving work conditions. Special attention is given to the most prevalent and most commonly discussed aspects within this subcategory. These factors are compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community.

**Compensation.** Numerous sources of research link teacher retention to the level of compensation—salary and benefits—offered by the school district. Jacobson (1988) performs a qualitative study in order to investigate the impact of internal salary distribution practices of 699 New York school districts between 1974 and 1985. Utilizing district-level salary data and retention records, mean salaries are calculated at three points of experience—entry-level (newly-hired teachers with less than 3 years of prior experience), mid-career (teachers with 9–11 years of district experience but no more than 15 years of total experience), and senior (teachers with 17 or more years of district experience)—and then two salary ratios to represent salary increases in the early and late parts of the salary schedules (Jacobson, 1988). The means and averages are then compared to district hiring and retention data in order to determine whether a connection between salary policy and recruitment and retention exists.

The findings of Jacobson's (1988) study suggest that such a connection does in fact exist. With few districts employing an across-the-board distribution, two groups of districts emerge—districts offering steep increases early in their schedules and districts favoring veteran teachers with their salary schedule. These two categories of school districts are able to achieve different advantages related to their faculty. First, the districts that front-load their compensation of teachers are able to establish an increased ability to hire highly qualified candidates, especially those with no or little experience (Jacobson, 1988). Conversely, districts who invest salary increases on the latter end of the experience continuum are able to increase the retention of more experienced teachers (Jacobson, 1988). These findings point to the ability for school districts to use salary increases to attract and retain teachers reducing teacher attrition.

Adding to the discussion of compensation practices and their impact on teacher retention/attrition, Stinebrickner (1998) utilizes data from the National Longitudinal Study of the Class of 1972 (NLS-72) that follows and reports on the career development, including migration and attrition, of a group of certified teachers from 1972 to 1986—341 individuals from this group made up the sample group for this study. In this quantitative study, data is used to offer and test a duration model to gauge the probability that a teacher would leave the teaching field each year depending on a set of characteristics. The results of Stinebrickner's (1998) research support the importance of competitive salaries in teacher retention. A significant correlation between salary and length of teaching spell is noted, specifically increasing the probability that a high wage teacher will stay in teaching more than five years by 9% over a teacher at the mean wage (Stinebrickner, 1998).

Similar findings are reported by Murnane and Olsen (1990) after a quantitative study of public school teacher records in North Carolina from 1974–1985. Using the econometric method

to determine the impact of salary on 13,890 teachers, the researchers conclude that higher salaries are connected to increased teacher spells, specifically citing that each \$1000 increase added a median of two to three years onto the duration of teaching (Murnane & Olsen, 1990, pp. 119–120). Borman and Dowling (2008) offer a meta-analysis of ninety different quantitative studies conducted relating to the retention or attrition of teachers. Their research includes the analysis of 14 studies focusing on teacher salary and teacher attrition and concludes that higher teacher salaries are linked to decreased teacher attrition. One specific study they research compares high-salaried teachers to their low-salaried peers and found that the lower paid teachers had 1.85 greater odds of attrition. In addition, another study utilizing a 5-point Likert scale of teacher salary satisfaction concludes that each increase of one unit of satisfaction was connected with a decrease of 2.94 in the odds of teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

**Workload.** Closely tied to the conversation of compensation is one of teacher workload. Many researchers examine the connection between the quantity of work and teacher career decisions. Salazar Sojo (2003) surveys the faculty of the three rural districts with the highest teacher retention and the three rural districts with the lowest teacher retention in Minnesota. The survey instrument is designed to gauge the satisfaction of the faculty in five areas, including amount of paperwork and number of preparations. After comparing data from the two groups of school districts, he finds that teachers at the high-retention districts are satisfied with the workload, while the low-retention group expresses dissatisfaction with the amount of paperwork and preparations within these districts.

Sieling (2012) explores the impact of workload on teacher attrition within the private school arena. By engaging seven teachers and seven administrators at a large private school in a qualitative study, he reports that both groups possessed shared perceptions that teacher workload

is the main contributor to teacher attrition at their school. Interviewed teachers attribute recent teacher attrition directly to the increasing workload. In addition, one administrator describes workload as the universal problem within the school. Sieling (2012) identified this factor as having a negative impact on teacher retention.

Contrasting the findings of Salazar Sojo (2003) and Sieling (2012), other research findings question the connection between workload and attrition. Hawks (2016) conducts a quantitative study to determine the predictive value of satisfaction, motivation, and caseload of elementary special education teachers in southwest Virginia. By giving 151 special education teachers from six public school districts the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) and the Work Motivation Scale for Teachers (WTMST), the study finds that caseload did not have a predictive relationship with teacher attrition. Hawks (2016) asserts that special education teachers could have a high caseload in combination with a high job satisfaction.

**Student discipline.** Beyond compensation and workload, prior research connects student discipline problems to teacher attrition. Ingersoll (2001) utilizes the results of the 1990–1991 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the 1991–1992 Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) conducted by the National Center of Education Statistics to analyze data related to contributing factors of teacher attrition. The analysis is conducted in three stages: investigating overall annual teacher turnover, performing multiple regression analysis on influencing factors, and examining teacher reported reasons for leaving prior positions. The results of Ingersoll’s (2001) analysis reveal that schools with lower levels of student discipline have notably lower teacher turnover rates. “A 1-unit difference in reported student discipline problems between two schools (on a 4-unit scale) is associated with a 47% difference in the odds of a teacher departing” (Ingersoll, 2001, pp. 518–519). In the study previously discussed by Salazar Sojo (2003), a marked

difference in teacher perceptions of student discipline problems is noted. Teachers in the high-retention districts report experiencing few discipline problems; while, teachers in low-retention districts perceive serious student discipline issues within their schools (Salazar Sojo, 2003). Similarly, a quantitative study involving surveys from 223 first-year or first-year-in-Texas music educators revealed that dissatisfaction with student behavior is the second most frequent reason given for leaving the teaching profession (Killian & Baker, 2006). Finally, McGrath and Princiotta (2005) use the 1999–2000 SASS data to focus specifically on factors impacting private school teacher retention. This analysis affirmed that 25.6% of private school teachers who moved schools or left teaching report poor student discipline as a contributing factor in the decision to leave (McGrath & Princiotta, 2005, p. 2).

**Teacher input in school decisions.** Teachers desire to have a voice in the school decisions. This desire to give input influences job satisfaction and teacher retention and attrition. After their respective reviews of SASS data, Ingersoll (2001) and McGrath and Princiotta (2005) assert that teachers who feel they have a lack of input also experience a higher attrition rate. In fact, Ingersoll (2001) specifies that a “1-unit difference in reported teacher influence between schools (on a 6-unit scale) is associated with a 26% difference in the odds of a teacher departing” (p. 519). In addition, Bogler and Nir (2012) perform a quantitative study to explore the effect of teacher empowerment on perception of support and satisfaction. The study involves surveying 2,565 elementary teachers from 153 elementary schools in Israel. Teacher empowerment, according to Bogler and Nir (2012), includes a teacher’s involvement in decision-making. The research findings suggest that when teachers feel empowered, they also feel supported and satisfied with their career, which are tied to retention.

**Administrative support and interaction.** Perhaps the most frequently cited aspect, administrative interaction and support is a major contributing factor in the retention/attrition process. Administrative support can be defined as “the extent to which principals and other school leaders make teachers’ work easier and help them to improve their teaching” (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 307). Angelle (2006) conducts a qualitative study of 19 beginning teachers and their supervising administrators at four middle school campuses in a southern state. Data are collected through interviews of volunteer teachers and their administrators regarding perceived support received and monitoring support offered, respectively. Interviews of teachers with actively involved instructional leaders describe frequent interaction in the form of “formal and informal class visits, reflective feedback, discussion of the practice of teaching, and assistance in professional and personal growth” (Angelle, 2006, p. 331). This culture of support is linked to the beginning teachers’ intention to stay in education. Conversely, the teachers of uninvolved principals communicate a sense of isolation and inadequacy resulting from the administrators’ primary focus on discipline problems and paperwork (Angelle, 2006).

Killian and Baker (2006) also add to the discussion of the impact of administrative support on teacher attrition through a quantitative study on new and new-to-Texas music educators. Using a researcher-designed survey instrument, data from 223 music educators is collected and analyzed in order to investigate factors impacting teacher retention and attrition. The research finds that teachers who planned to leave the profession most often indicate that lack of administrative support is a contributing factor. Continuing her research, Baker (2007) utilizes the same survey to collect data from 87 early career Texas choral directors and 53 of their administrators. The findings indicate that inadequate administrative support is one of the primary reasons choral teachers leave the profession. In addition, the researchers found that there is a

significant difference in perception of effective support between teachers and administrators with 75% of the teachers and principals not in agreement.

Boyd et al. (2011) survey 4,360 first-year teachers in New York City to collect data regarding the connection between school contextual factors and teacher attrition. The survey is based on the SASS with questions added based on prior research and feedback from school district personnel and is designed to measure the following areas: teacher influence, administration, staff relations, students, facilities, and safety (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 312). Analysis of the results provides a striking picture of the impact of administration involvement in teacher career decisions. Administrative support is a strong predictor of retention and is overwhelmingly cited as the most important factor influencing attrition.

Branch (2013) utilizes a qualitative approach to take an in-depth look into the leadership practices that exist in a school with exceptional teacher retention. Analyzing data collected through open-ended interviews, document reviews, and the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2003), the researcher notes a connection between the principal's leadership and teacher retention. "There are aspects of the principal's leadership style which make teachers want to work at this school" (Branch, 2013, p. 106). The administrator is connected to the faculty by a clearly articulated and communicated shared vision and models behaviors that are expected of his faculty. His involvement in the school and community is seen as sacrificial and supportive by his teachers. In addition, the principal prioritizes recognition of his staff.

Conducting a qualitative study into the factors causing elementary teachers to remain teaching in urban schools more than five years, Waddell (2010) notes that a strong professional relationship between a teacher and administrator impacts the teacher's decision to stay beyond the five-year mark. The researcher utilizes interviews, observations, document reviews, and

focus groups to collect data from a sample group of 378 elementary school teachers in a large urban district in the Midwest. The study participants all indicate that they each have significant relationships with their principals based on professionalism and respect. In addition, the teachers assert that working under a non-supportive principal would cause them to consider leaving their position (Waddell, 2010).

Bogler and Nir (2015) performed a quantitative study in order to investigate predictors of teacher commitment and job satisfaction. By surveying a random sampling of 841 teachers from 118 elementary schools in Israel, the researchers identified principal interaction with teachers as the second most influential predictor for commitment and satisfaction. Similarly, Hamburg (2012) found that a supportive relationship with a principal increases commitment to teaching and decreases teacher attrition. After surveying and interviewing a sample population of 27 teachers with 3 or fewer years of experience within a large suburban school in Georgia, the analysis of the data reveals that the participating teachers weigh administrative support heavily in their career decisions related to both retention and attrition (Hamburg, 2012).

**School culture.** Branch (2013) asserts that the culture of the school is everything when it comes to retention of its faculty. In the qualitative research study discussed in the previous section, the results of the study point to the importance of building a retentive culture. The researcher notes that when the culture reinforces traditions, pride, a focus on students, and a sense of family, it fosters a desire for teachers to remain. In addition, the creation of an environment permeated with predictability and security is vital in teacher retention efforts.

Conducting a qualitative, multiple-case study involving three rural districts in eastern Kentucky, Watts (2016) investigated the perceptions of school culture, among other factors, on teacher retention. The investigation included a review of documents, observations and field

notes, individual interviews with superintendents and principals, and focus group interviews with 93 teachers. Watts (2016) reported that the administration contributes a relational culture to increased retention. By fostering a family environment with strong interpersonal relationships, teachers feel connected and stay. Similarly, the teacher focus groups attribute retention to the strong supportive culture of the schools. Watts (2016) highlights the clear theme of family in the teachers' responses to the interview questions. A pervasive sense of team and family is identified as the foundation of a strong retentive culture.

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

As stated earlier, teacher retention and attrition have been the focus of many research studies over the last three decades. With researchers investigating the issue from a variety of viewpoints, different research methods have been utilized. Early investigation into teacher turnover was focused primarily on characteristics of teachers that contributed to an increase teacher attrition (Ingersoll, 2001). Moving beyond personal characteristics of employees, contemporary researchers have shifted the focus to job-related and school-related aspects in order to understand contributing factors and inform school reform and have employed both quantitative and qualitative research methodology.

**Quantitative method.** A common approach to studying the influential factors on teacher turnover is the use of quantitative research methods. Most of the studies that employs quantitative methods are done through surveying sample groups of teachers, administrators, or both (Baker, 2007; Bogler, 2001; Boyd et al., 2011; Chapman, 1984; Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, 1994; Salazar Sojo, 2003). This approach allows the researchers to collect detailed information from a diverse group of educators, often over multiple states or nation-wide. The survey instruments are employed to gain insight into the relationship between two or more

variables within a correlational study. Correlational studies test “the degree to which behaviors, events, and feelings co-occur with other behaviors, events, and feelings” (Adams & Lawrence, 2014, p. 20). While this type of study does shed light on the existence of a relationship between variables, it does not establish causality.

Bogler (2001) surveys elementary teachers in Israeli schools regarding the leadership style and decision-making practices of school leaders and job satisfaction. Baker (2007) surveys choral teachers and administration to determine the impact of administrative support and teacher retention. Boyd et al. (2011) survey first-year teachers and the rest of the teachers at their schools to gauge the impact of school characteristics on teacher retention. Chapman (1984) surveys teacher education graduates of the University of Michigan to test his model of teacher attrition. Littrell et al. (1996) survey special education and general education teachers to investigate the preferred type of principal support to encourage retention and job satisfaction. Finally, Salazar Sojo (2003) uses surveys to gather data related to factors impacting retention in small, rural schools in Minnesota.

Another technique used to gather quantitative information is to utilize existing data collections. These data collections are typically state or national in scope and offer very thorough records. Ingersoll (2001) utilize the SASS and TFS data to investigate the organization conditions impacting retention. Murnane and Olsen (1990) and Jacobson (1988) use state salary and retention data in order to determine impact of salary levels on teacher retention in North Carolina and New York respectively.

**Qualitative method.** Perhaps the more common approach to investigating the influencing factors on teacher retention and attrition is the use of qualitative research methods. Qualitative researchers focus on multiple perspectives, the uniqueness of individual experiences,

and the importance of context. “Qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes”

(McMillan, 2012, p. 44). While qualitative research approaches are quite varied and do not share all the same characteristics, there are some common threads present in most.

Stake (2010) describes qualitative research as interpretive. “It keys on the meaning of human affairs as seen from different views” (Stake, 2010, p. 15). Qualitative researchers do not rely on one source of information; rather, they look at numerous sources for patterns. “The process of qualitative research is like an upside down funnel. In the beginning, the data may seem unconnected and too extensive to make sense, but as the researcher works with the data, progressively more specific findings are generated” (McMillan, 2012, p. 275).

“A distinguishing characteristic of most qualitative research is that behavior is studied as it occurs naturally” (McMillan, 2012, p. 273). Stake (2010) calls this the experiential nature of qualitative research and emphasizes observation and its naturalistic approach. McMillan (2012) asserts that context is one of the most important factors for qualitative researchers.

Qualitative research is also situational—built on a holistic approach (Stake, 2010). This involves investigating multiple perspectives and factors and synthesizing them into the bigger picture. Qualitative researchers focus on the process instead of just the outcome; the how is also important (McMillan, 2012).

Finally, Stake (2010) emphasizes the personal character of qualitative research. “It is empathetic, working to understand individual perceptions . . . the researcher is often the main research instrument” (Stake, 2010, p. 15). McMillan (2012) echoes Stake (2010) by pointing to

the presence of direct data collection, rich narrative descriptions, participants' perspectives on reality, and emergent research design.

Due to the complex nature of factors that influence individuals' decisions regarding their future employment plans, several researchers opt to employ qualitative methods in order to gather data by interview or observation. Angelle (2006) conducted a qualitative study by collecting data related to administrative support and interaction, state-mandated mentoring programs, and retention plans. By conducting interviews of teachers and principals, it is noted that teacher perception of administrative involvement and support increases plans for the teacher to remain in the position. In addition, Waddell (2010) conducts a study of the relational influence on teacher retention through interviews, observations, and focus groups. This allows the study to capture the human side of retention and school policy, practice, and reform.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

Existing research offers a picture of the context, the problem, and the significance of an ongoing conversation related to teacher attrition. While differences in findings and opinions exist, a survey of the literature brings forth consistencies and trends that can be articulated and used as a foundation for further research and study. It is clear that the effectiveness of education is critical to the success of individual students and competitiveness of entire countries (Darling-Hammond, 2010). It is also agreed that quality teachers produce quality students (Shakrani, 2008). With attrition threatening the establishment of an experienced and effective faculty, research into successful strategies to cultivate teacher retention is vital.

**Causes of teacher attrition.** According to existing research, teacher attrition is influenced by a variety of factors. A review of relevant studies reveals four main frameworks offered to explain this complex process (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1993; Chapman,

1984; Sher, 1893). Chapman (1984) identifies five areas that influence teacher attrition—personal characteristics, training/experience, social and professional integration into the teaching profession, career satisfaction, and external environmental factors. Sher (1983) offers another model grounded in three areas—characteristics, conditions, and compensation—as an overarching framework of influencers. Billingsley (1993) offers a model of influencers divided into three categories: external factors, employment factors, and personal factors. Brownell and Smith (1993) suggest that teacher attrition is impacted by interconnected forces which can be modeled as nesting systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. While all approach the organization of impacting factors differently, they are consistent in their focus on the four primary types—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, work conditions, and non-school factors.

**Work conditions.** Because the focus of the current study is on influencers that can be impacted by school-based practices and policy, the investigation of factors is narrowed to work conditions. Current research demonstrates a connection between increased salary and longevity within the teaching field and decreased teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Jacobson, 1988; Murnane & Olsen, 1990). Workload is an additional factor influencing teacher retention inversely with the increase of workload causing a decrease in retention (Salazar Sojo, 2003; Sieling, 2012). Difficult student discipline issues have a similar impact on retention in both public and private schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Killian & Baker, 2006; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005; Salazar Sojo, 2003). The support the teacher receives from the administrative team (Angelle, 2006; Branch, 2013; Waddell, 2010) and the input that the teacher has in decisions (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005) both have powerful influences on

teacher retention. Finally, the culture of the school plays a role in creating an environment that fosters the desire for teachers to remain in their positions (Branch, 2013; Watts, 2016).

**Small private schools.** Teacher attrition is particularly detrimental to the mission and effectiveness of small, faith-based secondary schools. Ingersoll (2001) asserts that teacher attrition is at the highest level in small, faith-based schools when compared to all public and other private schools. Entering the 2000-2001 school year, administrators at private, faith-based schools report a teacher turnover rate of 23% (McGrath & Princiotta, 2006), which “is significantly higher, for instance, than the rate in high-poverty public schools, and is more than double the national average for other kinds of employees” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 516). This level of attrition is of great concern due to the potential disruptive impact on the quality of the school programs, community, and performance (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll (2001) acknowledges that a cohesive culture is one of the hallmarks of private, faith-based schools. With teacher turnover threatening the establishment and sustainability of this culture, teacher attrition must become a focus within this sector of secondary education. Unfortunately, little research extricating the factors that impact teacher retention, either positively or negatively, within small, faith-based schools is available; this is clearly an area of need for further research.

### **Critique of Previous Research**

The body of research literature related to factors impacting teacher retention is relatively extensive and thorough. The research is conducted from various angles measuring and investigating the impact on teacher retention within types of schools, sizes of districts, geographic regions, and types of communities. From focusing on teacher characteristics to school characteristics, studies also focus on all the areas of factors influencing teacher retention. A wealth of data and results are available to form a foundation for future study.

The majority of early studies in this area take the form of quantitative research. While quantitative research inherently removes bias, several of the research studies conducted on teacher attrition have specific limitations. McGrath and Princiotta (2005) utilize nationally collected survey data from the SASS and TFS. Focusing specifically on private school teacher retention narrows the responses used as data in this study. Due to this, some relatively small differences are exaggerated when reported in the study. The researchers give the example of expressed satisfaction of student discipline. “Because so few teachers reported serious student discipline problems, teachers who reported that discipline was a mild problem were described as having low satisfaction with student discipline” (McGrath & Princiotta, 2005, p. 1).

Ingersoll (2001) reports a limitation with the reporting of salary data within his quantitative study. Due to the inconsistent approaches of school salary scales, reporting salary levels of a nation-wide population is challenging. Ingersoll (2001) tests three different salary measures in order to select the best representation of the data for the study. In the end, the annual salary for a teacher with 20 years of experience and a master’s degree is reported. Finally, Salazar Sojo (2003) utilizes a conceptual model offered by Sher (1983) to investigate the difference between high and low retention districts and discovers only a minimal difference between the districts. Only one out of the five components of the conceptual model is found to be significant—work conditions ( $p = 0.029$ ). Within work conditions, acceptable number of preparations ( $p = 0.046$ ), acceptable amount of paperwork ( $p = 0.003$ ), and fewer serious student discipline issues ( $p = 0.024$ ) were found to be significant variants between the two groups (Salazar Sojo, 2003). The limitation of a small geographical area was offered as a potential explanation.

Qualitative research also offers limitations that impact the outcomes of the studies. Some of these are woven into the very nature of qualitative research—an example being researcher bias. Watts (2010) offers this as a potential and unintentional limitation to his qualitative study of teacher retention within small, rural schools in eastern Kentucky. Branch (2013) asserts that the eastern panhandle region of West Virginia is faced with strong competition for its teachers from surrounding states with higher salaries. This reality could have a dramatic impact on the teacher retention/attrition landscape of this area, and a similar study in another geographic region with less competition might garner very different outcomes.

Sieling (2012) offers the most extensive list of factors that might have impacted his qualitative study. Recognizing the limitations of a short-term research project, the researcher asserts that a longitudinal study would be more beneficial. In addition, the participants of this project are volunteers who might have entered the study with personal motives and, as with any sample population, the participants might not have been an accurate representation of the entire faculty and administration. Finally, Sieling (2012) offers that a larger participant pool would add to the statistical relevance of the study.

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

Globalization is reshaping the face of education. With increased competition and a shift in needed skills, many educational systems respond with significant reform to better prepare students for success in a global economy (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Effective reform requires a well-trained and stable workforce. Quality teachers produce quality results (Shakrani, 2008). In the United States, teacher attrition is hampering furthering educational effectiveness and reform.

Teacher attrition is particularly detrimental to the mission and effectiveness of small, faith-based secondary schools. Ingersoll (2001) asserts that teacher attrition is at the highest level

in small, faith-based schools when compared to all public and other private schools. Entering the 2000–2001 school year, administrators at private, faith-based schools report a teacher turnover rate of 23% (McGrath & Princiotta, 2006), which “is significantly higher, for instance, than the rate in high-poverty public schools, and is more than double the national average for other kinds of employees” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 516). This level of attrition is of great concern due to the potential disruptive impact on the quality of the school programs, community, and performance (Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher attrition is a costly problem.

Present literature and research investigate four areas of turnover influencers—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, work conditions, and non-school factors. Personal characteristics include demographic data, personality traits, past experiences, and personal values and priorities. Professional characteristics shift the focus to the teacher’s training, education, work experience, skills, and abilities. Work conditions encompass the aspects of the teacher’s specific position (assignment, schedule, student ability, student behavior, and workload), as well as school and district characteristics and conditions (school culture, facilities, support, collegial network, compensation, voice in decisions, school policies, parental relations, and access to resources). Non-school factors round out the studied factors with the inclusion of opportunities in the surrounding area, the state of the economy and job market, and cultural, societal, geographic, social, political, and religious factors and conditions.

Among the influencers of teacher attrition, teacher personal and professional characteristics have their primary impact on teacher recruitment and hiring practices. Non-school factors have an indirect impact on teacher career decisions; however, they are also outside of the scope and control of the individual teacher or school administration. With the framework of the current study focusing on factors influenced by practices and policies at the school-level, the

scope of the proposed investigation is narrowed to factors related to work conditions. These factors are compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the current single, instrumental case study is to examine practices and policies that support teacher retention within small, faith-based secondary schools. With teacher attrition reaching its highest level within small, faith-based schools, it is essential to fully investigate schools within this category that have achieved and sustained high teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001). Identifying contributing conditions within a high-retention school may help to inform reform efforts in schools suffering from elevated teacher attrition. Teacher attrition degrades the effectiveness of schools and hinders the development and achievement of students. An investigation of the contributing factors to teacher attrition will require an in-depth and thorough understanding of the complex conditions present at these schools and how these conditions contribute to the culture of stability within the workforce.

This chapter contains an overview of the methodological plan for this case study. Beginning with the research questions, the focus of the study is narrowed to the specific factors that will be examined. The rationale for selection of the case study approach will be presented, and an outline of the selection of the school site and individuals and the proposed data collection and documentation is included, as well. Finally, a discussion of limitations, delimitations, and ethical considerations is offered.

### **Research Questions**

The focus of the research study is on the work conditions within small, private, faith-based secondary schools that promote strong teacher retention. Since work conditions, such as compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community, are connected to the

practices and policies within a school, understanding these factors could help inform a positive change in teacher retention within this segment of schools. Previous research studies have focused on work conditions that support or hinder teacher retention within public and larger private schools but have not adequately investigated them within small, faith-based secondary schools. This lack of literature on factors that influence teacher retention and attrition within this type of institution is the impetus for the proposed study. The study is guided by the research question: What work conditions at small faith-based secondary schools support strong teacher retention?

### **Purpose and Design of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to inform practices and policies within small, faith-based secondary schools that will promote teacher retention and improve the levels of attrition within this sector of schools. Existing studies document a considerably higher teacher turnover in small, faith-based secondary schools, reaching almost 25% annually (McGrath & Princiotta, 2006). This phenomenon is threatening the effectiveness and quality of programs and the level of student achievement within these schools (Ingersoll, 2001). With the highest levels of teacher attrition affecting this sector of schools, it is essential that research specifically address the positive influence of practices and policies at small, faith-based secondary schools.

**Qualitative research.** In order to thoroughly explore the factors contributing to strength of teacher retention in small, faith-based secondary schools, qualitative methodology has been selected. Qualitative researchers focus on multiple perspectives, the uniqueness of individual experiences, and the importance of context. “Qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places

under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes” (McMillan, 2012, p. 44).

Qualitative research is the best choice due to its consideration of individual experiences and context (McMillan, 2012). In qualitative research, the goal is to conduct an in-depth examination of a phenomenon within its real-world context from multiple perspectives (Yin, 2014). This research approach fits the purpose and research questions of the current study.

**Case study design.** Specifically within the broader umbrella of qualitative research, a case study design has been selected as the methodological approach. Bromley (1990) describes case study as a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest” (p. 302). Case studies allow in-depth examinations of issues, which is aided by researchers entering the world of the individuals being studied to gain an intimate understanding (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) continues by attributing case study to answering “how” and “why” questions.

The defining characteristic of a case study is the focus of the research, or the case (Merriam, 1998). The case is “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). By articulating the phenomenon and drawing boundaries around what will be researched, the researcher clearly defines the target of the case study. The case of the study is work conditions within a small, faith-based school that foster teacher retention. As discussed in the previous chapter, the work conditions have been narrowed to include the areas of compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community. These boundaries have been drawn to provide the investigation with a realistic and appropriate scope and to include the primary areas related to school-controlled factors. These limitations may also contribute to

increased applicability of study finding, as the research will only be addressing the factors controllable by individual schools.

Stake (1995) offers two distinct types of case study research designs—intrinsic and instrumental. Intrinsic case studies focus on the investigation of one specific case; the purpose of this approach is to fully explore the case to gain a more thorough understanding. Instrumental case studies move beyond the specific case to explore and refine the issue being researched. In instrumental case studies, the case is secondary to the issue. Since the target of this study is to inform policies and practices related to teacher retention, an instrumental case study design was selected.

One of the foundational aspects of case study research is collection of data from multiple sources and triangulating data to gain a thorough picture of the case and issue (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The research study includes the use of interviews, observations, and document reviews in order to gain detailed insight into the influence of work conditions on teacher retention within small, faith-based secondary schools. The investigation of this issue is grounded in gathering the feelings, beliefs, opinions, perspectives, and experiences of individuals. This is consistent with the very heart of case study research.

### **Research Population and Sampling Method**

The case of this study is work conditions within a small, faith-based school that foster teacher retention. In order to investigate the issue, a research site was selected. The research study was conducted at a small, faith-based, private school in rural Texas. The focus of the study is on the high school campus, which includes fewer than 300 students in Grades 9–12 and a faculty of 30 teachers.

Specific criteria were chosen by the researcher to guide the selection of the research site. These criteria are small size (fewer than 300 students) and type (religious school; non-Catholic) for the case study research. The criteria were derived from Ingersoll's (2001) research using SASS data in which he pinpoints the highest attrition in non-Catholic, religious private schools with student populations below 300. Preliminary phone communication with the school's headmaster took place on June 22, 2017. An official explanation of the study's purpose and permission to conduct research at the school was sent to the headmaster in September 2017.

Next, individuals at the school sites were identified to participate in the interview portion of the study. Purposeful sampling incorporates the identification and selection of individuals who are experienced with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), allowing for an effective use of limited time and resources (Patton, 2002). Since the goal of the interview portion of the research study is to gather perceptions of teachers at the selected site, purposeful sampling was utilized in order to ensure that participants meet the needed criteria to participate in the interview portion of the case study. These criteria are that potential participants must have classroom instruction as part of their job responsibilities and have been employed at the school for at least one full year. Volunteer participation was elicited through electronic invitation via e-mail (see Appendix E). Informed consent was obtained from all participants at the beginning of the in-person interviews during the research visit.

### **Instrumentation**

One of the strengths of case study research is the use of a variety of instrumentation to collect thorough and detailed data to inform the understanding of the issue being studied (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995 Yin, 2014;:). This strength is realized in the process of triangulation—combining the data from multiple sources (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010).

In order to gain a robust understanding of work conditions that foster teacher retention in small, faith-based secondary schools, data was collected through interviews with teachers, the review of documentation to include internal documents and external publications, and observation of the school site. In-depth interviews of multiple participants allow for the collection of the perspectives, insights, and perceptions of a population (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The interviews were held during regular school hours during the research visit and consisted of a list of predetermined, open-ended questions to elicit descriptive responses and entice detail-saturated stories (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The use of an interview protocol with structured questions allowed for consistency of question phrasing in order to create a similar interview experience for all participants (see Appendix A). The questions were designed to elicit breadth and depth of coverage of the key issues through use of content mapping and content mining questions (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). However, the interview structure retained a certain level of flexibility to further probe areas that presented themselves organically during the interview process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The researcher conducted field-tests prior to official research study in order to refine and clarify the interview protocol. The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder and transcribed following the research visit. The transcripts were provided to the participants via e-mail to aid in member checking (see Appendix G).

Document review allows for a comprehensive understanding of the school site and issue being researched (Stake, 1995). External publications reviewed included marketing materials, website contents, school profile, human resources and employment information, and handbooks and policy guides. Internal documents reviewed included school schedules, teaching assignments, faculty meeting notes, memos, employee guides, and professional development and training documents. Electronic and hardcopy documents were obtained after the research visit

and were reviewed off-site following the visit. These documents were systematically reviewed and researcher insights were documented and added to the case study database (Yin, 2014). See Appendix B for the document review protocol.

Observations took place at the school site and allowed for first-hand experience with the work conditions and insight. Observations were conducted over a 3-day period and included observing teachers in various settings (classrooms, hallways, faculty lounges, administrative offices, and faculty meetings). Special attention was given to physical setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle concerns, and behaviors in order to document the setting of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), the researcher must assume the role of careful observer in order to extract useful data from the experience. This requires meticulous documentation and creation of thorough field notes as soon as possible after the observation is completed (Merriam, 1998, p. 10). For the purpose of this study, the field notes were created the same day as the observation occurred. A nonparticipant/observer role was assumed in order to engage in the site but preserve and prioritize the full role of observer (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). See Appendix C for the observation protocol.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher is the sole data collector within the case study approach. In the current study, data was obtained through interviews of teachers, observation, and document review. Collecting evidence from three sources allowed for triangulation and helped reduce bias and inaccuracies (Glesne, 2011). All interviews were conducted by the researcher and held during regular school hours in the teachers' classrooms during the research visit. Before each interview, the researcher confirmed that all participants meet the criteria to participate using information garnered from school administration and obtained informed consent. Data collected from

interviews of faculty at the school site was recorded using a digital audio recorder and then transcribed by a professional transcription service that is in a binding agreement to hold all information confidential. Each interview resulted in a formal transcript of all verbalized questions and answers. These transcripts were provided directly to participants to allow for member checking to ensure accuracy and validity (Maxwell, 2005), and the recordings were deleted upon completion of member checking. This data was cataloged and coded into the case study database to assist with organization and ease of data retrieval and analysis. Digital data is being stored in encrypted and password protected folders on an external hard drive. The hard drive is being stored in a locked file cabinet along with hard copy data from the research study.

The document review included both external and internal school publications. External publications reviewed included marketing materials, website contents, school profile, human resources and employment information, and handbooks and policy guides. Internal documents reviewed included school schedules, teaching assignments, faculty meeting notes, memos, employee guides, and professional development and training documents. Electronic and hardcopy documents were obtained from the administration after the research visit and were reviewed in the months following the visit. Document review occurred off-site and was structured to allow for efficient and thorough examination of the artifacts. Detailed notes and annotations of each document were produced and then organized and documented as part of a case study database that allowed for a formal assembly of data and ease of retrieval (Yin, 2014). Categorization and coding of the data into themes and patterns helped with data analysis. Digital data is being stored in encrypted and password protected folders on an external hard drive. The hard drive is being stored in a locked file cabinet along with hardcopy data from the research study.

Observations were conducted over a 3-day period and included observing teachers in various settings (classrooms, hallways, faculty lounges, administrative offices, and faculty meetings). Data collected during the observation phase of the study was captured through detailed note taking during the course of the observation. Observation notes focused on details of school setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle concerns, and behaviors in order to document the setting of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Consistent with Merriam's (1998) recommendations related to the creation of field notes, the review of raw notes from the observation and their conversion into an in-depth and robust narrative of the experience as soon as possible following the conclusion of observation was completed. This data was cataloged and coded by theme into the case study database to assist with organization and ease of data retrieval and analysis. Digital data is being stored in encrypted and password protected folders on an external hard drive. The hard drive is being stored in a locked file cabinet along with hardcopy data from the research study.

### **Identification of Attributes**

Focusing upon work conditions present within small, faith-based secondary schools that positively influence teacher retention, the aspects of the study include the specific factors representing work conditions. These include compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community. Similar to the terms defined in Chapter 1, definitions of these key attributes are included below. These attributes will be researched by examining their inclusion in school documentation, first-hand observation, and articulation of perceptions of teachers and administrators.

**Compensation.** Compensation is defined as the quantifiable return teachers receive for the completion of the job, consisting of salary and benefits (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

**Workload.** Workload is defined as the actual or teacher-perceived amount of work required for a certain position. This could include paperwork, teaching assignments, number of lesson preparations, number of students, and additional duties (Sieling, 2012).

**Student discipline.** Student discipline is defined as the actual number or perceived level of serious student disciplinary incidents (Salazar Sojo, 2003).

**Teacher voice in school decisions.** Teacher voice in school decisions is defined as the actual involvement or perceived inclusion in decisions related to school practices and policies (Bogler & Nir, 2012).

**Administrative support and interaction.** Administrative support and interaction is defined as the perception of involvement of administration in the daily activities of teachers, support given in the form of encouragement, mentoring, assistance, and provision of resources, and advocacy of teacher to the community at large (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

**School culture.** School culture is defined as the perceived ethos, shared beliefs and values, and sense of belonging or inclusion characterizing a specific school (Branch, 2013).

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data collected during the study resulted in large numbers of text and audio files. Both Yin (2014) and Stake (1995) advise implementing a structured organizational system to collect, categorize, and store data. Existing research projects document two primary approaches to data organization to foster analysis efforts—researcher-created and -managed data matrices and commercial software programs designed specifically for qualitative research. Saldaña (2009) recommends the researcher manually code and organize data the first time and during small-

scale research projects. For this study, I manually organized the data and coded it based on Saldaña's (2009, p. 48) general approach to coding. This organization plan lent itself to the efficient analysis of trends within the collected data.

The data analysis process began with the formatting of the collected data to foster efficient coding and recoding. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) recommend a three-column approach to formatting collected data. Using this as a model, I reformatted interview transcripts, observation notes, and document review notes into three-columned documents with all collected data in the left column. Raw data was divided into sections or stanzas as topics change. The middle column was used for preliminary coding, and the right column was utilized for final coding (Saldaña, 2009).

The coding process is not about labeling; it is about organizing, grouping, connecting, and linking data. Saldaña (2009) describes it as a cyclical process of decoding to decipher meaning, encoding to label meaning, and recoding. Keeping the study's conceptual framework and research questions at the forefront of the process (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), I followed the generic approach of coding outlined by Saldaña (2009). Coding began with the start of transcribing the collected data and was organized in a two-cycle approach. The first cycle of Saldaña's (2009) approach included performing Attribute Coding, Structural Coding, Descriptive Coding, In Vivo Coding, Initial Coding, and Values Coding. The second cycle employed Pattern Coding and Focused Coding. The process also included the creation of a codebook to document all of the codes created and used during the data analysis. MacQueen et al. (2008) suggests including the code, a brief description, a full description, guidelines for when to use the code, and examples in the codebook.

According to Yin (2014), data analysis in case study research consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, and combining the evidence in order to search for patterns. Saldaña (2009) encourages the use of analytic memos to document and reflect on the coding process and presenting patterns, connections, and categories. This data analysis process facilitated identification of emergent themes in the study. Through gathering, coding, and grouping annotations from document reviews, observation notes, and interview transcripts, a thorough analysis of all the evidence was possible and contributed to high-quality interpretations (Yin, 2014). These assertions (Stake, 1995) or explanations (Yin, 2014) formed the chain of evidence of the study and helped answer the research question.

Yin (2014), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998) recommend the collection of a breadth of data from multiple sources to enable triangulation and ensure the validity of the collected data. Yin (2014) suggests creating clear chains of evidence between types of data and conclusions. After interview audio files were transcribed, I sent the text files by email to the interviewees for member checking to catch any misrepresentation or misunderstandings in documentation to strengthen data reliability and accuracy (Merriam, 1998; Saldaña, 2009; Yin, 2014). In addition, I utilized rich descriptive language reinforced with the actual words of participants to communicate the findings (Merriam, 1998). Dependability of the data was increased by applying triangulation, member checking, and rich language in data analysis.

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

Consistent with case study design, one limitation of this study was linked to my potential error or bias as the sole collector and analyzer of the data. Yin (2014) asserts that the strength of case study research relies on the meticulous and cautious handling of data. To minimize this limitation, I employed a structured data collection process. I created formal protocols for the

three sources of data and followed these protocols to increase the consistency and objectivity of my documentation. In addition, I identified my potential bias before beginning my data collection and analysis process and regularly returned to these ideas to evaluate and safeguard the integrity of my research and results. The quality of the research study was dependent on my commitment to thoroughness.

The design of the research study also carries limitations outside of my role as the researcher. The short-term design of the study reduced the development of understanding to a defined period of time that naturally does not offer the depth and breadth of a longitudinal study. To minimize this limitation, I prioritized the effective and efficient use of time during my on-site visit to conduct as many interviews and observations as my time would allow. In addition, the selection of a single site limits the data available for the document review making it more difficult to gather adequate data from this source. While there was little I could do to counter this limitation, I did work to ensure a rich data collection experience during my single site visit.

### **Validation**

With the limitations and delimitations of the research design as a backdrop, it is vital that special care be taken to strengthen the trustworthiness and reliability of the data and conclusions. Yin (2014) offers well-defined overarching techniques to ensure validity and reliability. Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) are not as prescriptive regarding techniques; however, both offer strategies to solidify the validity and reliability of case study data and analysis. All three assert that it is the researcher's responsibility to engage in the process of building a credible study with the potential for transferability or replicability.

**Credibility.** In order to encourage the trustworthiness of data in case study research, Yin (2014) points to the importance of following a defined case study protocol and a formalized case

study database. Adherence to these helps guard against inaccuracies in data and increases the audience's trust in the quality of the collected data. Merriam (1998) suggests that the researcher remain open and transparent with preexisting personal positions related to the research issue. In addition, with clear and organized data documentation and the use of triangulation, a researcher can demonstrate the quality of data and the care taken to verify accuracy. Credibility is better ensured and enhanced by the employment of formalized and detailed data collection and documentation processes, documentation of personal positions and potential biases, and triangulation of data from multiple sources.

**Dependability.** The reliability of the data in a case study can also be reinforced through techniques offered by Yin (2014), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998). All recommend the collection of a breadth of data from multiple sources to enable triangulation and ensure the validity of the collected data. Yin (2014) suggests creating clear chains of evidence between types of data and conclusions. Utilizing member checking to catch any misrepresentation or misunderstandings in documentation can strengthen data reliability and accuracy (Yin, 2014; Merriam, 1998). In addition, Merriam (1998) encourages the use of rich descriptive language reinforced with the actual words of participants to communicate findings. Dependability is increased by applying triangulation, member checking, and rich language in data collection and analysis.

### **Expected Findings**

The focus of the study is expanding the insight related to work conditions with a positive influence on teacher retention at small, faith-based secondary schools. Based on existing research in public and larger private schools, it is anticipated that small, faith-based schools with high teacher retention will have implemented practices and policies that create positive work

conditions for teachers. While compensation plays a prominent role in teacher retention decisions, the expectation is that the other areas of work conditions actually play a more significant role in teacher retention within these schools. The hope is to find strategies that administrators at the school site have employed to foster a culture of teacher retention and inform other administrators' efforts to increase teacher retention within small, faith-based secondary schools.

### **Ethical Issues**

As with any research study, this case study has ethical implications that must be identified, discussed, and considered in the design, implementation, and reporting of the research study. Prior to conducting research, appropriate approval from the Institutional Review Board had to be secured. This was an essential step before taking any action related to the research phase of the study. In addition, Creswell (2013) outlined the importance of securing official permission from potential sites and participants and guarding against selecting a site or participants that could gain from the outcome of the study. Permission was obtained directly from the research site prior to the start of the research study.

Moving into conducting research and collecting data, I remained above reproach by disclosing the purpose of the research to all involved and by guarding against intentional and unintentional pressuring of participants to consent to participation (Creswell, 2013). Lichtman (2013) outlined ethical considerations within qualitative research including protection of participants from harm, confidentiality, and privacy, and informed consent. Researchers should also reduce disruption of the site and its participants (Lichtman, 2013). Finally, it is vital for the researcher to conduct himself with integrity by avoiding deception, protecting confidentiality of participants, remaining impartial, and reporting accurate and complete data (Creswell, 2013). I

prioritized a thorough informed consent process, earnestly protected the confidentiality of participant information and data by securing information with password protection, and fostered objectivity by following predetermined processes and procedures.

**Conflict of interest assessment.** As the researcher, I must honestly examine potential sources of conflict of interest that could negatively affect the integrity of the research study. Research should not offer a financial or professional gain to the researcher or the research site. As a former employee at the research site, I actively ensured that my existing relationships did not compromise but instead helped build a foundation of trust and rapport that elevates my research. This was achieved by establishing intentional formality and professionalism in communication and face-to-face interaction. Following the established protocols for interviews and observations allowed for consistent and structured data collection.

**Researcher's position.** Within the case study research approach, the researcher is present within the setting being researched and could potentially influence the outcome of data collection. To protect against this threat, I assumed the nonparticipant/observer role in order to engage in the site while preserving and prioritizing the full role of observer. In addition to limiting my participation, I had to actively remain impartial during interviews to allow interviewees to feel safe to freely express their honest perceptions. It is my responsibility to create a trusting environment and comfortable rapport with participants free from my beliefs, opinions, and biases. In order to remove myself as much as possible from my previous opinions and experiences with the case and issue, I employed bracketing. Bracketing is a reflective process that allows for honest recognition and setting aside of previous knowledge and assumptions (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

**Ethical issues in the study.** The potential ethical issues in this study center on safeguarding the confidentiality of the participants. The seriousness of my commitment to protection of their privacy began with a well-articulated consent form that outlines the potential risks, the process and purpose, the costs and rewards, rights as a volunteer, and protections offered to participants. In addition, once data was collected, I followed a structured process in order to ensure confidentiality of identity and responses. Outside of the identifying information contained in the interview transcripts, all participants are being referred to by numeric identifiers in the research study. Due to the small participant population, distinguishing characteristics have been omitted from the research report in order to reduce the potential for deductive disclosure. Finally, all information is being securely stored in both hardcopy in a locked file cabinet and digital forms on a password protected hard drive. These records will be destroyed 3 years after the conclusion of my research.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

The purpose of this case study is to thoroughly investigate work conditions—underpinned by practice and policy—that support low teacher attrition rates within small, faith-based secondary schools. This purpose was best supported by adopting a qualitative, instrumental case study research approach. Document review, observation, and interviews of teachers were used to collect a breadth of information and enabled the use of triangulation of data. Data was collected, consolidated, organized, and analyzed, and techniques were used to support the dependability and credibility of the data. Finally, steps were taken to reduce the researcher influence and bias and protect the identity and information of the participants.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this single, instrumental case study was to examine practices and policies that support teacher retention within small, faith-based secondary schools. With teacher attrition reaching its highest level within small, faith-based schools, it is essential to fully investigate schools within this category that have achieved and sustained high teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001). This chapter will build on this purpose to describe the sample in greater detail and offer an overview of methodology and data collection in the context of the research questions. A discussion of the steps taken to analyze the data using the manual coding and re-iterative process offered by Saldaña (2009) will be included. Finally, a presentation of the results of this analysis and a summary of the findings are offered.

### **Description of the Sample**

The research study was conducted at a small, faith-based, private school in rural Texas. The focus of the study was on the high school campus, which included fewer than 300 students in Grades 9–12. Since the goal of the interviews was to gather perceptions of teachers at the selected site, purposeful sampling was utilized in order to ensure that participants met the needed criteria to participate in the interview portion of the case study. Purposeful sampling incorporates the identification and selection of individuals who are experienced with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), allowing for an effective use of limited time and resources (Patton, 2002). These criteria are that potential participants must have classroom instruction as their primary job responsibilities and have been employed at the school for at least 1 full year.

Identifying interview participants began with obtaining the email addresses of 24 potential participants and sending an electronic invitation for participation in the interview portion of the research study (see Appendix D). The targeted sample size was set at 10–12 participants and was determined based on data needs and time requirements for individual interviews during the site visit. Eleven potential participants responded to the invitation, and 10 participants agreed to schedule face-to-face interviews.

Table 1 offers the breakdown of the number of years employed at the school site, the self-identified ethnicity/race and gender of the entire group of qualified teachers, the expected enrollment, and the actual participants of the interview portion of the study. As seen in the table, most of the participants (5 teachers) have been at the school site for 6–10 years, with four teachers being employed at the school 11–20 years and one being employed 1–5 years. The ethnicity/racial makeup of the faculty is homogenous with all qualified teachers self-identifying as White; likewise, the actual participants were all from this ethnic/racial group. The gender split of the qualified teachers was almost even at 13 males and 11 females. The actual participants were predominately female (seven teachers) with only three males participating.

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

The focus of the study is on the work conditions within small, private, faith-based secondary schools that promote strong teacher retention. Since work conditions, such as compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community, are connected to the practices and policies within a school, understanding these factors could help inform a positive change in teacher retention within this segment of schools. The study is being guided by the

research question: What work conditions at small faith-based secondary schools support strong teacher retention?

Table 1

*Interview Enrollment Table*

Years at School	Population ( <i>n</i> )	Recruited	Expected Enrollment	Actual Enrollment
1–5 years	10	10	5	1
6–10 years	7	7	4	5
11–15 years	3	3	1	2
16–20 years	3	3	1	2
21+ years	1	1	1	0
Total	24	24	12	10

Self-Identified Ethnicity/Race	Population ( <i>n</i> )	Recruited	Expected Enrollment	Actual Enrollment
Black	0	0	0	0
White	24	24	12	10
Latino or Hispanic	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	24	24	12	10

Gender	Population ( <i>n</i> )	Recruited	Expected Enrollment	Actual Enrollment
Male	13	13	6	3
Female	11	11	6	7
Total	24	24	12	10

**Qualitative research.** Qualitative research was the best choice for this study due to its consideration of individual experiences and context (McMillan, 2012). In qualitative research, the goal is to conduct an in-depth examination of a phenomenon within its real-world context

from multiple perspectives (Yin, 2014). This was achieved through collection of data from three distinct sources: teacher interviews, on-site observations, and off-site external document reviews.

First, the qualitative methodology was implemented during the data collection through on-site teacher interviews. Since qualitative research targets participants' feelings, experiences, and perceptions, the interview protocol was designed to elicit rich responses related to the targeted work conditions. The resulting transcripts contained details of the participants' perception of the impact of work conditions on their decisions to return year-to-year. Second, the on-site interviews were conducted in support of the qualitative research approach. Detailed notes of observations were collected and organized to encourage objective documentation of observed environments and interactions. Finally, the structured document review reinforced the goal of qualitative research through a systematic examination of provided internal and external publications. Using the formalized protocol encouraged thorough documentation of content with relation to the work conditions at the heart of this study.

**Instrumental case study design.** Since the target of the study is to inform policies and practices related to teacher retention, an instrumental case study design was selected as the methodological approach. Bromley (1990) describes case study as a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest” (p. 302). Case studies allow in-depth examinations of issues, which is aided by researchers entering the world of the individuals being studied to gain an intimate understanding (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) continues by attributing case study to answering “how” and “why” questions. Instrumental case studies move beyond the specific case to explore and refine the issue being researched (Stake, 1995). In instrumental case studies, the case is secondary to the issue.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the work conditions have been narrowed to include the areas of compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community. These boundaries were drawn to provide the investigation with a realistic and appropriate scope and to include the primary areas related to school-controlled factors. These limitations may also contribute to increased applicability of study findings, as the research addresses only the factors controllable by individual schools.

One of the foundational aspects of case study research is collection of data from multiple sources and triangulating data to gain a thorough picture of the case and issue (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The research study included the use of interviews, observations, and document reviews in order to gain detailed insight into the influence of work conditions on teacher retention within small, faith-based secondary schools. The investigation of this issue was grounded in gathering the feelings, beliefs, opinions, perspectives, and experiences of individuals. This is consistent with the very heart of case study research.

**Data analysis procedures.** Data collected during the study resulted in large numbers of text and audio files. Saldaña (2009) recommends the researcher manually code and organize data the first time and during small-scale research projects. For the study, I manually organized the data and coded it based on Saldaña's (2009, p. 48) general approach to coding. This organization plan lent itself to the efficient analysis of trends within the collected data.

The data analysis process began with the formatting of the collected data to foster efficient coding and recoding. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) recommend a three-column approach to formatting collected data. Using this as a model, I reformatted interview transcripts, observation notes, and document review notes into double-spaced documents with all collected

data in the left column. The middle column was used for preliminary coding, and the right column was reserved for final coding. The raw data was divided into sections or stanzas as topics changed (Saldaña, 2009).

The coding process was a cyclical process of decoding to decipher meaning, encoding to label meaning, and recoding (Saldaña, 2009). Keeping the study's conceptual framework and research questions at the forefront of the process (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), I followed the generic approach of coding outlined by Saldaña (2009). Coding began by transcribing the collected data and organizing in a two-cycle approach. The first cycle of Saldaña's (2009) approach includes performing attribute coding, structural coding, descriptive coding, in vivo coding, initial coding, and values coding. The second cycle employs pattern coding and focused coding.

According to Yin (2014), data analysis in case study research consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, and combining the evidence in order to search for patterns. Saldaña (2009) encourages the use of analytic memos to document and reflect on the coding process and presenting patterns, connections, and categories. This data analysis process facilitated identification of emergent themes in the study. Through gathering, coding, and grouping annotations from document reviews, observation notes, and interview transcripts, a thorough analysis of all the evidence contributed to high-quality interpretations (Yin, 2014) that formed the chain of evidence of the study. Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 outline the resulting themes, subthemes, and codes from the data analysis and interpretation process.

**Type and quality of data collected.** During the research field experience, data was obtained through observation and interviews of teachers within the school site. I collected data during the observation phase of the study through detailed note taking. Observation notes were

taken by hand and cataloged chronologically in the case study database (Yin, 2014). Priorities regarding certain observations were determined before the field experience; however, I added additional observation locations in response to emerging themes from early observations and interviews. These additions included a school chapel assembly, athletic pep rally, community event, and athletic competition. Overall, I completed 16 observations over the three-day research period. I have reviewed the raw field notes and translated them into more detailed narratives and have cataloged and coded the observation notes by theme. An observation schedule is included in the appendix of this document (see Appendix D).

The interview process began with obtaining the email addresses of 24 potential participants in order to send an electronic invitation for participation in the interview portion of the research study (see Appendix E). Eleven potential participants responded to the invitation, and ten participants agreed to schedule face-to-face interviews. All interviews were scheduled via email and conducted over the 3-day research period; an interview schedule is included in the appendix of this document (see Appendix F). Before each interview, I confirmed that all scheduled participants met the criteria to participate using information (position at the school and start date) garnered from school administration, reviewed the purpose and design of the study with each participant, and obtained informed consent. I intentionally followed the interview protocol to guide questioning while adding clarifying questions to gain further detail. Data collected from interviews of faculty at the school site was recorded using a digital audio recorder and then transcribed by a Rev.com, a professional transcription service that is in a binding agreement to hold all information confidential. Each interview resulted in a formal transcript of all verbalized questions and answers. These transcripts were provided directly to participants to allow for member checking to ensure accuracy and validity (Maxwell, 2005). An example of this

communication is included in the appendix of this document (see Appendix G). Once the transcripts were verified as accurate, the audio files were permanently deleted.

The document review portion of the research field experience began with the receipt of the requested documents from the school administration and was conducted off-site. The process was structured to allow for an efficient and thorough examination of the artifacts. Detailed notes and annotations of 234 documents were produced. This data was then organized and documented as part of a case study database that allowed for a formal assembly of data and ease of retrieval (Yin, 2014). Categorization and coding of the data helped group data into themes and patterns.

### **Summary of Findings**

As the data was reviewed, coded, and recoded, the saturation of data became apparent with four primary emerging themes: a relational school culture, supportive relationship with administration, prominent teacher voice, and minor and infrequent student discipline. Further analysis revealed subcategorization of data and codes within each emerging theme. The presenting school culture can be organized into the following themes: a personal and relational culture, a familial culture, a supportive and collaborative culture, and a Christ-centered culture. Likewise, administrative support can be organized into the following themes: support through being present and available; support through active care, love, and encouragement; and support through valuing teachers as professionals with autonomy and trust. Additionally, teacher voice in school decisions can be broken into teacher voice through formal avenues and teacher voice through informal avenues. Also, student discipline can be expressed through the themes: minor and infrequent student discipline and high and clear student behavior expectations. Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 outline the resulting themes, subthemes, and codes from these four areas of work conditions.

**School culture.** Findings from interviews, observations, and document reviews all point to an impactful school culture. The teacher interviews offered a clear articulation of a personal and relational environment, with some referring to the school community as a family. This was best seen in the frequency of people and personal connections being offered as examples of how the school culture functions. The Christian focus of the school's mission was highlighted by a majority of the teachers as a prominent aspect of the culture.

The relational culture was also recorded in the observation phase of the research study. Building relationships with students and colleagues was a focus of faculty development and the fruits of this development were present in the classroom interaction between teachers and their students. The strong personal connections were also evident outside of the classrooms and were noted within the context of collegial interactions in offices and workrooms and in teacher engagement with peers and students in the hallways and at events.

The document review offered consistent evidence of a family-like environment. Official school documents point to prioritizing a spirit of community and the fostering of relationships between colleagues and among stakeholder groups. Documentation of faculty worship, prayer, collaboration, and social gatherings outline some examples of the practical implementation of a personal and familial culture. Survey results also assert that the faculty recognizes this as one of the distinctive aspects of the school.

Table 2

*School Culture: Themes, Subthemes, and Codes*

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
School culture impacts teacher retention.	School culture is personal and relational.	The people Community Relational Deep, lasting relationships Social events Comfortable Warm Personal Tight-knit, close-knit Visiting Interacting Greeting Talking, Conversation
	School culture is like a family.	It is a family Family feel Warm Students as their “children” Students as part of the family Inclusion of staff families Recognize staff family
	School culture is supportive and collaborative.	Work together Play off each other Sharing Helping Good working relationships Pulling the same direction Same team Supportive Connecting Collaboration
School culture is Christ-centered.	School culture is Christ-centered.	Christian Spiritual Uplifting Christ-centered Devotion Prayer Common/shared beliefs Shared purpose Faith Mission Calling Worship Scripture Christian Truth Biblical principles

**Administrative support.** Administrative support is the second theme with saturated prevalence in all areas of data collection. Teacher interviews highlight a palpable care, love, and encouragement exhibited by the administrative team toward the faculty. Many of the teachers offered that the administration is consistently available to offer help or resources when needed. One of the most voiced areas of administrative support was the treatment of teachers as professionals manifesting in autonomy and trust given. This spirit of support and flexibility with teachers can be found on the personal side in addition to the professional side of faculty/administrator relationships.

Administrative support of teachers was also noted during on-site observations in meetings, classrooms, and school events. Public recognition of teachers is one way that this support was observed. One administrator was observed conducting a classroom observation and offering feedback to the member of the faculty. In addition, members of the administration were present and actively supporting the teachers and students participating in the school's pep rally, tailgate, and sporting game.

The review of internal and external documents revealed supportive language woven throughout establishing teachers as experts, authorities, and accomplished educators. Recognition is offered to specific faculty members within communication targeted to the faculty at large and the parental community. In addition, school documentation includes evidence of systematic support via mentoring and coaching by administrators, department chairs, and peers.

Table 3

*Administrative Support: Themes, Subthemes, and Codes*

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Administrative support impacts teacher retention.	Administrative support through being present and available.	Approachable Open door Receptive Willing to listen Visible Available Will make time Present Engaged Assist Attend Participating Meet one-on-one Observations Support Walk-through
	Administrative support through active care, love, and encouragement.	Loving Caring Positive Encouraging Understanding Appreciated Comfortable Recognition Refreshments Praise Thanks
	Administrative support through autonomy and trust.	Not micromanaging Allowed to do job Professional courtesy Respect Flexible Freedom Not breathing down neck Not looking over shoulder Don't interfere Trust Don't feel bound Authorities Experts Professionals Qualified Important

**Teacher voice.** Teachers having a significant voice is seen as a thread through interviews and school publications. Almost all of the teachers interviewed asserted that they are encouraged to and have avenues to provide feedback and suggestions to the administration. Many highlighted a formalized system that allows the faculty to relay information directly to the administration through faculty representatives; however, most communicated that administration welcomes teachers to connect directly with them through open door practices.

Table 4

*Teacher Voice: Themes, Subthemes, and Codes*

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Teacher voice impacts teacher retention.	Teacher voice through formal avenues.	Faculty Council Departments Surveys Teachers leading Administrator evaluations Committees Interviews Faculty feedback Consulted
	Teacher voice through informal avenues.	Opinion Voice Ideas Listened to Administrator/faculty interaction

School documents echo the formal and informal teacher advocacy present at the school site. Teachers are given the opportunity for involvement in decisions and planning through committee participation, the accreditation process, strategic planning, and representative groups. Teacher feedback is also elicited in meetings and through surveys regarding specific programs or needs of the faculty. In addition, faculty members assume roles in leading meetings and training

for their colleagues. Finally, teachers are asked to provide specific feedback regarding administrators during annual surveys.

**Student discipline.** The quality of student behavior and the minor and infrequent nature of student discipline presented as a theme during the study. During the interview portion, teachers communicated the positive student behavior and absence of serious disciplinary issues contributed to a pleasant working environment. While all teachers indicated that their students did occasionally misbehave, the nature of the behavior was communicated as being mild and manageable. In addition, several faculty expressed that students who do demonstrate more serious misbehavior did not remain within the school community long term.

The quality of the student behavior and interaction with adults and peers was extremely evident during the observation phase of the study. Classroom observations revealed students who are self-managed and engaged in the lesson. When redirection was necessary, students were quick to respond and correct behavior. This theme carried over into the hallways and lunchtime with students exhibiting positive behavior and interacting in a calm and orderly manner without formal adult oversight.

School documentation revealed high behavioral expectations for students and a clear articulation of these expectations. The school's formal honor code was woven through several documents giving a consistent message regarding student conduct. One document even referenced attendance as a privilege not a right in the context of student behavior. Finally, there was a strong establishment of teachers as authority with the power to directly address student behavior.

Table 5

*Student Discipline: Themes, Subthemes, and Codes*

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Student discipline impacts teacher retention.	Student behavior is infrequent and minor.	Great kids Not many problems/issues Didn't stay very long Minor Not the same problems Well-behaved Not an issue Self-managed Little redirection needed Responsive students Engaged students No oversight needed
	Student behavior expectations are clear and high.	Attendance is a privilege Teachers are authority, have power Classroom management Honor Code Bullying policy Conduct expectations

**Presentation of the Data and Results**

As the data was reviewed, coded, and recoded, the saturation of data became apparent with six primary emerging themes: a relational school culture, supportive relationship with administration, prominent teacher voice, minor and infrequent student discipline, challenging but reasonable workload, and the insignificance of compensation. Further analysis revealed subcategorization of data and codes within the first four emerging themes. The presenting school culture can be organized into the following themes: a personal and relational culture, a familial culture, a supportive and collaborative culture, and a Christ-centered culture. Likewise, administrative support can be organized into the following themes: support through being present and available; support through active care, love, and encouragement; and support through valuing teachers as professionals with autonomy and trust. Additionally, teacher voice in school

decisions can be broken into teacher voice through formal avenues and teacher voice through informal avenues. Also, student discipline can be expressed through the themes: minor and infrequent student discipline and high and clear student behavior expectations.

**School culture.** Findings from interviews, observations, and document reviews all point to an impactful school culture. The teacher interviews offered a clear articulation of a personal and relational environment, with some referring to the school community as a family. This was best seen in the frequency of people and personal connections being offered as examples of how the school culture functions. The Christian focus of the school's mission was highlighted by a majority of the teachers as a prominent aspect of the culture.

The relational culture was also recorded in the observation phase of the research study. Building relationships with students and colleagues was a focus of faculty development and the fruits of this development were present in the classroom interaction between teachers and their students. The strong personal connections were also evident outside of the classrooms and were noted within the context of collegial interactions in offices and workrooms and in teacher engagement with peers and students in the hallways and at events.

The document review offered consistent evidence of a family-like environment. Official school documents point to prioritizing a spirit of community and the fostering of relationships between colleagues and among stakeholder groups. Documentation of faculty worship, prayer, collaboration, and social gatherings outline some examples of the practical implementation of a personal and familial culture. Survey results also assert that the faculty recognizes this as one of the distinctive aspects of the school. Conceptual matrixes for the subthemes are presented in Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9 to demonstrate the chain of evidence.

*A personal and relational school culture.* The personal and relational nature of the school culture was evident within teacher interviews, on-site observations, and school documents. The interviewed faculty members articulated clearly the relational nature of the school's culture. One teacher described the school as a community comprised of kind individuals and went on to say that this community is relational as well as instructional. Continuing this theme another faculty member spoke of the deep relationships that were possible at the school and the freedom that teachers have to form and invest in relationships. Two other teachers point to daily interaction with colleagues and students to describe the school culture; one offering that the people at the school are reason enough to want to come to work.

The personal and relational aspects of the school culture were consistently observed during the site visit. Positive interactions and conversations between faculty were notably present in the observed faculty meeting, the teacher workroom, the hallways, the lunchroom, and the school office. These interactions included supportive and encouraging exchanges, collaborative discussions, and personal and friendly chats incorporating humor. In classrooms, engagement between teachers and students were comfortable and natural including instructional communication and personal, casual communication filled with humor and personality. Finally, relational connections were clearly on display at school events. Teachers were engaged with each other and students at the athletic pep rally, cheering for and encouraging one another. There was a designated tent for teachers and staff at the school tailgate that fostered personal interactions between faculty members, along with eating and laughing together.

Table 6

*Conceptual Matrix for School Culture—Personal and Relational Culture*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers' perceptions of the school culture?	How is the school culture observable?	What do school documents communicate about the school culture?
<p>“And it is the truth about [this school], is the people that I'm surrounded with everyday make this place worthy of coming to every day.”</p> <p>“People are just kind and nice, and it's a community. . . . It's much more relational than strictly instructional.”</p> <p>“I love the time that I have, which is not as much as I would like, but visiting and talking with the teachers.”</p> <p>“it's deep relationships with some people. It's really, really good. I think I have the freedom here to do, to make those relationships that I might not have maybe some other places, I think.”</p>	<p>Faculty Meeting—Observed faculty engaging in positive and casual conversation before meeting and upcoming faculty social events were presented during the meeting.</p> <p>Teacher Workroom—Observed faculty members visiting with each other as they worked.</p> <p>Classrooms—Observed faculty and students interacting in positive and relational manner</p> <p>School Office—Observed staff promptly greeting students, teachers, and parents warmly and caring for them; Everyone knew each other and called each other by name</p> <p>Community Events—Observed social interaction between teachers, administrators, parents, and students; faculty tent that offered teachers and staff a space to eat, visit, laugh together</p>	<p>All Faculty In-service Schedule—Faculty Social Event (Escape Room), New Faculty Dessert</p> <p>Faculty Mentoring Program—“build a lasting relationship”</p> <p>Faculty Memos—Faculty social events, Faculty Appreciation Breakfasts</p> <p>Accreditation Executive Summary—“The [school's] culture is very personal, relational, and caring.”</p> <p>Accreditation Self-Assessment—“Another aspect of [the school's] relational environment is connecting all students to an adult advocate and mentor. The close-knit and supportive nature of the school is one of the premier differences students appreciate.”</p>

The review of school documentation revealed a consistent theme of a personal and relational culture woven through many of the internal and external documents. In the professional characteristics document the school includes contributing to a sense of community and taking a personal interest in students as desired traits of its faculty. In other documents related to faculty in-service and general faculty communication, there is significant examples of

events designed to foster teacher connection and community. These events include organized faculty social events, a new faculty dessert reception, a faculty mentoring program, and faculty appreciate breakfasts sponsored by parents. Finally, several accreditation documents highlight the close-knit relationships and strong sense of community.

*A familial school culture.* The familial quality of the school culture was present in the teacher interviews, on-site observations, and minimally in the document review. Half of the interviewed teachers specifically used the term “family” to describe the school culture. One teacher acknowledged that it might sound like a cliché but that it is actually true. Another faculty member indicated that the familial culture was one of the most influential reasons for staying at the school. Further explaining the use of family, one teacher offered that there is always a colleague ready to step in to help when needed.

Table 7

*Conceptual Matrix for School Culture—Familial Culture*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers’ perceptions of the school culture?	How is the school culture observable?	What do school documents communicate about the school culture?
<p>“I think the one word I would use to describe our culture, which is probably one of the largest, one of my biggest reasons for staying is that I mean this place is a family.”</p> <p>“What I love is you have this family.”</p> <p>“It really, it’s a cliché here, but it is a family. I mean, it really is.”</p> <p>“It’s so silly to say, ‘Oh, it’s a family.’ But it kind of is that way.”</p>	<p>Pep Rally—Observed one speaker refer to the school as a family.</p> <p>Community Events—Observed a celebration of nations represented at the school—teachers were discussing the students as “their children” or members of their family; during a chapel event the school recognized war veterans from families within the community (including faculty families)</p>	<p>Accreditation Executive Summary—“The school community is most often referred to by students, parents, and staff as a family.”</p>

The on-site observations and document review also pointed to the close-knit family nature of the school culture. Evidence of this aspect was observed during a school event as teachers were discussing the students as “their children” or members of their family. In addition, war veterans from the faculty families were recognized at a weekly chapel program demonstrating an intentional celebration of extended family members. Moreover, one of the speakers at an athletic pep rally referred to the school as a family as he was describing the support shown for the football team. Lastly, the document review of the school’s accreditation executive summary reinforces this theme by noting that the school community was most often referred to by students, parents, and staff as a family.

*A supportive and collaborative school culture.* The supportive and collaborative school culture is woven through the teacher interviews, the on-site observations, and the school document review. One of the interviewed teachers described the faculty as having good working relationships. This quality was further explained to include working together to achieve a unified outcome, sharing supplies, and helping with one another’s curricular or pedagogical questions. Another faculty member offered an image of the school’s teachers as a team noting that they are all pulling in the same direction.

The collegial nature of the faculty was observed throughout the on-site observations. During the faculty meeting groups of teachers worked together on a professional development exercise and presented findings before the entire faculty. Teachers were observed collaborating regarding the design and success of current lesson plans and brainstorming ideas for future lessons for each other in the teacher workroom. Not confined to the teacher workroom, two teachers engaged with one another in the hallways between classes conferring about a book they were both reading and invited a student to share thoughts regarding the book. Lastly, supportive

interaction between teachers and students were present in the classrooms and hallways where students freely approached teachers and teachers readily offered extra assistance and encouragement.

Table 8

*Conceptual Matrix for School Culture—Supportive and Collaborative Culture*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers' perceptions of the school culture?	How is the school culture observable?	What do school documents communicate about the school culture?
<p>“And there’s a definite let’s work together to achieve the outcome we’re wanting within the department or to some degree outside the department. But yeah, we play off of each other well to get what we need. That could be anything from sharing the lab space or helping each other address an issue with curriculum, to sharing supplies. Do you have any of this? So there is that definite good working relationship.”</p> <p>“I mean, we all are pulling in the same direction. And we’re all on the same team.”</p>	<p>Faculty Meeting—Observed teams of teachers working together on a professional development exercise.</p> <p>Teacher Workroom—Observed faculty members discussing current and future lessons and sharing feedback and insight.</p> <p>Classrooms—Observed lessons based on discussion and interaction; teachers providing support to students during class time.</p> <p>Hallways—Observed two teachers were standing outside of their classrooms discussing a book they were both reading—when a student walked up, they included the student; teachers were connecting with students and offering to stay after school to give them extra assistance.</p>	<p>All Faculty In-service Schedule—Team collaboration</p> <p>Instructional Technology Plan—Collaboration is a focus and goal</p> <p>Characteristics of Professional Excellence—“Actively supports colleagues”</p> <p>Professional Development—“It is the desire of the administration of [the school] to create a community of lifelong learners . . . we encourage all faculty members to continue their education both formally and informally.”</p> <p>Accreditation Self-Assessment—“[The culture] fosters a commitment to improvement, collaboration, innovation, and growth.” “The close-knit and supportive nature of the school.”</p>

School documents reinforce the presence of a supportive and collaborative school culture.

Internal faculty documents highlight dedicated time for team collaboration, collaboration as a

goal of the instructional technology program, and support of the greater community. The professional characteristics document offers active support of colleagues as a desired trait of the school's faculty members. Lastly, the school's accreditation self-assessment document included a description of the supportive nature of the culture.

*A Christ-centered school culture.* The Christian school culture is evident in the teacher interviews, on-site observations, and review of school documents. The faculty interviews offered a unanimous focus on a Christ-centered culture. Evidence of this culture was offered by some teachers in the form of collegial interaction. They describe having the freedom to love, care, and pray for one another and sharing the burdens of their co-workers. Similarly, one teacher revealed that the Christian culture allowed for spiritual support of the students—praying for students, offering devotionals at the beginning of class, and sharing with students about Christ and the Christian faith. Lastly, the interviews spoke of a common belief among the faculty and the uniting power of the mission statement.

The Christ-centered school culture was observed in meetings, classrooms, and school events. First, the faculty meeting was opened and closed with a prayer of thanksgiving. A member of the faculty presented a devotional highlighting Jesus as a model of an effective teacher using Bible passages as the foundation and support and then facilitated corporate prayer for voiced requests. The Christian culture is also consistently evident in the classroom interactions between teachers and students. Prayer and scripture reading was observed in several classrooms, while one teacher specifically connected the lesson to Biblical principles with scripture offered as evidence. Lastly, the faith-focused culture was demonstrated through the incorporation of prayer and worship during several school and community events.

Table 9

*Conceptual Matrix for School Culture—Christ-Centered Culture*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers' perceptions of the school culture?	How is the school culture observable?	What do school documents communicate about the school culture?
<p>"I think the first thing that struck me was just, of course, the Christian atmosphere."</p> <p>"Well, I mean, so one thing that I really like about Brook Hill is that we are always talking about being Christ-centered."</p> <p>"I mainly really love the idea of a Christian school where I could share my faith, where I could pray with the kids."</p> <p>"you can stop and share the burden of a coworker. And I have been in the faculty lounge and have stopped and talked with someone, and they said, you know, 'Let me stop and pray for you.' And that's just . . . it's encouraging and it's uplifting and you know that it's a great place to be."</p> <p>"working in a Christian environment."</p>	<p>Faculty Meeting—Observed a faculty member giving a devotion and then praying for voiced requests.</p> <p>Classrooms—Observed teachers praying for students, reading daily scripture, connecting lesson to Biblical principles</p> <p>Community Events—Observed prayer and worship during events.</p>	<p>All Faculty In-service Schedule—Faculty worship</p> <p>Faculty Memos—Weekly scripture and requests for prayer</p> <p>Characteristics of Professional Excellence—"Personally exemplifies an authentic faith in Christ . . . integrate Christian truth and biblical principles"</p> <p>Accreditation Self-Assessment—"The [school's] culture is fueled by a shared purpose to impact the lives of students for God's Kingdom with high standards and expectations for all students. This purpose is a calling."</p> <p>School Improvement Plan—"Foster an atmosphere of Christ-centered community"</p> <p>Faculty/Staff Survey Report—"The fact that the school was Christ-centered or Christian was another strength that was independently mentioned by 16 respondents."</p>

The review of school documents offered examples reinforcing the Christian quality of the school culture. Faculty communication highlighted devotions and prayer during meetings and faculty gatherings, weekly scriptures, and prayer requests from the community. The Parent/Student Handbook clearly communicates the school's commitment to assemble a

Christian faculty that is spiritually alive. Adding to this, the professional characteristics document identifies authentic faith in Christ and the integration of Christian truth and biblical principles as expectations of the school's faculty members. Additionally, the accreditation self-assessment and exit presentation both spoke of a culture grounded in shared beliefs and purpose of impacting students for God's Kingdom. Lastly, teacher survey results pointed to the school's culture, specifically the Christ-centered or Christian focus, as the most common characteristic mentioned as a great strength by members of the school faculty.

**Administrative support.** Administrative support is the second theme with saturated prevalence in all areas of data collection. Teacher interviews highlight a palpable care, love, and encouragement exhibited by the administrative team toward the faculty. Many of the teachers offered that the administration is consistently available to offer help or resources when needed. One of the most voiced area of administrative support was the treatment of teachers as professionals manifesting in autonomy and trust given. This spirit of support and flexibility with teachers can be found on the personal side in addition to the professional side of faculty/administrator relationships.

Administrative support of teachers was also noted during on-site observations in meetings, classrooms, and school events. Public recognition of teachers is one way that this support was observed. One administrator was observed conducting a classroom observation and offering feedback to the member of the faculty. In addition, members of the administration were present and actively supporting the teachers and students participating in the school's pep rally, tailgate, and sporting game.

The review of internal and external documents revealed supportive language woven throughout establishing teachers as experts, authorities, and accomplished educators.

Recognition is offered to specific faculty members within communication targeted to the faculty at large and the parental community. In addition, school documentation includes evidence of systematic support via mentoring and coaching by administrators, department chairs, and peers. Conceptual matrixes for the subthemes are presented in Tables 10, 11, and 12 to demonstrate the chain of evidence.

*Support through being present and available.* Teacher support by the administration through being present and available was evident in teacher interviews, on-site observations, and review of school documents. The interviewed teachers were clear in their articulation of the administration's presence and availability. One teacher noted that their administration has an open door policy that encourages staff to bring any issues to their attention. Other faculty members described the administration as receptive and approachable and noted that they are not only open to teachers but they are also present around the school and at school events.

The visibility and availability of the administration team was also prevalent in the on-site observations. One teacher was greeted and assisted by an administrator immediately upon entering the school office, and administrators and teachers were engaged in conversation while using the copier and enjoying cups of coffee in the teacher workroom. During a classroom observation, one administrator had attended a class and was offering written and verbal feedback to the teacher after class. School administration was visible and participated in the various school events observed including a chapel program, an athletic pep rally, the community tailgate, and a football game. During all of these events, the administrators arrived early and remained after to interact with faculty, students, and parents.

Table 10

*Conceptual Matrix for Administrative Support—Support Through Presence and Availability*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers' perceptions of support from the administration?	How is administrative support of teachers observable?	What do school documents communicate about administrative support of teachers?
<p>"If I ever needed to see them, it'd be very easy to do that."</p> <p>"I feel that I can approach him with anything. Anything that I feel like is an issue, I feel like he has an open door for me too and is receptive to anything that I would bring up, whether it's good, bad, whatever, I feel like he's always willing to listen."</p> <p>"I feel that I could go and talk about anything with her. Very approachable, very willing to listen, and more visible I feel like on campus."</p> <p>"They are always supportive, available. I feel like I could go in and talk with . . . any of the administrators."</p> <p>"Definitely. I think that's probably the key factor. Knowing that I have people who support, encourage, are available, will make the time."</p>	<p>Teacher Workroom—Observed administrators and teachers engaging in personal, casual conversation</p> <p>School Office—Observed faculty being greeted and assisted by administrator upon arrival</p> <p>Pep Rally—Observed administrators attending and offering praise, encouragement, and thanks to faculty in front of peers and students; administrators remained after the event to visit with teachers, parents, and students</p> <p>Classroom—Observed administrator attending a class and offering written and verbal feedback to teacher</p> <p>Community Events—Observed administrator/teacher positive and engaged interaction (socializing, laughing) at tailgate and football game</p>	<p>Faculty Mentoring Program— "Administration meets with faculty regularly to address issues or concerns."</p> <p>New Teacher Orientation Plan— "Administration meet with new faculty once a month for the first semester to address issues or concerns."</p> <p>Professional Development Plan— Monthly support meetings for faculty with administration</p> <p>Faculty Memos—Administration offers to meet with teachers one-on-one during Wednesday mornings; Administration offers regular professional development opportunities</p> <p>AdvancED Standard Indicator 3.4—Administration conducts regular observations, walk-throughs, and support meetings</p>

The administration's priority regarding regular and open interaction with teachers is woven throughout internal school documents. The new teacher orientation plan speaks to official observations and walk-throughs by administration coupled with monthly meetings with administration and one-on-one meetings with administration and department chairs at the end of the school year. The faculty mentoring program, professional development plan, and weekly

memos all detail routine meetings with administration for support and assistance with emerging issues. Lastly, the school's strategic plan and accreditation self-assessment articulate the school's priority of continuous improvement in direct administrator support of teachers.

*Support through active care, love, and encouragement.* Administrative support of teachers through active care, love, and encouragement was found across all phases of data collection. Almost unanimously the interviewed teachers characterized their support with loving and caring terminology. Several teachers indicated that their administrator's care of them went beyond the provision of basic support or meeting of need. They described it with the richness of loving attention and concern for the faculty's wellbeing. Encouragement was also specifically mentioned in the context of administrative support. One teacher described the feedback he received from his administrator as encouraging him to be the best teacher possible. Three other faculty members offered that direct interaction with administration is always positive and encouraging and that the encouragement comes in the form of verbal and written support. Lastly, several teachers pointed to administrative support through appreciation and described the power of feeling appreciated. Concisely put, one teacher acknowledged feeling loved and appreciated.

The care, love, and encouragement offered to teachers by the administration was consistently observed during the site visit. This care manifested in the provision of refreshments to encourage teachers throughout the school day. Coffee and bagels were provided at the faculty meeting, while coffee bars were located in the school office and teacher workroom. Another mode of loving care for teachers was observed at the faculty meeting when an administrator offered recognition to a specific teacher for going "above and beyond" and for making a lasting impact on her students. This public praise, encouragement, and appreciation was also offered by administrators to faculty members at the athletic pep rally and the chapel program. Finally, the

administration demonstrated love and care during direct interaction in the teacher workroom and at the community tailgate event by asking about health, family members, and recent accomplishments.

Table 11

*Conceptual Matrix for Administrative Support—Support Through Active Care, Love, and*

*Encouragement*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers' perceptions of support from the administration?	How is administrative support of teachers observable?	What do school documents communicate about administrative support of teachers?
<p>"[L]oving on the faculty, and caring about us."</p> <p>"She's so likable and loving and whatever I need, she's right there. She's very supporting."</p> <p>"[H]e's very positive, very encouraging."</p> <p>"I do feel very supported by them."</p> <p>"They are concerned about the wellbeing of the faculty and the students."</p> <p>"Definitely. I think that's probably the key factor. Knowing that I have people who support, encourage, are available, will make the time."</p> <p>"They've always been very encouraging and very supportive."</p> <p>"I feel loved and appreciated."</p>	<p>Faculty Meeting—Observed administration providing refreshments (bagels and coffee) at meeting; administrator-led devotion focusing on the difficulty of a teacher's job and offering understanding; administrator-led prayer requests; Above &amp; Beyond award recognizing teachers</p> <p>Community Events—Observed administrator/teacher positive and engaged interaction (socializing, laughing) at tailgate and football game</p> <p>Teacher Workroom—Observed administrators and teachers engaging in personal, casual conversation</p> <p>School Office—Observed faculty being greeted and assisted by administrator upon arrival; coffee bar for teachers in principal's office</p>	<p>Faculty Mentoring Program—"We believe when a faculty feels support from their coworkers and administration, they will perform at a higher level, thereby creating a positive learning environment for our students."</p> <p>Faculty Memos—Teacher recognition</p> <p>Administrator Job Descriptions—Principals and dean of academics offer support to teacher as employees and instructors respectively.</p> <p>Accreditation Self-Assessment—Support and growth of faculty is a focus and goal.</p> <p>AdvancED Indicator 1.2—"Encouragement, support, resources are given to staff members by administration"</p>

Internal school documents communicate teacher recognition, an intentional system of support, and the school's dedication to teacher support. First, the administration regularly provides recognition and appreciation to specific teachers within weekly memos sent out to the entire faculty and staff. These announcements are coupled with encouragement to others to congratulate or thank the teacher. Three documents offer details related to a formal support system designed to care for new and veteran teachers. Job descriptions for members of the administration, specifically the upper school principal and dean of academics, document an ownership of teacher support as employees and instructors, respectively. A checklist used by the department chairs outlines the personal and professional support given to the teachers within the structure of the academic departments including monthly meetings, check-ins, review of lesson plans and gradebooks, and feedback. The faculty mentoring program document describes the philosophy of faculty support by linking strong support to a high performing faculty.

*Support through autonomy and trust.* Administrative support of teachers by valuing them as professionals with autonomy and trust was presented in the faculty interviews and the document review. The faculty spoke of trust and autonomy in the interview process, often using the word freedom to describe the support by administration. Several teachers provided that they do not feel micromanaged and are respected to make decisions within their own classroom and instruction. Referring to this support as professional courtesy, one faculty member further detailed that teachers feel like their opinions matter and are trusted to guide their own curriculum. Articulating a view shared by many, one teacher concluded that the faculty is trusted to do what is best and allowed to do it. Another teacher added that the administration does not interfere in the faculty carrying out their jobs.

School documents speak to the strong and shared view that teachers are professionals. Within weekly parent memos, administration referred to the faculty as experts, authorities, and professionals. This common language is also found the school’s accreditation self-assessment where teachers are described as true experts and highly qualified. This document also asserts the faculty is vitally important to the school’s mission. Finally, prominently in the employee handbook, the headmaster echoes this sentiment by referring to the quality of teachers being the most important priority.

Table 12

*Conceptual Matrix for Administrative Support—Support Through Autonomy and Trust*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers’ perceptions of support from the administration?	How is administrative support of teachers observable?	What do school documents communicate about administrative support of teachers?
<p>“[H]e is very much . . . not a micromanaging type of person . . . he hires us to do our job.”</p> <p>“I think that there’s a lot of professional courtesy . . . we’re not really micromanaged as far as that goes.”</p> <p>“But there’s also a lot of freedom at [this school] for a teacher.”</p> <p>“But the freedom, I mean, the freedom in the classroom to me is important to me.”</p> <p>“And they don’t interfere.”</p> <p>“I don’t feel bound.”</p>	Not observed	<p>Parent Memos—Teachers are referred to as “authorities,” “experts,” and “professionals.” Teacher recognition for accomplishments and Above and Beyond Awards.</p> <p>Accreditation Executive Report—“teachers are true experts in the various academic fields.”</p> <p>Accreditation Self-Assessment—Teachers described as “true experts” and “highly qualified.” “The staff is vitally important to ensure realization of school mission.”</p> <p>Employee Handbook—Headmaster writes, “nothing is more important than the quality of our teachers”</p>

**Teacher voice.** Teachers having a significant voice is seen as a thread through interviews and school publications. Almost all of the teachers interviewed asserted that they are encouraged to and have avenues to provide feedback and suggestions to the administration. Many highlighted a formalized system that allows the faculty to relay information directly to the administration through faculty representatives; however, most communicated that administration welcomes teachers to connect directly with them through open door practices.

School documents echo the formal and informal teacher advocacy present at the school site. Teachers are given the opportunity for involvement in decisions and planning through committee participation, the accreditation process, strategic planning, and representative groups. Teacher feedback is also elicited in meetings and through surveys regarding specific programs or needs of the faculty. In addition, faculty members assume roles in leading meetings and training for their colleagues. Finally, teachers are asked to provide specific feedback regarding administrators during annual surveys. Conceptual matrixes for the subthemes are presented in Tables 13 and 14 to demonstrate the chain of evidence.

***Teacher voice through formal avenues.*** Formal avenues of teacher input in school decisions were found in the teacher interviews and review of school documentation. Through the interviews, teachers communicated the presence of formal avenues to voice opinions and give input. Three teachers described a formalized faculty council that meets regularly with administration to communicate the concerns of the faculty and give input related to school issues. Additionally, another faculty member shared her experience of using her voice to shape the direction of her department. Finally, one teacher pointed to the annual survey of teachers by administration as a way to communicate concerns and speak into the direction of the school.

Table 13

*Conceptual Matrix for Teacher Voice—Formal Avenues*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers' perceptions of their voice in school decisions?	How is teacher voice in school decisions observable?	What do school documents communicate about teacher voice in school decisions?
<p>“[W]e’ve got . . . a faculty council that we started I guess last year and all the department chairs are on it. I think that’s made a big difference because the headmaster and principal sit down and they go, ‘Well, what are some of the issues you have?’ And we can kind of discuss it. And a lot of times they come with issues and go, ‘Now how do you think the teachers would react to this or to that?’ And we’re able to discuss it.”</p> <p>“I can take things from my department and bring that into the faculty council, so there is now, it seems like, more than in years past, there’s more of an avenue for the teachers to have their voice heard”</p> <p>“And if I was the new guy, across the hall, I mean he has a voice now. Because I have a voice, I try to give my people a voice.”</p>	<p>Faculty Meeting—Observed teachers voicing ways they balance their teacher-student relationship with curricular goals</p>	<p>Professional Development Plan – Teachers complete Administrator evaluations; Teachers give feedback on New Faculty support</p> <p>Internal Review Process— “inclusive, collaborative, honest dialogue”</p> <p>Strategic Planning Process— Teachers completed surveys and served on planning committee</p> <p>Staff Technology Professional Development Survey—Teachers were surveyed and results were used to set professional development focus</p> <p>Department Meeting Notes— Faculty feedback collected and communicated to administration</p> <p>Faculty Meeting Agenda— Dedicated time for faculty feedback</p>

Teachers were also given a platform for communication through formal surveys focused on faculty culture, strategic planning priorities, technology professional development, annual professional development, and effectiveness of administration leadership. Additionally, a panel of teachers was interviewed by the visiting team during the accreditation process to elicit school strengths and needs. Finally, time is set aside during faculty meetings and departmental meetings to foster collaborative dialogue between teachers and administrators.

*Teacher voice through informal avenues.* The ability for teachers to have a voice through informal avenues was clearly communicated during teacher interviews and observed during on-site observations. Interviewed faculty members pointed to direct interaction with administrators as the primary informal avenue for input. Citing the administration's open door policy, six teachers reported the ability to go directly to administration with concerns or ideas. One teacher even shared that she had recently discussed the issue of online homework with her administrator over lunch in the lunchroom. Other faculty members took it a step further by asserting that the faculty is listened to by the administration. In addition, several teachers mentioned the impact that they are able to have at the classroom or programmatic level. Returning to the idea of professional courtesy, two teachers detailed the ability to make decisions within their areas without micromanaged.

Informal avenues of teacher voice in school decisions were also observed during the site visit. Administration and faculty interaction in the teacher workroom was used as fertile ground for teachers to discuss school issues and communicate their opinions regarding the matters. Similarly, teachers were able to connect with administrators after the athletic pep rally to go beyond casual socializing to give input and feedback regarding important topics impacting them. Lastly, this same communication was observed at the community tailgate. Teachers and administration engaged in conversation related to school decisions while enjoying refreshments at the faculty tent.

Table 14

*Conceptual Matrix for Teacher Voice—Informal Avenues*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers' perceptions of their voice in school decisions?	How is teacher voice in school decisions observable?	What do school documents communicate about teacher voice in school decisions?
<p>"I think I would have a complete voice of anything I wanted to go talk to someone."</p> <p>"But I always feel if I have an idea about something, I feel I could go in and talk to them. And I wouldn't be hesitant to go in if I felt strongly about something."</p> <p>"[W]hen I talk, or contribute, I feel listened to. And I think that probably is true for most of the teachers here."</p> <p>"But I don't feel like I've ever been shut down as far as being asked to give opinions or being part of decision making groups or . . . I think that communication's pretty open."</p> <p>"[O]ne of the problems we have been working on recently is online homework . . . my administrators and I] talked about that at lunch the other day."</p>	<p>Teacher Workroom—Observed administrator/faculty interaction including feedback/opinion given by teacher</p> <p>Pep Rally—Observed administrator/faculty interaction including feedback/opinion given by teacher</p> <p>Community Events—Observed administrator/faculty interaction including feedback/opinion given by teacher</p>	<p>Not present</p>

**Student discipline.** The quality of student behavior and the minor and infrequent nature of student discipline presented as a theme during the study. During the interview portion, teachers communicated the positive student behavior and absence of serious disciplinary issues contributed to a pleasant working environment. While all teachers indicated that their students did occasionally misbehave, the nature of the behavior was communicated as being mild and

manageable. In addition, several faculty expressed that students who do demonstrate more serious misbehavior did not remain within the school community long term.

The quality of the student behavior and interaction with adults and peers was extremely evident during the observation phase of the study. Classroom observations revealed students who are self-managed and engaged in the lesson. When redirection was necessary, students were quick to respond and correct behavior. This theme carried over into the hallways and lunchtime with students exhibiting positive behavior and interacting in a calm and orderly manner without formal adult oversight.

School documentation revealed high behavioral expectations for students and a clear articulation of these expectations. The school's formal honor code was woven through several documents giving a consistent message regarding student conduct. One document even referenced attendance as a privilege not a right in the context of student behavior. Finally, there was a strong establishment of teachers as authority with the power to directly address student behavior. Conceptual matrixes for the subthemes are presented in Table 15 to demonstrate the chain of evidence.

*Student discipline is minor and infrequent.* The minor and infrequent nature of student discipline was present in interviews of faculty members and on-site observations. The teachers communicated during the interviews that student discipline was minor in nature. Several teachers acknowledged that their students are not perfect but also that the school does not deal with serious disciplinary issues. One teacher explained this feeling by saying that the biggest problem at the school was wearing sneakers to chapel. One teacher voiced that if a student does exhibit major disciplinary issues the student does not remain within the community for long.

Table 15

*Conceptual Matrix for Student Discipline—Minor and Infrequent Discipline and Clear and High Expectations*

Teacher Interviews	On-Site Observations	Document Review
What are the teachers' perceptions of student discipline?	How is student discipline observable?	What do school documents communicate about student discipline?
<p>"Yeah, I think [our school] has great kids. I think there's not a lot of, we don't have a lot of discipline issues."</p> <p>"We really don't have a lot of problems . . . Most of our student discipline [is] minor."</p> <p>"Here, the biggest problem is they're wearing sneakers on chapel day . . . that's one of beauties of the job, actually, is we don't deal with that."</p> <p>"I don't have to worry about [serious issues] here."</p> <p>"I mean, I feel fortunate to be in a private school where student behavior is not an issue."</p>	<p>Classrooms—Students self-managed behavior; students transitioned to tasks/activities smoothly; Very little need for redirection (students were on task); students respond to direction and redirection without hesitation; students were engaged in lesson; students were supportive of one another; minor student misbehavior was not addressed by teacher; students were not engaged and did not respond to redirection</p> <p>Hallways—No student discipline observed; calm and orderly transitions; no formal oversight by teachers</p> <p>Lunch—No behavioral issues observed; students cleaned tables before leaving cafeteria</p>	<p>Parent/Student Handbook—Honor Code; "attendance is a privilege;" establishes teachers as authority with power to address student behavior</p> <p>Faculty Mentoring Program—Master teacher presents on effective classroom management</p> <p>Orientation for Middle and Upper School—Honor Code; Bullying; Conduct expectations</p>

The on-site observations reinforced the minor and infrequent nature of student discipline that was voiced by teachers. In a majority of the classrooms, students were engaged in the lesson and exhibiting signs of self-management allowing for smooth transitions between tasks and activities. In addition, the students responded to direction and redirection from their teachers without hesitation. Within one classroom, the teacher did not address minor misbehavior and students did not respond to the redirection of their teacher. In addition, transitions between

classes were characterized by calm and orderly student hallway behavior with no formal oversight by faculty. There were no disciplinary issues observed in the hallways. Similarly, there were no disciplinary issues noted during the lunch period and no formal oversight by faculty. Students engaged socially and cleaned their tables before leaving the cafeteria.

*Student behavior expectations are clear and high.* School documentation contains a consistent message regarding student behavior. The parent and student handbook outlines student behavior expectations with specific reference to a formal honor code and attendance as a privilege. In addition, the document establishes teachers as authority with the power and responsibility to address student behavior. Similarly, the upper school orientation schedule noted information sessions for students covering the honor code, bullying, and conduct expectations. Finally, the faculty mentoring program integrates presentations covering classroom management by master teachers from the school's faculty.

#### **Chapter 4 Summary**

In order to thoroughly answer the research question, I obtained data through teacher interviews, on-site observations, and an off-site review of school documents. The interview process included ten face-to-face interviews. Data collected from interviews of faculty at the school site was recorded using a digital audio recorder. The recordings were then transcribed by a Rev.com, a professional transcription service that is in a binding agreement to hold all information confidential, resulting in a formal transcript of all verbalized questions and answers. These transcripts were provided directly to participants to allow for member checking to ensure accuracy and validity (Maxwell, 2005). Once the transcripts were verified as accurate, the audio files were permanently deleted.

Data was collected during the observation phase of the study through detailed note taking. Observation notes were taken by hand and cataloged chronologically in the case study database (Yin, 2014). In the end, I completed 16 observations over the three-day research period.

The document review portion of the research field experience began with the receipt of the requested documents from the school administration and was conducted off-site. The process was structured to allow for an efficient and thorough examination of the artifacts. Detailed notes and annotations of 234 documents were produced. This data was then organized and documented as part of a case study database that allowed for a formal assembly of data and ease of retrieval (Yin, 2014). Categorization and coding of the data helped group data into themes and patterns.

As the data was reviewed, coded, and recoded, the saturation of data became apparent with six primary emerging themes: a relational school culture, supportive relationship with administration, prominent teacher voice, minor and infrequent student discipline, reasonable workload, and the insignificance of compensation. Further analysis revealed subcategorization of data and codes within the first four emerging themes. The presenting school culture can be organized into the following themes: a personal and relational culture, a familial culture, a supportive and collaborative culture, and a Christ-centered culture. Likewise, administrative support can be organized into the following themes: support through being present and available; support through active care, love, and encouragement; and support through valuing teachers as professionals with autonomy and trust. Additionally, teacher voice in school decisions can be broken into teacher voice through formal avenues and teacher voice through informal avenues. Also, student discipline can be expressed through the themes: minor and infrequent student discipline and high and clear student behavior expectations.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this single, instrumental case study was to examine practices and policies that support teacher retention within small, private, non-Catholic faith-based secondary schools. With teacher attrition reaching its highest level within small, faith-based schools, it is essential to fully investigate schools within this category that have achieved and sustained high teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001). The focus of the study is on the work conditions within small, private, faith-based secondary schools that promote strong teacher retention. Since work conditions, such as compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community, are connected to the practices and policies within a school, understanding these factors could help inform a positive change in teacher retention within this segment of schools.

This chapter will summarize and discuss the results, what they mean, and how they are connected to the preexisting literature. In addition, the chapter will thoroughly examine the implications that the results have on the practices and policies impacting teacher retention in small, faith-based secondary schools. Finally, I will make recommendations for further research related to this topic.

### **Summary of the Results**

As previously stated, the purpose of the proposed study is to inform practices and policies within small, private, non-Catholic faith-based secondary schools that will promote teacher retention and improve the levels of attrition within this sector of schools. McGrath and Princiotta (2006) document a considerably higher teacher turnover in small, faith-based secondary schools, reaching almost 25% annually. This phenomenon is threatening the effectiveness and quality of

programs and the level of student achievement within these schools (Ingersoll, 2001). With the highest levels of teacher attrition affecting this sector of schools, it is essential that research specifically address the positive influence of practices and policies at small, faith-based secondary schools.

**Research question.** Previous research studies have focused on work conditions that support or hinder teacher retention within public and larger private schools but have not adequately investigated them within small, faith-based secondary schools. This lack of literature on factors that influence teacher retention and attrition within this type of institution was the impetus for this study. The study was guided by the research question: What work conditions at small faith-based secondary schools support strong teacher retention?

**Existing theories and prevailing literature.** Existing research offers a picture of the context, the problem, and the significance of an ongoing conversation related to teacher attrition. While differences in findings and opinions exist, a survey of the literature brings forth consistencies and trends that can be articulated and used as a foundation for further research and study. It is clear that the effectiveness of education is critical to the success of individual students and competitiveness of entire countries (Darling-Hammond, 2010). It is also agreed that quality teachers produce quality students (Shakrani, 2008). With attrition threatening the establishment of an experienced and effective faculty, research into successful strategies to cultivate teacher retention is vital.

According to existing research, teacher attrition is influenced by a variety of factors. A review of relevant studies revealed four main frameworks offered to explain this complex process (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1993; Chapman, 1984; Sher, 1983; Swars et al., 2009). Chapman (1984) identified five areas that influence teacher attrition—personal

characteristics, training/experience, social and professional integration into the teaching profession, career satisfaction, and external environmental factors. Sher (1983) offers another model grounded in three areas—characteristics, conditions, and compensation—as an overarching framework of influencers.

Billingsley (1993) offers a model of influencers divided into three categories: external factors, employment factors, and personal factors. Brownell and Smith (1993) suggest that teacher attrition is impacted by interconnected forces, which can be modeled as nesting systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Offering a narrowed look at teacher retention, Swars, Meyers, Mays, and Lack (2009) outline a two-dimensional model of teacher retention and mobility that connects the agreement between the teacher and organization to help predict whether teachers are more likely to stay or leave their current teaching position. While Chapman (1984), Sher (1983), Billingsley (1993), Brownell and Smith (1993), and Swars et al. (2009) all approach the organization of impacting factors differently, they are consistent in their focus on the four primary types—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, work conditions, and non-school factors. This four-part system derived from the five prevailing models was used as the conceptual framework for this study.

Because the focus of the current study is on influencers connected to school-based practices and policy, the investigation of factors is narrowed to work conditions. Current research demonstrates a connection between increased salary and longevity within the teaching field and decreased teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Jacobson, 1988; Murnane & Olsen, 1990). Workload is an additional factor influencing teacher retention inversely with the increase of workload causing a decrease in retention (Salazar Sojo, 2003; Sieling, 2012).

Difficult student discipline issues have a similar impact on retention in both public and private schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Killian & Baker, 2006; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005; Salazar Sojo, 2003). The support the teacher receives from the administrative team (Angelle, 2006; Branch, 2013; Waddell, 2010) and the input that the teacher has in decisions (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001; McGrath & Princiotta, 2005) both have powerful influences on teacher retention. Finally, the culture of the school plays a role in creating an environment that fosters the desire for teachers to remain in their positions (Branch, 2013; Watts, 2016).

Teacher attrition is particularly detrimental to the mission and effectiveness of small, faith-based secondary schools. Ingersoll (2001) asserted that teacher attrition is at the highest level in small, faith-based schools when compared to all public and other private schools. Entering the 2000–2001 school year, administrators at private, faith-based schools reported a teacher turnover rate of 23% (McGrath & Princiotta, 2006), which “is significantly higher, for instance, than the rate in high-poverty public schools, and is more than double the national average for other kinds of employees” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 516). This level of attrition is of great concern due to the potentially disruptive impact on the quality of the school programs, community, and performance (Ingersoll, 2001).

Private school teachers are less likely to report dissatisfaction with their schools; however, they exhibit a higher rate of attrition. Administrators in small, faith-based schools realize the impact of lower salaries and limited benefits on teacher retention efforts. With tight financial resources, these schools must strengthen teacher retention and satisfaction through other means. Unfortunately, little research extricating the factors that impact teacher retention, either positively or negatively, within small, non-Catholic, faith-based schools is available; this is clearly an area of need for further research.

**Significance of the study and results.** Teacher attrition is a costly problem. The financial consequences to teacher turnover are easily identified. NCTAF (2010) estimates that attrition costs school districts at least \$7.2 billion a year (p. 4). In fact, researchers estimate that the cost of teacher turnover in Texas alone carries a conservative price tag of \$329 million a year (NCTAF, 2002). The costs extend beyond the fiscal arena impacting school culture, curriculum continuity, reform efforts, student success, and administrator involvement with staff. Ingersoll (2001) asserts that teacher attrition can reduce and stunt school cohesion and performance. NCTAF (2002) articulates the seriousness of teacher attrition by stating:

This churning staff turnover keeps school administrators scrambling to find replacements, and in too many cases quality teaching is compromised in an effort to find a sufficient number of warm bodies to staff classrooms. In the wake of this turmoil, student achievement declines. (p. 8)

Conversely, increasing teacher retention can help positively impact culture, effectiveness, and performance. Freed from the necessity of focusing financial and personnel resources on replacement of staff, schools are able to offer intentional support and development to faculty members. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) argued that this is one of the differences in the educational systems of high-achieving countries. These countries adopted and implemented practices that foster teacher growth and mold new teachers into effective instructors who remain in the profession long-term. By proactively building human capital instead of reactively funding recruitment efforts to replace leaving teachers, these school systems are realizing student gains and successful achievement.

As an administrator at a small, private, faith-based secondary school, the teacher attrition epidemic is a reality for me. While the goal of small, faith-based schools is student success, the

mission of this sector of schools goes beyond academic performance. These schools exist to transform students spiritually, intellectually, and personally. Prensky (2014) articulates this by arguing that learning is not the goal of education. Isolated learning is hollow; education is about being changed—becoming something that you were not before. This transformation includes thinking, relating, accomplishing, and reflecting and is accomplished by way of authentic challenge within cultivated relationships between students and teachers. It is a slow and intentional process.

The importance of continuity within the school staff is understood when faith-based education is viewed through this filter. It is vital that the faculty is comprised of quality teachers who return year-to-year to deepen relationships with students and continue the momentum of student transformation. Stability is a key ingredient. Teacher attrition is a threat to this mission, and efforts to understand contributing factors and development of proactive practices and policies schools can implement to positively stimulate retention are necessary.

**Summary of methodology.** In order to thoroughly explore the factors contributing to strength of teacher retention in small, private, non-Catholic faith-based secondary schools, qualitative methodology was selected. Qualitative researchers focus on multiple perspectives, the uniqueness of individual experiences, and the importance of context. “Qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes” (McMillan, 2012, p. 44).

Qualitative research was the best choice due to its consideration of individual experiences and context (McMillan, 2012). In qualitative research, the goal is to conduct an in-depth

examination of a phenomenon within its real-world context from multiple perspectives (Yin, 2014). This research approach fit the purpose and research questions of this study.

Specifically within the broader umbrella of qualitative research, a case study design was selected as the methodological approach. Bromley (1990) describes case study as a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest” (p. 302). Case studies allow in-depth examinations of issues, which is aided by researchers entering the world of the individuals being studied to gain an intimate understanding (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) continues by attributing case study to answering “how” and “why” questions.

One of the foundational aspects of case study research is collection of data from multiple sources and triangulating data to gain a thorough picture of the case and issue (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). This research study included the use of interviews, observations, and document reviews in order to gain detailed insight into the influence of work conditions on teacher retention within small, faith-based secondary schools. The investigation of this issue was grounded in gathering the feelings, beliefs, opinions, perspectives, and experiences of individuals. This is consistent with the very heart of case study research.

**Summary of findings.** As the study’s data was reviewed, coded, and recoded, four primary emerging themes became apparent: a relational school culture, supportive relationship with administration, prominent teacher voice, and minor and infrequent student discipline. Further analysis revealed subcategorization of data and codes within each emerging theme. The presenting school culture can be organized into the following themes: a personal and relational culture, a familial culture, a supportive and collaborative culture, and a Christ-centered culture. Likewise, administrative support can be organized into the following themes: support through

being present and available; support through active care, love, and encouragement; and support through valuing teachers as professionals with autonomy and trust. Additionally, teacher voice in school decisions can be broken into teacher voice through formal avenues and teacher voice through informal avenues. Also, student discipline can be expressed through the themes: minor and infrequent student discipline and high and clear student behavior expectations.

## **Discussion of Results**

The purpose of this case study was to examine practices and policies that support teacher retention within small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based secondary schools. This examination was implemented through a thorough investigation of work conditions, specifically school culture, administrative support, teacher voice in school decisions, student discipline, teacher workload, and compensation. The study was guided by the research question: What work conditions at small faith-based secondary schools support strong teacher retention? In the end, the results of this study did successfully answer the research question. The results revealed that school culture, administrative support, teacher voice, and student discipline played major roles in the teachers' decisions to return year-to-year. Additionally, the results indicated that teacher workload and compensation did not significantly impact teachers' plans to return.

**School culture.** The impact of the school culture was evident within teacher interviews, on-site observations, and school documents. First, the interviewed faculty members articulated clearly the relational nature of the school's culture. One teacher described the school as a community comprised of kind individuals and went on to say that this community is "much more relational than strictly instructional." Continuing this theme another faculty member spoke of the deep relationships that were possible at the school and the freedom that teachers have to form and invest in relationships. Two other teachers point to daily interaction with colleagues and

students to describe the school culture; one offering, “And it is the truth about [this school] is that people that I’m surrounded with everyday make this place worthy of coming every day.”

Next, the faculty highlighted the familial nature of the faculty with half of the interviewed teachers specifically using the term “family” to describe the school culture. One teacher concisely expressed this sentiment with, “It really, it’s a cliché here, but it is a family.” Another faculty member indicated that the familial culture was one of the most influential reasons for staying at the school. Further explaining the use of family, one teacher offered that there is always a colleague ready to step in to help when needed.

Thirdly, the faculty offered that the culture was supportive and collaborative. One of the interviewed teachers described the faculty as having “definite good working relationships.” This quality was further explained to include working together to achieve a unified outcome, sharing supplies, and helping with one another’s curricular or pedagogical questions. Another faculty member offered an image of the school’s teachers as a team noting that they “are all pulling in the same direction.”

Lastly, the faculty interviews offered a unanimous focus on a “Christ-centered” culture. Evidence of this culture was offered by some teachers in the form of collegial interaction. They describe having the freedom to love, care, and pray for one another and sharing the burdens of their co-workers. Similarly, one teacher revealed that the Christian culture allowed for spiritual support of the students—praying for students, offering devotionals at the beginning of class, and sharing with students about Christ and the Christian faith. The interviews spoke of a common belief among the faculty and the uniting power of the mission statement. One teacher stated, “But in a lot of ways, that’s why I’m here because of the mission statement. I believe in what we’re doing and where we’re trying to go.”

The influential aspects of the school culture were consistently observed during the site visit. Positive interactions and conversations between faculty was notably present in the observed faculty meeting, the teacher workroom, the hallways, the lunchroom, and the school office. These interactions included supportive and encouraging exchanges, collaborative discussions, and personal and friendly chats incorporating humor. In classrooms, engagement between teachers and students were comfortable and natural including instructional communication and personal, casual communication filled with humor and personality. Teachers were engaged with each other and students at the athletic pep rally, cheering for and encouraging one another. There was a designated tent for teachers and staff at the school tailgate that fostered personal interactions between faculty members, along with eating and laughing together.

The on-site observations also pointed to the close-knit family nature of the school culture. Evidence of this aspect was observed during a school event as teachers were discussing the students as “their children” or members of their family. In addition, war veterans from the faculty families were recognized at a weekly chapel program demonstrating an intentional celebration of extended family members. Moreover, one of the speakers at an athletic pep rally referred to the school as a family as he was describing the support shown for the football team.

The collegial nature of the faculty was observed throughout the on-site observations. During the faculty meeting groups of teachers worked together on a professional development exercise and presented findings before the entire faculty. Teachers were observed collaborating regarding the design and success of current lesson plans and brainstorming ideas for future lessons for each other in the teacher workroom. Not confined to the teacher workroom, two teachers engaged with one another in the hallways between classes conferring about a book they were both reading and invited a student to share thoughts regarding the book. Lastly, supportive

interaction between teachers and students were present in the classrooms and hallways where students freely approached teachers and teachers readily offered extra assistance and encouragement.

The Christ-centered school culture was observed in meetings, classrooms, and school events. First, the faculty meeting was opened and closed with a prayer of thanksgiving. A member of the faculty presented a devotional highlighting Jesus as a model of an effective teacher using Bible passages as the foundation and support and then facilitated corporate prayer for voiced requests. The Christian culture is also consistently evident in the classroom interactions between teachers and students. Prayer and scripture reading was observed in several classrooms, while one teacher specifically connected the lesson to Biblical principles with scripture offered as evidence. Lastly, the faith-focused culture was demonstrated through the incorporation of prayer and worship during several school and community events.

The review of school documentation revealed a consistent theme of a personal and relational culture woven through many of the internal and external documents. In the professional characteristics document the school includes as desired traits of its faculty contributing to a sense of community and taking a personal interest in students. In other documents related to faculty in-service and general faculty communication, there is significant examples of events designed to foster teacher connection and community. These events include organized faculty social events, a new faculty dessert reception, a faculty mentoring program, and faculty appreciation breakfasts sponsored by parents. Also, several accreditation documents highlight the close-knit relationships and strong sense of community. One statement from the school's accreditation executive summary captures it best by saying, "The [school's] culture is very personal, relational, and caring." This same document also reinforced the familial aspect of

the culture by citing, “The school community is most often referred to by students, parents, and staff as a family.”

School documents additionally reinforced the presence of a supportive and collaborative school culture. Internal faculty documents highlight dedicated time for team collaboration, collaboration as a goal of the instructional technology program, and support of the greater community. The professional characteristics document offers active support of colleagues as a desired trait of the school’s faculty members. Lastly, the school’s accreditation self-assessment document articulates the supportive nature of the culture by stating, it “fosters a commitment to improvement, collaboration, innovation, and growth.”

The review of school documents offered examples reinforcing the Christian quality of the school culture. Faculty communication highlighted devotions and prayer during meetings and faculty gatherings, weekly scriptures, and prayer requests from the community. The Parent/Student Handbook clearly communicates the school’s commitment to assemble a “Christian faculty that is . . . spiritually alive.” Adding to this, the professional characteristics document identifies authentic faith in Christ and the integration of Christian truth and biblical principles as expectations of the school’s faculty members. Additionally, the accreditation self-assessment and exit presentation both spoke of a culture grounded in shared beliefs and purpose of impacting “the lives of students for God’s Kingdom.” Lastly, teacher survey results pointed to the school’s culture, specifically the Christ-centered or Christian focus, as the most common characteristic mentioned as a great strength by members of the school faculty.

The relationship between teacher retention and school culture was not surprising to me, falling exactly in line with my expectations. One of the primary advantages within small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based schools is the supportive, relational, and faith-based culture. This was

one of the strongest work conditions cited by the school's teachers and found during observations and document reviews. It seemed woven into all aspects of the school and was the predominant characteristic of the faculty that I interacted with during my visit. I discovered a prominent sense of family that manifested in many tangible ways. Personable, supportive, relational teachers are choosing to stay within a culture that fosters the very traits they characterize and value.

**Administrative support.** The positive impact of teacher support by the administration was evident in teacher interviews, on-site observations, and review of school documents. The interviewed teachers were clear in their articulation of the administration's presence and availability. One teacher noted that their administration has an "open door" policy that encourages staff to bring any issues to their attention. Other faculty members described the administration as receptive and approachable and noted that they are not only open to teachers but they are also present around the school and at school events. Another teacher summed this support by saying, "I think that's probably the key factor. Knowing that I have people who support, encourage, are available, [and] will make time."

Administrative support of teachers through active care, love, and encouragement was found across all phases of data collection. Almost unanimously the interviewed teachers characterized their support with loving and caring terminology. Several teachers indicated that their administrator's care of them went beyond the provision of basic support or meeting of need. They described it with the richness of loving attention and concern for the faculty's well-being. Encouragement was also specifically mentioned in the context of administrative support. One teacher described the feedback he received from his administrator as encouraging him to be the best teacher possible. Three other faculty members offered that direct interaction with

administration is always positive and encouraging and that the encouragement comes in the form of verbal and written support. Lastly, several teachers pointed to administrative support through appreciation and described the power of feeling appreciated. Concisely put, one teacher stated, “I feel loved and appreciated.”

Administrative support of teachers by valuing them as professionals with autonomy and trust was presented in the faculty interviews and the document review. The faculty spoke of trust and autonomy in the interview process, often using the word freedom to describe the support by administration. Several teachers provided that they do not feel micromanaged and are respected to make decisions within their own classroom and instruction. Referring to this support as “professional courtesy,” one faculty member further detailed that teachers feel like their opinions matter and are trusted to guide their own curriculum. Articulating a view shared by many, one teacher said, “They trust me to figure out what to do and what is the best way to do, and then they let me do it. That’s one really positive [aspect].” Another teacher simply said, “They don’t interfere.”

The visibility and availability of the administration team was also prevalent in the on-site observations. One teacher was greeted and assisted by an administrator immediately upon entering the school office, and administrators and teachers were engaged in conversation while using the copier and enjoying cups of coffee in the teacher workroom. During a classroom observation, one administrator had attended a class and was offering written and verbal feedback to the teacher after class. School administration was visible and participated in the various school events observed including a chapel program, an athletic pep rally, the community tailgate, and a football game. During all of these events, the administrators arrived early and remained after to interact with faculty, students, and parents.

The care, love, and encouragement offered to teachers by the administration was consistently observed during the site visit. This care manifested in the provision of refreshments to encourage teachers throughout the school day. Coffee and bagels were provided at the faculty meeting, while coffee bars were located in the school office and teacher workroom. Another mode of loving care for teachers was observed at the faculty meeting when an administrator offered recognition to a specific teacher for going “above and beyond” and for making a lasting impact on her students. This public praise, encouragement, and appreciation was also offered by administrators to faculty members at the athletic pep rally and the chapel program. Finally, the administration demonstrated love and care during direct interaction in the teacher workroom and at the community tailgate event by asking about health, family members, and recent accomplishments.

Internal school documents communicate teacher recognition, an intentional system of support, and the school’s dedication to teacher support. First, the administration regularly provides recognition and appreciation to specific teachers within weekly memos sent out to the entire faculty and staff. These announcements are coupled with encouragement to others to congratulate or thank the teacher. Three documents offer details related to a formal support system designed to care for new and veteran teachers. Job descriptions for members of the administration, specifically the upper school principal and dean of academics, document an ownership of teacher support as employees and instructors, respectively. A checklist used by the department chairs outlines the personal and professional support given to the teachers within the structure of the academic departments including monthly meetings, check-ins, review of lesson plans and gradebooks, and feedback. The faculty mentoring program document describes the

philosophy of faculty support by saying, “We believe when a faculty feels support from their coworkers and administration, they will perform at a higher level.”

School documents speak to the strong and shared view that teachers are professionals. Within weekly parent memos, administration referred to the faculty as experts, authorities, and professionals. This common language is also found in the school’s accreditation self-assessment where teachers are described as true experts and highly qualified. This document also asserts the faculty as vital to fulfillment of the school’s mission. Finally, prominently in the employee handbook, the headmaster echoes this sentiment by writing about quality teachers as critical for the institution.

While the impact of the school culture matched my expectations, the connection between administrative support and teacher retention was stronger than I anticipated. It has been my experience that small, private school administrators often carry a variety of additional responsibilities and have fewer support staff, dampening their ability to actively support individual teachers. From reading the existing literature, I was expecting to see a positive relationship but was met with a more powerful and consistent association. The interviewed teachers shared feelings, thoughts, and examples all pointing to an extremely established administrative practice of faculty care. The frequency at which the terms *love*, *care*, *open*, *available*, and *autonomy* were voiced by faculty members constitutes a substantive theme. The teachers felt trusted and were allowed to shape their classroom practices, curriculum, and programs. This loving and trusting support was captured in the interactions I observed between faculty and administration and the unique personality that each of the teachers’ classrooms embodied. Adding to this, the consistent voice of support in the school documents communicates

that the teachers feel valued and taken care of, contributing to their commitment to remaining at the school.

**Teacher voice.** Influential avenues of teacher input in school decisions were found in the teacher interviews and review of school documentation. Through the interviews, teachers communicated the presence of formal avenues to voice opinions and give input. Three teachers described a formalized faculty council that meets regularly with administration to communicate the concerns of the faculty and give input related to school issues. One teacher offered, “I can take things from my department and bring that into the faculty council . . . there’s more of an avenue for teachers to have their [voices] heard.” Additionally, another faculty member shared her experience of using her voice to shape the direction of her department. Finally, one teacher pointed to the annual survey of teachers by administration as a way to communicate concerns and speak into the direction of the school.

The ability for teachers to have a voice through informal avenues was clearly communicated during teacher interviews and observed during on-site observations. Interviewed faculty members pointed to direct interaction with administrators as the primary informal avenue for input. Citing the administration’s open door policy, six teachers reported the ability to go directly to administration with concerns or ideas. One teacher even shared that she had recently discussed the issue of online homework with her administrator over lunch in the lunchroom. Another faculty member captured this opportunity by saying, “We’re listened to by the administration.” In addition, several teachers mentioned the impact that they are able to have at the classroom or programmatic level. Returning to the idea of professional courtesy, two teachers detailed the ability to make decisions within their areas “without having to worry about what’s over my shoulder.”

Descriptions of numerous formalized systems for teacher feedback are highlighted in school documents. Most prevalent are opportunities for teacher participation in committees. The focus of the committees cover instructional technology, strategic planning, and the accreditation internal review. In addition, several documents contain details regarding teacher participation in planning and delivering faculty development. Teacher-led sessions were present in the all faculty in-service schedule and the professional development plan document. Teachers were also given a platform for communication through formal surveys focused on faculty culture, strategic planning priorities, technology professional development, annual professional development, and effectiveness of administration leadership. Additionally, a panel of teachers was interviewed by the visiting team during the accreditation process to elicit school strengths and needs. Finally, time is set aside during faculty meetings and departmental meetings to foster “inclusive, collaborative, honest dialogue” between teachers and administrators.

Informal avenues of teacher voice in school decisions were also observed during the site visit. Administration and faculty interactions in the teacher workroom were used as fertile ground for teachers to discuss school issues and communicate their opinions regarding the matters. Similarly, teachers were able to connect with administrators after the athletic pep rally to go beyond casual socializing to give input and feedback regarding important topics impacting them. Lastly, this same communication was observed at the community tailgate. Teachers and administration engaged in conversation related to school decisions while enjoying refreshments at the faculty tent.

It was also clear that the teachers feel that they have a voice and that this positively impacts their retention. Similarly to administrative support, I expected a positive impact from teacher voice on retention but was surprised at the strength of the relationship. While I observed,

heard about, and read about formalized programs and structures to allow teachers to have avenues to express ideas and shape school decisions, it was the comfort with which the faculty described the open access to communicate directly with administration that seemed to empower the faculty. The teachers believe that administration is not only open to but welcomes input. This invitation to engage one-on-one or in groups with administration fosters a connection to the school and its decisions. Another prevalent avenue for teacher voice occurred at the program, department, and classroom level. With the autonomy given by the administration the faculty has the power to shape their niches within the greater school community. This often provides an immediate and tangible change and reinforces the teachers' belief that their ideas and opinions are valued and have power to lead to change.

**Student discipline.** The impact of student discipline was present in interviews of faculty members and on-site observations. The teachers communicated during the interviews that student discipline was minor in nature. Several teachers acknowledged that their students are not perfect but also that the school does not deal with serious disciplinary issues. One teacher explained this feeling by saying, "Here, the biggest problem is they're wearing sneakers on chapel day . . . that's one of the beauties of the job, actually, is we don't deal with [serious issues]." One teacher voiced that if a student does exhibit major disciplinary issues the student does not remain within the community for long.

The on-site observations reinforced the minor and infrequent nature of student discipline that was voiced by teachers. In a majority of the classrooms, students were engaged in the lesson and exhibiting signs of self-management allowing for smooth transitions between tasks and activities. In addition, the students responded to direction and redirection from their teachers without hesitation. Within one classroom, the teacher did not address minor misbehavior and

students did not respond to the redirection of their teacher. In addition, transitions between classes were characterized by calm and orderly student hallway behavior with no formal oversight by faculty. There were no disciplinary issues observed in the hallways. Similarly, there were no disciplinary issues noted during the lunch period and no formal oversight by faculty. Students engaged socially and cleaned their tables before leaving the cafeteria.

School documentation contains a consistent message regarding student behavior. The parent and student handbook outlines student behavior expectations with specific reference to a formal honor code and attendance as a privilege. In addition, the document establishes teachers as authority with the power and responsibility to address student behavior. Similarly, the upper school orientation schedule noted information sessions for students covering the honor code, bullying, and conduct expectations. Finally, the faculty mentoring program document integrates presentations covering classroom management by master teachers from the school's faculty.

Lastly, student discipline was found to reinforce a positive view of the school leading to teacher retention. Unlike the former three work conditions, I did not expect a strong connection between student discipline and teacher retention. Having worked at several schools within the small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based school sector, I have grown accustomed to the difference in perspectives from teachers at these schools as opposed to teachers from other types of schools. While the student discipline issues are typically minor in small, private schools, I suspected that they might still negatively impact teachers' decisions to return year-to-year. Overall, my prediction missed the mark, as the teachers communicated a uniform appreciation for the minor and infrequent nature of student discipline at the school. However, fewer teachers connected this appreciation back to deciding to continue teaching at the school.

**Teacher workload and compensation.** While the data did not support fully developed themes, I think it is important to note the absence of workload and compensation's impact on teacher retention in this study. The overall view that teacher workloads are challenging but reasonable was found in the teacher interviews and document review. The interviewed teachers voiced that workloads were overall positive. Three faculty members expressed contentment with their workloads describing them as reasonable, not too heavy, and positive. One teacher went a step further to indicate that the workload gets better each year due to a growing comfort with material signaling consistency in assignments year-to-year. Two other teachers contributed their love of teaching and calling to the profession as a reason they do not even consider the impact of their workload. One faculty member offered a different perspective by describing the workload as more challenging with several preps to juggle. Finally, the document review found descriptions of the teacher workload which included expectations outside of instruction but stated that the "other responsibilities are not to be seen as an added burden but as an integral part of the call to teaching."

The faculty voiced a united theme of the insignificance of compensation in retention decisions. Many acknowledged the fact that their compensation was lower than desired and was not equitable to the compensation offered by local public schools. However, the faculty held a universal position that compensation was not the reason they were at the school. One teacher offered, "It doesn't play a part in whether I choose to return. I have been in private Christian education, this is 20 years. The salaries are lower, and you accept that as part of the deal." Others articulated their position in very concise and pointed ways. One faculty member stated, "It's not why I am here."

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

As stated previously, teacher attrition in small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based schools is the highest of any subgroup of secondary schools and reduces and stunts school cohesion and performance (Ingersoll, 2001). It negatively impacts student achievement (NCTAF, 2002). While the goal of small, faith-based schools is student success, the mission of this sector of schools goes beyond academic performance. These schools exist to transform students spiritually, intellectually, and personally. Prensky (2014) articulates this by arguing that learning is not the goal of education. This transformation includes thinking, relating, accomplishing, and reflecting and is accomplished by way of authentic challenge within cultivated relationships between students and teachers. It is a slow and intentional process.

The importance of continuity within the school staff is understood when faith-based education is viewed through this filter. It is vital that the faculty is comprised of quality teachers who return year-to-year to deepen relationships with students and continue the momentum of student transformation. Stability is a key ingredient. Teacher attrition is a threat to this mission, and efforts to understand contributing factors and development of proactive practices and policies schools can implement to positively stimulate retention are necessary.

Existing research offers a picture of the context, the problem, and the significance of an ongoing conversation related to teacher attrition. While differences in findings and opinions exist, a survey of the literature brings forth consistencies and trends that can be articulated and used as a foundation for further research and study. It is clear that the effectiveness of education is critical to the success of individual students and competitiveness of entire countries (Darling-Hammond, 2010). It is also agreed that quality teachers produce quality students (Shakrani, 2008). With attrition threatening the establishment of an experienced and effective faculty, research into successful strategies to cultivate teacher retention is vital.

The results of this study clearly pointed to the power of the school's culture in the retention of faculty and reinforces the existing literature. Branch (2013) qualitative study asserted that the culture of the school is everything when it comes to retention of its faculty, noting that when the culture reinforces traditions, pride, a focus on students, and a sense of family, it fosters a desire for teachers to remain. Likewise, Watts (2016) qualitative, multiple-case study echoed finding consistency with the results of this study. Watts (2016) reported that the administration contributes a relational culture to increase retention. By fostering a family environment with strong interpersonal relationships, teachers feel connected and stay. Similarly, the teacher focus groups attribute retention to the strong supportive culture of the schools. Watts (2016) highlights the clear theme of family in the teachers' responses to the interview questions. A pervasive sense of team and family is identified as the foundation of a strong retentive culture in all three studies.

The results from this study offer strong support for the impact of administrative support on teacher retention. Angelle (2006) conducted a qualitative study that pointed to perception of and offering of administrative support being linked to the beginning teachers' intention to stay in education. Conducting a qualitative study into the factors causing elementary teachers to remain teaching in urban schools more than five years, Waddell (2010) noted that a strong professional relationship between a teacher and administrator impacts the teacher's decision to stay beyond the five-year mark. Bogler and Nir (2015) performed a quantitative study in order to investigate predictors of teacher commitment and job satisfaction and identified principal interaction with teachers as the second most influential predictor for commitment and satisfaction. Similarly, Hamburg (2012) found that a supportive relationship with a principal increases commitment to teaching and decreases teacher attrition. Analysis of the data revealed that the participating

teachers weigh administrative support heavily in their career decisions related to both retention and attrition (Hamburg, 2012).

This study offered results consistent with existing research and reinforce the prevailing theme that teachers desire to have a voice in the school decisions. This desire to give input influences job satisfaction and teacher retention and attrition. After their respective reviews of SASS data, Ingersoll (2001) and McGrath and Princiotta (2005) assert that teachers who feel they have a lack of input also experience a higher attrition rate. In addition, Bogler and Nir (2012) performed a quantitative study to explore the effect of teacher empowerment on perception of support and satisfaction. Teacher empowerment, according to Bogler and Nir (2012), includes a teacher's involvement in decision-making. The research findings suggest that when teachers feel empowered, they also feel supported and satisfied with their career, which are tied to retention.

This study's revelation that low incidents of student discipline promote teacher retention is not new, supporting the current body of existing literature. Ingersoll (2001) analyzed the results of the 1990–1991 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the 1991–1992 Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS) to reveal that schools with lower levels of student discipline have notably lower teacher turnover rates. This same conclusion was noted by Salazar Sojo (2003); teachers in the high-retention districts report experiencing few discipline problems. Similarly, a quantitative study involving surveys from 223 first-year or first-year-in-Texas music educators revealed that dissatisfaction with student behavior is the second most frequent reason given for leaving the teaching profession (Killian & Baker, 2006). Finally, McGrath and Princiotta (2005) use the 1999–2000 SASS data to focus specifically on factors impacting private school teacher retention. This analysis affirmed that 25.6% of private school teachers who moved schools or left

teaching report poor student discipline as a contributing factor in the decision to leave (McGrath & Princiotta, 2005, p. 2).

Since the existing literature does not offer a unified conclusion related to workload and teacher retention, the results of this study support a portion of the research and contradict the remaining studies. Hawks (2016) conducted a quantitative study to determine the predictive value of satisfaction, motivation, and caseload of elementary special education teachers in southwest Virginia and found that caseload did not have a predictive relationship with teacher attrition. Hawks (2016) asserted that special education teachers could have a high caseload in combination with a high job satisfaction. This is consistent with the results of this study.

Contrasting the findings of this study and Hawks (2016), other research findings support the connection between workload and attrition. Salazar Sojo (2003) surveyed the faculty of the three rural districts with the highest teacher retention and the three rural districts with the lowest teacher retention in Minnesota and concluded that teachers at the high-retention districts are satisfied with the workload, while the low-retention group expresses dissatisfaction with the amount of paperwork and preparations within these districts. Likewise, Sieling (2012) explored the impact of workload on teacher attrition within the private school arena. Interviewed teachers attribute recent teacher attrition directly to the increasing workload. In addition, one administrator describes workload as the universal problem within the school. Sieling (2012) identified this factor as having a negative impact on teacher retention.

In opposition to this study's finding that compensation does not have an impact on teacher retention, numerous sources of research link teacher retention to the level of compensation—salary and benefits—offered by the school district. Jacobson (1988) performed a qualitative study in order to investigate the impact of internal salary distribution practices of 699

New York school districts between 1974 and 1985. The findings of Jacobson's (1988) study suggested that such a connection does in fact exist. With few districts employing an across-the-board distribution, two groups of districts emerged—districts offering steep increases early in their schedules and districts favoring veteran teachers with their salary schedule. These two categories of school districts were able to achieve different advantages related to their faculty. These findings point to the ability for school districts to use salary increases to attract and retain teachers reducing teacher attrition.

Adding to the discussion of compensation practices and their impact on teacher retention/attrition, Stinebrickner (1998) utilized data from the National Longitudinal Study of the Class of 1972 (NLS-72) that followed and reported on the career development, including migration and attrition, of a group of certified teachers from 1972 to 1986. The results of Stinebrickner's (1998) research supported the importance of competitive salaries in teacher retention, noting a significant correlation between salary and length of teaching spell. Similar findings were reported by Murnane and Olsen (1990) after a quantitative study of public school teacher records in North Carolina from 1974–1985. They concluded that higher salaries are connected to increased teacher spells, specifically citing that each \$1000 increase added a median of two to three years onto the duration of teaching (Murnane & Olsen, 1990, pp. 119–120). Lastly, Borman and Dowling (2008) offered a meta-analysis of ninety different quantitative studies conducted relating to the retention or attrition of teachers. Their research included the analysis of 14 studies focusing on teacher salary and teacher attrition and concluded that higher teacher salaries are linked to decreased teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

### **Limitations**

All research studies are faced with potential limitations; this study was no exception. As the researcher for this case study, all of the data collection processes were solely completed by me, opening up room for researcher bias. My prior experience in private education as a teacher and administrator, as well as my time working at the research site, might have impacted data collection. While I demonstrated great care in my work, meticulously and cautiously handling data and committing to thorough and organized documentation, my previous experience remains a source of potential limitation.

The design of this research study also carried limitations outside of researcher bias. The short-term design of the study reduced the development of understanding to a defined period of time that naturally is not as thorough as a longitudinal study. Increasing the length of the site visit, and potentially adding additional visits throughout one or several school years, would definitely create a more robust and rich investigation of the case. Similarly, the selection of a single site narrowed the data collected to one school. Expanding the case study to include multiple sites would have provided additional perspectives to investigate.

Another limitation was the representation of tenure and ethnic diversity present in the interview participants. While the majority of the faculty at-large have been employed at the school one to five years, this was the most underrepresented group among the teachers interviewed. With the greatest teacher turnover happening in the early years of teaching (NCTAF, 2002), the lack of representation of this group potentially influenced the data collected from teacher interviews. Along the same lines, the homogenous ethnic makeup of the faculty posed a limitation in the perspectives from the teachers. While this was a characteristic of the research site and was not able to be overcome, collecting perceptions from an entirely White

population did not allow for the investigation of ethnic differences in work conditions leading to teacher retention.

The final limitation was related to the interview protocol created for this study. Since I designed the interview protocol, including all the specific questions, the validity and reliability of this data collection instrument is unknown. Even with the field-tests that I conducted prior to using the protocol in this study, the consistency of the interview data was potentially influenced by minor, unintentional changes in my delivery of the questions or the variations in the teachers' interpretations of the questions.

### **Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

**Implications for practice.** The results of this study offer five distinct implications for future practice within small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based secondary schools. First, the findings indicate school culture has a significant power on teacher retention. The most valuable aspects of the school culture, according to the faculty in this study, are the relational and familial natures. This can be fostered through intentional practices initiated by school administration. One significant practice is the establishment of a daily schedule that is conducive for teachers to connect professionally and personally. This could be achieved through common planning periods, duty-free shared lunch times, and regular social time built into the structure of meetings. This time could be used to foster the deep relationships and community that this study offered as influential to teacher retention.

In addition to the schedule, administrators can create spaces that invite personal connection between teachers and administration. The results of this study suggested that this casual and organic interaction was vital in growing the connection between staff and open access to administrators. Supplying coffee in the teacher workroom, enlisting parent groups to provide

appreciation breakfasts once a month, and offering refreshments at meetings are some practices that would support a relational culture. In addition, organizing social gatherings for teachers outside of the workday nurtures the personal connections that elevate peer and teacher-administrator relationships to form a tight-knit, familial community.

Second, the results of this study suggest that teacher retention is enhanced when the faculty feels supported as individuals not just employees. The school administration should exhibit loving, caring, and encouraging behaviors when interacting with teachers that form the foundation of this support. This can be achieved by demonstrating genuine care and appreciation for teachers personally and professionally. In addition, administrators should invest time in knowing teachers deeply, stay connected to the teachers' lives outside of school, and invite teachers' families to school-sponsored events.

Thirdly, the results of the study also suggest that having a strong professional teacher-administrator relationship is connected to teacher retention in the school. The faculty indicated that having supportive administrators who are available and present was extremely important. Many small, faith-based schools have administrators carrying additional responsibilities outside of teacher support and supervision. Similarly, the administrative support for administrators is often not as robust as larger private schools and public schools. In order to advance administrative support, a school must allocate adequate time in administrator schedules to be available and present. This can be achieved by narrowing the responsibilities of administrators and providing ample support staff to allow for regular and deep interaction with teachers. Building off of availability, administrative support must include advocacy, care, and encouragement and lead to follow-through of meeting teacher needs.

Additionally, the study findings clearly reveal the importance of teachers' possessing avenues to voice opinions and ideas to administration. More specifically, the teachers in this study indicated that they value having access to the administration through open-door practices and regular interaction with administration. This pushes against the traditional methods of providing teacher voice, such as surveys and committee involvement. To meet this need, administrators need to be available as stated in the previous recommendation. Providing the ability for teachers to engage with administration face-to-face through drop-ins, scheduled appointments, or crossing paths during the school day allows teachers to feel valued and heard.

Lastly, the results of this study suggest that when teachers are given autonomy, they are more likely to return year-to-year. This was a clearly developed and articulated theme. Administrators must foster the autonomy of their teachers by extending trust in classroom-level decisions. Teachers should be empowered to creatively implement instructional techniques and present material in a way that reinforces individual gifts and talents. This freedom to try new things and explore innovation helps teachers feel valued and trusted.

**Implications for policy.** The results of this study offer three significant implications for future policy within small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based secondary schools. First, the results indicated that a shared mission and purpose was linked to teacher retention. All of the teachers who participated in interviews offered the school's mission as an important factor while the mission was woven into school policy. It is essential for the school administration to develop and clearly articulate a mission statement. The mission statement should become the foundation of all the rest of the school's policy and should be used as a litmus test the implementation of policy.

Secondly, the results of the study suggest that teachers consider student discipline when making decisions to return year-to-year. The teachers voiced that having minor student discipline

and clear expectations related to student behavior are necessary to meet this need. One recommendation for administrators to support teachers in this area is by creating policies that establish teachers as authorities with the power to directly handle student discipline. This empowerment allows teachers to have a part in ensuring positive behavior in and out of their classes. Another encouragement is for administrators to offer very clear articulations of student behavior expectations and consequences for negative behavior within school policy. This helps remove any ambiguity of communication that could exist in this school sector and reinforces a unified approach to student discipline.

Thirdly, the results offer the need for policy to foster teacher voice in school decisions. Administrators should create policy that encourages or requires teacher participation in representation groups like committees or councils. Involvement in these groups will provide the faculty an opportunity to speak honestly about issues impacting the classroom teacher role. In addition, teachers will have the option to share opinions, ideas, and solutions to presenting school issues. Similarly, the school should create policy to require and implement annual surveys and administrator evaluations. This will establish an anonymous avenue for teachers to have a voice.

**Implications for theory.** The results of this study affirm much of the existing literature but challenge the impact of compensation and workload on teacher retention. According to existing research, teacher attrition is influenced by a variety of factors. A review of relevant studies revealed four main frameworks offered to explain this complex process (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1993; Chapman, 1984; Sher, 1983). Chapman (1984) identified five areas that influence teacher attrition—personal characteristics, training/experience, social and professional integration into the teaching profession, career satisfaction, and external

environmental factors. Sher (1983) offers another model grounded in three areas—characteristics, conditions, and compensation—as an overarching framework of influencers.

Billingsley (1993) offers a model of influencers divided into three categories: external factors, employment factors, and personal factors. Brownell and Smith (1993) suggest that teacher attrition is impacted by interconnected forces, which can be modeled as nesting systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Offering a narrowed look at teacher retention, Swars et al. (2009) outline a two-dimensional model of teacher retention and mobility that connects the agreement between the teacher and organization to help predict whether teachers are more likely to stay or leave their current teaching position. While Chapman (1984), Sher (1983), Billingsley (1993), Brownell and Smith (1993), and Swars et al. (2009) all approach the organization of impacting factors differently, they are consistent in their focus on the four primary types—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, work conditions, and non-school factors.

The findings of this study support the impact of work conditions on teacher retention; however, they deviate in the discussion of compensation and workload. Other research demonstrates a connection between increased salary and longevity within the teaching field and decreased teacher attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Jacobson, 1988; Murnane & Olsen, 1990). Workload is an additional factor influencing teacher retention inversely with the increase of workload causing a decrease in retention (Salazar Sojo, 2003; Sieling, 2012). This study did not find a significant impact of either factor on the retention of teachers within small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based schools.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

While this study provided a much needed look into teacher retention within a small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based school, it does not give us a complete picture of teacher retention in schools. I offer as a recommendation for further research to broaden the research sites to include similar schools in other parts of Texas, other states in the country, and other countries around the world. The benefit of this further research lies in investigating whether the major themes from this study are consistent outside of the specific school site and the geographic region. Obtaining data from these other schools would also assist in establishing the results as more transferrable to a greater number of schools leading to a potential increase in teacher retention.

Another recommendation for further research is to expand the investigation to include some or all of the other factors that influence teacher retention in small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based schools. Existing research has established a variety of factors contributing to teacher turnover—teacher personal characteristics, teacher professional characteristics, and non-school factors—in addition to work conditions (Billingsley, 1993; Brownell & Smith, 1993; Chapman, 1984; Sher, 1983; Swars et al., 2009). While the other factors have been shown to impact teacher retention and attrition, this study narrowed the research to only school-based factors allowing for findings supporting the research goal of informing school practices and policies. By opening future research to thoroughly investigate the other factors, administrators within the studies school sector would receive a more thorough understanding of factors that influence teacher retention. This could be a benefit in the recruitment process and further strengthen teacher retention efforts.

## **Conclusion**

Teachers are the very foundation of a successful educational program. Excellent teachers lead to excellent students. Professional consensus points to the quality of instruction as the most powerful factor influencing student achievement (Shakrani, 2008). In addition, research suggests that teacher effectiveness increases with experience during the first 7 years (NCTAF, 2010) and continues to increase up to 20 years with experience in the same grade level (Huang & Moon, 2009). If the mission of secondary education is successful students, retaining effective teachers in schools is the means to building a thriving educational system. The answer, then, is simple. In order to increase student achievement and preparation for global competition, quality teachers must be hired, developed, and retained.

While the goal of small, faith-based schools is student success, the mission of this sector of schools goes beyond academic performance. These schools exist to transform students spiritually, intellectually, and personally. Prensky (2014) articulates this by arguing that learning is not the goal of education. Isolated learning is hollow; education is about being changed—becoming something that you were not before. This transformation includes thinking, relating, accomplishing, and reflecting and is accomplished by way of authentic challenge within cultivated relationships between students and teachers. It is a slow and intentional process.

The importance of continuity within the school staff is understood when faith-based education is viewed through this filter. It is vital that the faculty is comprised of quality teachers who return year-to-year to deepen relationships with students and continue the momentum of student transformation. Stability is a key ingredient. Teacher attrition is a threat to this mission, and efforts to understand contributing factors and development of proactive practices and policies schools can implement to positively stimulate retention are necessary.

The purpose of this single, instrumental case study was to examine practices and policies that support teacher retention within small, private, non-Catholic faith-based secondary schools. With teacher attrition reaching its highest level within small, faith-based schools, it is essential to fully investigate schools within this category that have achieved and sustained high teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001). The focus of the study was on the work conditions within small, private, faith-based secondary schools that promote strong teacher retention. Since work conditions, such as compensation, workload, student discipline, teacher voice in school decisions, administrative support and interaction, and a school culture or sense of community, are connected to the practices and policies within a school, understanding these factors could help inform a positive change in teacher retention within this segment of schools.

Previous research studies have focused on work conditions that support or hinder teacher retention within public and larger private schools but have not adequately investigated them within small, faith-based secondary schools. This lack of literature on factors that influence teacher retention and attrition within this type of institution was the impetus for this study. The study was guided by the research question: What work conditions at small faith-based secondary schools support strong teacher retention?

The research study was conducted at a small, faith-based, private school in rural Texas. The focus of the study is on the high school campus, which included fewer than 300 students in Grades 9–12. Data was collected through on-site teacher interviews and observations and an off-site document review. As the data was reviewed, coded, and recoded, the saturation of data became apparent with four primary emerging themes: a relational school culture, supportive relationship with administration, prominent teacher voice, and minor and infrequent student discipline. Further analysis revealed subcategorization of data and codes within the first four

emerging themes. The presenting school culture can be organized into the following themes: a personal and relational culture, a familial culture, a supportive and collaborative culture, and a Christ-centered culture. Likewise, administrative support can be organized into the following themes: support through being present and available; support through active care, love, and encouragement; and support through valuing teachers as professionals with autonomy and trust. Additionally, teacher voice in school decisions can be broken into teacher voice through formal avenues and teacher voice through informal avenues. Also, student discipline can be expressed through the themes: minor and infrequent student discipline and high and clear student behavior expectations.

In the end, the results of this study did successfully answer the research question. The results revealed that school culture, administrative support, teacher voice, and student discipline played major roles in the teachers' decisions to return year-to-year. Additionally, the results indicated that teacher workload and compensation did not significantly impact teachers' plans to return. These results offer a foundation of understanding the work conditions that influence teacher retention in small, private, non-Catholic, faith-based secondary schools and set the stage for further research.

## References

- Adams, G. J., & Dial, M. (1994). The effects of education on teacher retention. *Education, 114*(3), 358–364.
- Adams, K., & Lawrence, E. (2014). *Research methods, statistics, and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2005). *Teacher attrition: A costly loss to the nation and to the states*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Angelle, P. S. (2006). Instructional leadership and monitoring: Increasing teacher intent to stay through socialization. *NASSP Bulletin, 90*(4), 318–334.
- Anthony, G., & Ord, K. (2008). Change-of-career secondary teachers: Motivations, expectations and intentions. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(4), 359–376.
- Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Baker, V. D. (2007). Relationship between job satisfaction and the perception of administrative support among early career secondary choral music educators. *Journal of Music Teacher Education, 17*(1), 77–91.
- Billingsley, B. S. (1993). Teacher retention and attrition in special and general education: A critical review of the literature. *The Journal of Special Education, 27*(2), 137–174.
- Boe, E., Bobbitt, S.A., Cook, L.H., Barkanic, G., Maislin, G. (1998). *National trends in teacher supply and turnover for special and general education*. Data analysis report no. 1998–DAR1. Philadelphia, PA: Center for Research and Evaluation in Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania.

- Bogler, R. (2001). The influence of leadership style on teacher job satisfaction. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 37(5) 662–683.
- Bogler, R., & Nir, A. E. (2015). The contribution of perceived fit between job demands and abilities to teachers' commitment and job satisfaction. *Educational Management Administration Leadership*, 43(4), 541–556.
- Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of educational research*, 78(3), 367–409.
- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). The influence of school administrators on teacher retention decisions. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(2), 303–333.
- Branch, R. A., II. (2013). *Leadership practices of a principal in a high school with a high teacher retention rate* (Order No. 3571650). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1426845831). Retrieved from <http://cupdx.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/docview/1426845831?accountid=10248>
- Bromley, D. B. (1990). Academic contributions to psychological counselling: I. A philosophy of science for the study of individual cases. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 3(3), 299–307.
- Brownell, M. T., & Smith, S. W. (1993). Understanding special education teacher attrition: A conceptual model and implications for teacher educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 16(3), 370–382.
- Chapman, D. W. (1984). Teacher retention: The test of a model. *American Educational Research Journal*, 21(3), 645–658.

- Chapman, D. W., & Green, M. S. (1986). Teacher retention: A further examination. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 79(5), 273–279.
- Chapman, D. W., & Hutcheson, S. M. (1982). Attrition from teaching careers: A discriminant analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19(1), 93–105.
- Cowan, T. H. (2010). *Teacher perspectives on factors that affect teacher attrition and retention in rural middle schools of North Carolina* (Order No. 3427786). Available from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; ProQuest Social Sciences Premium Collection. (815406786). Retrieved from <http://cupdx.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/docview/815406786?accountid=10248>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Culver, S. M., Wolfle, L. M., & Cross, L. H. (1990). Testing a model of teacher satisfaction for blacks and whites. *American Educational Research Journal*, 27(2), 323–349.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teacher's College, Columbia University.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R. C., & Andree, A. (2010). How high-achieving countries develop great teachers. *Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education - Research Brief, 1–8*. Retrieved from [http://www.oup.hu/howhigh\\_doug.pdf](http://www.oup.hu/howhigh_doug.pdf)

- Fuller, F., & Brown, O. (1975). Becoming a teacher. In K. Ryan (Ed.), *Teacher education: Seventy-fourth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Gonzalez, P. (1995). Factors that influence teacher attrition. *NSTEP Information Brief*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED389127.pdf>
- Grissmer, D. W., & Kirby, S. N. (1987). *Teacher attrition: The uphill climb to staff the nation's schools*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corp.
- Hamburg, B. E. (2012). *Teacher attrition and retention: An uphill climb that education must overcome to save schools* (Order No. 3517153). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1031210520). Retrieved from <http://cupdx.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/docview/1031210520?accountid=10248>
- Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2006). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2012). *The global fourth way: The quest for educational excellence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Hawks, C. R. (2016). *The relationship between satisfaction, motivation, and caseload and teacher retention* (Order No. 10090323). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1779524703). Retrieved from <http://cupdx.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/docview/1779524703?accountid=10248>

- Heyns, B. (1988). Educational defectors: A first look at teacher attrition in the NLS-72. *Educational Researcher*, 17(3), 24–32.
- Huang, F. L., & Moon, T. R. (2009). Is experience the best teacher? A multilevel analysis of teacher characteristics and student achievement in low performing schools. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(3), 209–234.
- Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American educational research journal*, 38(3), 499–534.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & May, H. (2012). The magnitude, destinations, and determinants of mathematics and science teacher turnover. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(4), 435–464.
- Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(42), 1–10. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol17/iss42/3>
- Jacobson, S. (1988). Alternative practices of internal salary distribution and their effects on teacher recruitment and retention. *Journal of Education Finance*, 14(2), 274–284.
- Keigher, A., & Cross, F. (2010). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the 2008–09 Teacher Follow-up Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Killian, J. N., & Baker, V. D. (2006). The effect of personal and situational factors in the attrition and retention of Texas music educators. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 16(1), 41–55.
- Legard, R., Keegan, J., & Ward, K. (2003). In-depth interviews. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 138–169). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods* (2nd ed.). South

- Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Littrell, P. C., Billingsley, B. S., & Cross, L. H. (1994). The effects of principal support on special and general educators' stress, job satisfaction, school commitment, health, and intent to stay in teaching. *Remedial and Special Education, 15*(5), 297–310.
- Lodico, M., Spaulding, D., & Voegtle, K. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- MacQueen, K. M., McLellan-Lemal, E., Bartholow, K., & Milstein, B. (2008). Team-based codebook development: Structure, process, and agreement. In G. Guest & K. M. MacQueen (Eds.), *Handbook for team-based qualitative research* (pp. 119–135). Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Madsen, C. K., & Hancock, C. B. (2002). Support for music education: A case study of issues concerning teacher retention and attrition. *Arts Education Policy Review, 104*(1), 19–24.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McGrath, D. J., & Princiotta, D. (2005). *Private school teacher turnover and teacher perceptions of school organizational characteristics. Issue Brief No. NCES 2005-061*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education Institute of Educational Sciences.
- McMillan, J. H. (2012). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. doi: 10.4135/9781412957397
- Murnane, R. J., & Olsen, R. J. (1990). The effects of salaries and opportunity costs on length of stay in teaching: Evidence from North Carolina. *Journal of Human Resources*, 25(1), 106–124.
- Murnane, R., Singer, J., & Willett, J. (1989). The influences of salaries and “opportunity costs” on teachers' career choices: Evidence from North Carolina. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59(3), 325–347.
- National Commission of Teaching and America’s Future. (2002). *Unraveling the “teacher shortage” problem: Teacher retention is the key*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. (2010). Who will teach? Experience matters. *NCTAF Research Reports*. Retrieved from <http://nctaf.org>.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pigge, F. L., & Marso, R. N. (1992). A longitudinal comparison of the academic, affective, and personal characteristics of persisters and nonpersisters in teacher preparation. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 61(1), 19–26.
- Prensky, M. (2014). The goal of education is becoming. *Education Week*, 33(30), 36–40. Retrieved from [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/05/06/30prensky\\_ep.h33.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/05/06/30prensky_ep.h33.html)

- Ronfeldt, M., Reininger, M., & Kwok, A. (2013). Recruitment or preparation? Investigating the effects of teacher characteristics and student teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64(4), 319–337.
- Sahlberg, P. (2015). *Finnish lessons 2.0: What can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teacher's College, Columbia University.
- Salazar Sojo, R. M. (2003). *Examination of the factors associated with teacher retention in small rural high schools* (Order No. 3092725). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (305331846). Retrieved from <http://cupdx.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/docview/305331846?accountid=10248>
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Schlechty, P. C., & Vance, V. S. (1981). Do academically able teachers leave education? The North Carolina case. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 63(2), 106–112.
- Shakrani, S. (2008). Teacher turnover: Costly crisis, solvable problem. *Education Policy Center, Michigan State University*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502130.pdf>
- Sher, J. (1983). Education's ugly duckling: Rural schools in urban nations. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 65(4), 257–262.
- Sieling, K. P. (2012). *Teacher and administrator perceptions of teacher turnover at a private school* (Order No. 3543228). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1175871544). Retrieved from <http://cupdx.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.cupdx.idm.oclc.org/docview/1175871544?accountid=10248>

- Simon, M. K., & Goes, J. (2013). *Dissertation and scholarly research: Recipes for success*. Seattle, WA: Dissertation Success LLC.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Starks, H. and Trinidad, S. B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1372–80.
- Stewart, V. (2012). *A world-class education: Learning from international models of excellence and innovation*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Stinebrickner, T. R. (1998). An empirical investigation of teacher attrition. *Economics of Education Review*, 17(2), 127–136.
- Stockard, J., & Lehman, M. B. (2004). Influences on the satisfaction and retention of 1st-year teachers: The importance of effective school management. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(5), 742–771.
- TNTP. (2012). *Greenhouse schools: How schools can build cultures where teachers and students thrive*. Retrieved from [http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP\\_Greenhouse\\_Schools\\_2012.pdf](http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Greenhouse_Schools_2012.pdf)
- Waddell, J. H. (2010). Fostering relationships to increase teacher retention in urban schools. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 4(1), 70–85.
- Watts, J. (2016). An exploration of teacher retention in rural school districts in Eastern Kentucky. *Theses and Dissertations - Education Science*. Paper 13. Retrieved from [http://uknowledge.uky.edu/edsc\\_etds/13](http://uknowledge.uky.edu/edsc_etds/13)

- Wong, H. (2003). Induction programs that keep working. In M. Scherer (Ed.), *Keeping good teachers* (pp. 42–49). Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum and Development.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

## **Appendix A: Interview Protocol**

### Interview Information:

Interviewee Name:

Location:

Date and Time:

Email address:

### Preliminary Information:

1. Give brief overview of study
2. Request permission to audio record and take notes of interview
3. Review and ask for interviewee to sign consent form
4. Explain member checking and the process that will be used to get transcript to the interviewee

### Interview Questions:

1. Briefly tell me about yourself.
  - a. How did you become an educator?
2. How did you begin working at this school?

#### SCHOOL CULTURE:

3. Tell me about the school culture?
  - a. Community?

#### ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT:

4. Tell me about your relationship to your administrative team.
  - a. Observations?
  - b. Assistance/Availability?
  - c. Support?

TEACHER VOICE:

5. Tell me about the part teachers play in school decisions.
  - a. A time when you had a voice?

WORKLOAD:

6. Tell me about your job.
  - a. Number of classes/preps?
  - b. Duties?
  - c. Reasonable?

STUDENT DISCIPLINE:

7. Tell me about student discipline at this school.

COMPENSATION:

8. Tell me about teacher feelings about compensation at this school.

ADDITIONAL PERCEPTIONS:

9. What about this school leads to your decision to continue to teach here?
10. Is there something different or unique about this school that motivates teachers to stay?

## Appendix B: Document Review Protocol

Document Title/Number:

Number of pages:

Circle one: Internal    External

Date of Review:

Area	Notes from Review
Compensation	
Workload	
Student Discipline	
Teacher Voice	
Admin Support	
School Culture	

### Appendix C: Observation Protocol

School Name and Location:

Observer:

Date:

Start Time:

Stop Time:

Location	Compensation	Workload	Discipline	Teacher Voice	Admin Support	School Culture
Classrooms						
Hallways						
Teachers' Lounge						
Admin Offices						
Faculty Meeting						
Other:						
Other:						

### Appendix D: Observation Schedule

Date	Start Time	End Time	Location
11/07/2018	8:00AM	9:02AM	Faculty Meeting
11/07/2018	10:30AM	11:30AM	Chapel
11/08/2018	8:45AM	9:10AM	Teachers' Lounge
11/08/2018	9:15AM	9:25AM	Classroom
11/08/2018	9:25AM	9:35AM	Classroom
11/08/2018	9:35AM	9:45AM	School Office
11/08/2018	9:50AM	10:00AM	Classroom
11/08/2018	10:50AM	11:00AM	Hallway
11/09/2018	10:45AM	11:15AM	Gym—Pep Rally
11/09/2018	11:30AM	11:45AM	Cafeteria
11/09/2018	1:35PM	1:45PM	Classroom
11/09/2018	1:50PM	2:00PM	Classroom
11/09/2018	2:00PM	2:10PM	Classroom
11/09/2018	2:15PM	2:20PM	Classroom
11/09/2018	2:20PM	2:30PM	Hallway
11/09/2018	6:30PM	7:00PM	Community Event
11/09/2018	7:00PM	8:00PM	Athletic Event

## Appendix E: Invitation to Potential Participants

**From:** Brian Nelson  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 31, 2018 10:50 AM  
**To:** Brian Nelson  
**Subject:** Research Interview Participation

Dear Colleague,

I am currently pursuing my Ed.D. degree in Teacher Leadership through the College of Education at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. As the capstone of my doctoral program, I am conducting a research project to investigate what conditions influence teachers to stay committed to their school. My desire is to garner insight into teacher retention that might be useful to small, faith-based schools. One aspect of my research project consists of a series of face-to-face interviews with upper school teachers conducted during my visit November 7–9, 2018. The face-to-face interviews will take approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted in a confidential location on the school's campus at a time that is convenient for you. Your participation would be invaluable to my research project.

### Compensation:

You will receive no compensation for your participation in this study.

### Risks and Confidentiality:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, your information will be protected. As the principal investigator, I will digitally record all interviews. The recordings will be transcribed by a transcribing service that is in a binding agreement to hold all information confidential. Then, as soon as the transcripts are checked for accuracy, the recordings will be deleted. Any data you provide will be coded so that your information cannot be linked to you.

### Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but I acknowledge that the questions I am asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating.

I hope that you will consider participating in one of the face-to-face interviews. Information you provide will help inform the study and strengthening of teacher retention within small, private faith-based secondary schools. If you have any questions about participation in this study or becoming an interview participant, you may contact me at [redacted].

If you would be willing to participate in a face-to-face interview, please respond to this invitation email with your name, preferred contact information, and your availability during the interview period of November 7–9, 2018.

I will contact you by the end of the day on November 6, 2018 to confirm your participation and the time and location of the interview.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brian Nelson  
Doctoral Candidate  
Concordia University–Portland

### Appendix F: Teacher Interview Schedule

Participant	Date	Time	Location
1048	11/07/2018	10:45AM	Classroom
1405	11/07/2018	2:00PM	Classroom
1509	11/07/2018	3:00PM	Classroom
1608	11/07/2018	4:00PM	Classroom
1012	11/08/2018	10:00AM	Classroom
1121	11/08/2018	11:00AM	Classroom
1321	11/08/2018	1:00PM	Classroom
1513	11/08/2018	3:00PM	Classroom
0817	11/09/2018	8:00AM	Classroom
1240	11/09/2018	1:00PM	Classroom

## **Appendix G: Member Checking Email**

**From:** Brian Nelson

**Sent:** Friday, December 7, 2018 2:15 PM

**To:** Participant

**Subject:** Interview Transcript

Participant,

Thank you again for participating in the interview portion of my case study. Please find the transcript from your interview attached to this email. I ask that you take a moment to review it for accuracy of words and meaning, make any corrections needed, and send it back to me with your final approval.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

Brian Nelson

Doctoral Candidate

Concordia University–Portland

## **Appendix H: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations:**

#### *What does “fraudulent” mean?*

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### *What is “unauthorized” assistance?*

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

**Statement of Original Work (Continued)**

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

*Brian S. Nelson*

---

Digital Signature

Brian Samuel Nelson

---

Name (Typed)

April 23, 2020

---

Date