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Award-Winning Teachers' Perceptions of the Missouri Leadership Development System's Principal Competencies as a Factor in Teacher Retention

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

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Shelly Parks

MA, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2005

BS, Harding University, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership and Administration

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August 2025

Abstract

This qualitative descriptive study addressed low teacher retention in the U.S. state of Missouri, where ineffective school leadership is often noted as a primary cause for why teachers leave the profession despite the existing Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS) principal training. Guided by the job demands-resources theory, the purpose of this study was to explore award-winning teachers' perceptions of MLDS principal competencies as an influence on retention and gather suggestions for refinement. Phase 1 involved surveying 82 award-winning Missouri teachers on the appropriateness of the 41 principal competencies for retention where teachers ranked each competency. Survey data were analyzed to determine the relative importance of each competency, and the mean and standard deviation identified the highest and lowest-ranked competencies. Phase 2 involved semistructured interviews with 13 late-career, award-winning teachers. Interview data were analyzed using open coding to identify relevant themes. Based on the survey results, relational competencies (e.g., fostering collaboration, positive relationships) were highest ranked for retaining teachers, whereas the compliance competency and innovative leadership competencies were ranked lowest. Similarly, emergent themes in the interview data suggest that teachers desire (a) principal mentoring and collaboration, (b) input on school practices, (c) support for student behavior, and (d) foundational principal-teacher relationships. Recommendations include refining MLDS training to align with teacher-identified priorities. Revisions to principal training could contribute to positive social change by cultivating stronger leaders who better support teachers, potentially improving Missouri's teacher retention rate.

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Dedication

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my husband, Michael, who is a consistent source of support and encouragement. You keep our family running on love, delicious food, and Jesus. Your wise words, “just because something is free doesn’t mean it doesn’t come at a cost,” resonated deeply, yet you remained my biggest champion, even when my early morning work sessions cut into your gym time.

I also dedicate this work to my four amazing children, Elise, Bennett, Deacon, and Judah. Your belief in me and your patience with me throughout this process have been a constant reminder that you deserve the same unwavering support from me as you pursue your passions.

To my mom, your example of hard work and endless generosity is unmatched. Because of your example, I persevered through this process and saw this journey through to the end.

Finally, to my friend and colleague Anne, who swooped in to save the day when I was on the brink of giving up. Your selfless sacrifice of time and energy, spent across the table from me at Bread Company or the library, will never be forgotten.

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I would like to acknowledge Dr. James Bailey, who has been an incredible committee chair. Thank you for your endless, timely feedback and for being an email or phone call away to answer my questions. It takes an exceptional human being to invest so much time and energy into another person's research, and many days, it was your enthusiasm and excitement about my study that reinvigorated me.

I also want to acknowledge Dr. Chris Cale, my second committee member. Dr. Cale provided quality feedback and encouragement that helped me cross the finish line.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In 2016, Missouri launched a statewide principal development initiative called The Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS), which provides professional development to every principal in the state, utilizing a standard set of leadership competencies. In 2022–23, 1,628 educators employed by 425 school districts, 15 charter schools, and 58 non-public schools (Liang & Slotnik, 2023) participated in professional learning through MLDS. Not all participating educators identified their roles, but of the 1,556 participants who did, 863 of them were principals (55.5%), 552 of them were assistant principals (35.5%), and 141 were identified as other educators (9.0%) (Liang & Slotnik, 2023). Today, 45% of Missouri principals participate annually (Duffrin, 2022).

Despite having a strategic system to develop Missouri's school leaders, just 5 years after developing and implementing MLDS, Missouri teachers still struggle to stay in the profession because they do not feel like they are working with strong school administrators. Missouri's 2021 Teacher Workforce report concludes that only 48% of the teaching workforce remains in the profession after the first 5 years. In the 2021 report, Missouri teachers cited poor salary, lack of solid administration, and lack of support as their top three factors for leaving education (Katnik, 2021). By asking Missouri teachers which principal competencies were most important to their retention, the information they provided can be shared with trainers and leaders of MLDS. Those trainers can shift or revise their professional development content as needed.

In this chapter, I will briefly overview the importance of strong school leadership to teacher retention, which I will explore further in the background section. I will then

give an overview of the study, including the problem statement, purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, nature, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. I will conclude by discussing the potential significance of the research and its potential impact on social change.

Background

Administrative support is one of several factors impacting teachers' working conditions and is repeatedly named as a primary factor in teacher retention (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Podolsky *et al.*, 2016; Urick, 2016). Research from around the world highlights administrative support as the most significant factor influencing whether teachers choose to remain in education (Horng, 2009; Martinez & McAbee, 2020; Tran & Smith, 2019; Yakavets et al., 2017). Kaiser and Thomson (2021) interviewed principals to hear their experiences on how they help support teachers to counteract stress and burnout. This study showed how leaders determine what teachers need and implement interventions to reduce the stressors that cause teachers to leave the profession. Kaiser and Thomson (2021) found that the common sources principals see teachers stressed about are the workload, student discipline, and accountability or teacher evaluations. The ways principals were able to support teachers that proved to be most beneficial included autonomy, collaborative relationships, and peer mentorship. This study has compelling research on the principal's critical role in supporting teacher retention.

Similarly, Shell et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review that synthesized the findings of fourteen studies focusing on the decline of teacher retention in elementary and secondary schools in the United States. The review summarized the findings for the

decrease in teacher retention. The findings included that clear communication and support are crucial to teacher retention in the United States, and they also noted that other qualities of principals who retain teachers include principals who recognize how hard their teachers are working, as well as principals who enforce discipline and are fair when they evaluate teachers. Shell et al. (2023) concluded that if principals are going to help contribute to teacher retention, they must work on the qualities noted.

These studies illustrate the need for improving school leadership to improve teacher retention. A survey of California principals that was able to control for other student, teacher, and school characteristics found that strong principal preparation and access to professional development were significantly associated with increased teacher retention and student achievement (Campoli & Darling-Hammond, 2022), and the state of Missouri has created a plan for principal professional development.

MLDS is reaching many principals in Missouri through its development program. Two organizations, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Comprehensive Center Network (Liang & Slotnik, 2023), have evaluated the MLDS thus far. Both organizations have surveyed Missouri school leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of MLDS. These survey results have no teacher voice, even though Missouri teachers say they are leaving due to a lack of a strong school leader. There is a disconnect between Missouri leaders and Missouri teachers, yet no one thus far has asked the teachers to try to describe their perception of the disconnect, which is why this study is needed.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed through this study is that, despite the introduction of the MLDS and competencies created in 2016 to develop strong school leaders, the lack of effective leadership is still cited as a primary reason for the low retention rate of Missouri teachers. Teacher retention has been a problem we have yet to solve over the past 20 years. As early as 2005, nearly 450,000 left their jobs in American public schools (Johnson et al., 2005). Research indicates that the leadership style of a principal significantly impacts whether a teacher leaves or stays at their school (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Currently, Bryant et al. (2023) corroborate the need for strong school leadership; in fact, at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, they surveyed more than 1800 United States educators, and from that survey, 33% of 1800 survey respondents claimed they are leaving due to uninspiring school leadership.

Tran et al. (2023) examined teachers' perceptions about the importance of school administrative support for teacher retention. The researchers used a sample of teachers from South Carolina. They derived a list of 13 attributes to see how South Carolina teachers ranked those administrative support attributes using a Best-Worst scale. The findings indicated that respect was the most crucial attribute of administrative support, and this was found across each of the subgroups of teachers (school type, retention status, and locale). Tran's study out of South Carolina, asking teachers which administrative supports were most important to them, inspired this study, which will take place in Missouri. Through this qualitative study, I can report which competencies and skills Missouri teachers find most appropriate for teacher retention and share their suggestions

for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve retention. I will ask MLDS leaders and trainers to focus their training on the competencies most important to teacher retention.

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative descriptive study, I explored perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri regarding the appropriateness of the principal competencies in the MLDS for influencing teacher retention and their suggestions for refining the principal competencies to improve retention. The concept explored through this study is administrative support as a resource that can buffer between teachers and their job demands (Tickle et al., 2011).

Research Questions

The following research questions underpinned this qualitative study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri about the appropriateness of the MLDS principal competencies for influencing teacher retention?

RQ2: What are the suggestions of award-winning teachers in Missouri for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention?

Conceptual Framework

The concept explored through this study is administrative support as a resource that can buffer between teachers and their job demands. The job demands-resource (JD-R) theory supports this qualitative descriptive study (Demerouti et al., 2001). The JD-R examines employee well-being through the lens of two different categories: job resources and job demands. Job demands are generally the “most important predictors of such

outcomes as exhaustion, psychosomatic health complaints, and repetitive strain injury" (Bakker et al., 2003b; Hakanen et al., 2006), whereas job resources lead to motivation, work enjoyment, and engagement (Bakker et al., 2007, 2010). Job resources are defined as physical, psychological, social, or organizational elements of a job that are helpful in reaching work goals. They can also lessen the physiological and psychological costs of job demands or encourage personal growth and development (Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Three primary factors are identified as Job Resources when understanding teacher well-being through the JD-R theory. Supportive leadership is one of those three primary job resources, in addition to school climate and social support, which principals also influence. To illustrate the importance of a school leader, the JD-R theory recognizes the school leader's impact on buffering effects. The 'buffering' effect occurs when job resources reduce or counteract the negative impact of job demands (Bakker et al., 2005). This means that a supportive school leader can be a significant factor in buffering how teachers perceive and respond to their job demands.

Knowing that job demands can be buffered by job resources (Bakker et al., 2005) shows us the impact effective school leadership as a job resource can have on improving teacher retention and avoiding teacher burnout due to job demands. This is why I surveyed award-winning Missouri teachers to see how their school leader is a resource to help them meet their job demands. While we know that ineffective school leadership is just one factor Missouri teachers cited in 2021 for choosing to leave the profession, the JD-R theory shows that job resources, one being supportive leadership, can reduce job-

related stress and can help individuals respond more positively to job demands (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

Most recently, the Missouri State Teachers Association surveyed its members on the state of the profession in January and February 2024 (Missouri State Teachers Association, 2024). More than 2,300 members responded, including non-certified members, teachers, administrators, and retired members. One of their findings was that student behaviors significantly impact teacher recruitment and retention efforts. In 2024, this survey indicated that student behaviors are the most significant reason Missouri educators are considering leaving the profession and the largest source of stress, the second most significant reason Missouri educators consider leaving (Missouri State Teachers Association, 2024).

Concerning the JD-R theory, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) discovered that when Finnish teachers had strong support from school leaders, a positive organizational climate, and high levels of innovativeness, their work engagement rwas not negatively impacted by student behavior. This demonstrates that job resources, one of which is supportive leadership, better support teachers in buffering demanding situations. This means that helping improve Missouri's school leadership could impact how Missouri teachers feel about their school leaders and help buffer some other factors for Missouri teachers considering leaving the profession.

Teachers face significant demands in their jobs, and the JD-R theory illustrates that those job demands must be met with job resources to ensure teachers stay in education. Missouri has invested in the MLDS program to help Missouri principals

become influential leaders. The study approach was to ask Missouri teachers how Missouri principals can become better resources to help teachers meet their job demands. In asking Missouri teachers about their perceptions of the principal competencies related to their retention, I discovered which competencies best support teachers for their retention. This can help refine which skills principals most need to buffer teachers' job demands. When asking for suggestions, teachers reported which skills are still needed to help buffer their job demands. A more thorough explanation of the JD-R theory will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Ravitch and Carl (2021) asserted that "qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 33). A qualitative researcher differs from a quantitative researcher in that qualitative researchers seek to understand people's values, beliefs, and lived experiences rather than prove or disprove a hypothesis by analyzing numerical data. I used a qualitative descriptive research approach to help describe teacher perceptions of the MLDS principal competencies. I chose qualitative because I ascribe to the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism holds that reality is not a single, objective truth, but rather a subjective concept shaped by social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This fits with my study since I interpreted teachers' perceptions of the MLDS principal competencies.

Descriptive research aims to gather information to describe a phenomenon. In the case of my study, the phenomenon studied was administrative support as a resource that

can buffers between teachers and their job demands. Descriptive research can be done to help inform decision-making and program planning, and my goal was to collect data to share with MLDS leaders and trainers about which principal competencies Missouri teachers find most important, in hopes that they might shift the competencies on which the state of Missouri focuses its training of Missouri principals. In turn, I hope this makes Missouri teachers feel more supported by their school principals, potentially positively impacting Missouri's teacher retention rate.

The research methodology included two types of qualitative survey instruments and was conducted in two phases. The first phase used a qualitative descriptive study survey to survey between 50 and 100 award-winning Missouri teachers (those who have been honored by the state as a Regional Teacher of the Year, a State Teacher of the Year semifinalist, a State Teacher of the Year finalist, or a State Teacher of the Year) to get some basic descriptive statistics. The survey took the MLDS competencies for Missouri principals and asked the 50 to 100 award-winning Missouri teachers to use a 5-point Likert Important scale (*very unimportant*, *unimportant*, *neutral*, *important*, and *very important*) to rank the following question for each of the principal competencies: How appropriate is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

After I got the descriptive survey results, the second stage was in-depth interviews, which are considered an effective approach to examine a participant's experience related to a phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I intentionally selected a small sample of 10-15 award-winning teachers from the original 50 to 100 to investigate the critical ideas learned from the survey results. In the interviews, I framed interview

questions around the following question: What are the suggestions of award-winning teachers in Missouri for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention? Interviewees were selected from each of the 10 regions across the state of Missouri (only seven were represented), as well as teachers from the elementary and secondary levels and those who teach in rural, urban, and suburban schools, respectively, to gain a wide range of perspectives from across the state. This is an example of quota sampling, which takes a proportion representing a particular characteristic of interest in the population (Burkholder et al., 2020).

I conducted semistructured interviews with identified individuals to understand their ideas about the MLDS principal competencies and gather their recommendations. I used the interview data to conduct a thematic analysis and identify key findings that can be used to refine the MLDS in the context of teacher retention efforts. I am able to report which competencies and skills Missouri teachers find most appropriate for teacher retention, and share their suggestions for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve retention. I will ask the MLDS leaders and trainers to focus their training on the competencies most important to teacher retention. I had two reasons for choosing award-winning teachers. The primary reason is that the audience I hoped to challenge to hear what teachers say about the Missouri principal training is principals and the leaders who develop the training. While we know there are extreme flaws in any type of recognition system, the fact that award-winning teachers say these things can carry additional weight with the audience. I also had access to the 2014 to 2024 Missouri State Teachers of the Year network.

Definitions

Several terms are critical to understanding this study. To ensure readers understand the meaning of these terms and the context of how they are used in this study, they are defined as follows:

Administrator: For this study, a person currently serving as an assistant or head principal in a school building. In Missouri, to obtain this role, the administrator must have completed a master's degree or higher in educational administration from a Missouri-approved program and have a teaching certificate and at least 2 years of teaching experience (*Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education homepage)*.

Award-winning teachers: A Missouri teacher who has been named a regional, semifinalist, finalist, or Teacher of the Year. According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website (*Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education homepage)*, Missouri has a Teacher of the Year recognition system to recognize the contributions of the classroom teacher. Missouri identifies various levels of award winners, beginning with Regional Teachers of the Year and progressing to a singular State Teacher of the Year. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education criteria state that for a teacher to be considered as a Regional Teacher of the Year for Missouri, they must be full-time public or charter school teacher in Missouri with a valid teaching certificate. They should also be respected by students, parents, colleagues, and the wider community. Additionally, they must actively contribute to their school community through leadership and service, and show a clear

ability to promote educational excellence and enhance student learning (*Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education homepage)*. Counselors and library media specialists are eligible if they spend over 50% of their school day in direct classroom instruction. Districts can nominate their own teacher of the year, or individuals can submit open nominations, which are then reviewed by committees comprised of representatives from teacher and administrator organizations as well as higher education institutions. Thirty-four Regional Teachers of the Year are then chosen based on the regional student population from each of the 10 regions in Missouri: Northeast (2), Northwest (2), South Central (2), Central (2), Southeast (2), Heart of Missouri (3), Southwest RPDC (3), Kansas City (6), St. Louis (10), and Southwest Center (2). From these regional honorees, a committee narrows the list to 17 semifinalists, then six or seven finalists, and finally the singular Missouri Teacher of the Year. Additional criteria for the state-level award include plans to remain teaching in the classroom, effectiveness in promoting student performance regardless of background or ability, and the ability to be an effective spokesperson (*Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education homepage)*.

Buffering: In the JD-R model, the concept that positive job resources can mitigate the adverse effects of high job demands on an employee's well-being, essentially acting as a protective shield against stress and strain caused by demanding work conditions; meaning that when employees have adequate resources, the impact of high demands on their health and performance is lessened (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023).

Job demands: In the JD-R model, job demands are defined as the parts of a job that require significant physical or mental effort. These demands can be taxing, leading to psychological and physiological costs, and they can drain an individual's energy, which often contributes to burnout. Examples include heavy workloads, time pressure, and emotional or interpersonal conflict (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Job resources: In the JD-R model, job resources are the positive elements of a role, including social, physical, organizational, and psychological aspects, that help employees meet their work goals. They also lessen the effects of job demands and foster personal growth and development, essentially acting as protective facts against stress and burnout by enabling employees to cope effectively with high work demands (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS): A principal development program created to support the development of effective school leaders. In Fall 2014, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) gathered critical stakeholders involved in principal development and support to prioritize the key competencies of a transformational principal. The MLDS competencies align with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL; Masters & Katnik, 2020).

Teacher: For this study, a full-time public or charter school educator with a valid Missouri teaching certificate.

Assumptions

The philosophical orientation that most closely reflects my worldview is relative-constructivist. I believe our experiences shape our reality. This is why I think a teacher's

desire to stay in education, a career they selected for themselves with a degree they spent years attaining (the reality), can be significantly changed by the interactions, both positive and negative, they have with their school administrator (an experience that shapes the reality). Concerning my topic of interest, I wanted to learn how Missouri teachers perceive the competencies on which Missouri principals are trained, to try to more closely align principal training to hopefully increase the longevity of Missouri teachers in education. The ontological assumptions that framed my understanding are that there is no single truth because the truth is subjective, depending on the variety of experiences and interactions a person has (Burkholder et al., 2020). In this study, the various experiences and interactions teachers have had with their principal revealed what they believe are essential competencies for their school leaders. An objective number would likely not tell the entire story of how a school leader's behaviors influence a teacher's willingness to remain in the profession, so the study was both qualitative and quantitative. Another epistemological assumption that drove this study is that social interactions influence how knowledge is constructed (Burkholder et al., 2020), and this is why I interviewed Missouri teachers about their suggestions for improving principal development.

Scope and Delimitations

Burkholder et al. (2020) defined the scope of the study as the parameters or boundaries of what the study will and will not examine, and the delimitations as the choices a researcher makes about who and what to include in a study. This study specifically used award-winning teachers (Regional, semifinalists, finalists, and winner of

Missouri Teacher of the Year) from 2014 to 2024, and not all teachers in the state. The survey was sent to all award-winning teachers from 2014 to 2024, hoping to get 50 to 100 to respond. From the initial group of survey respondents, I purposefully chose people who represent as many of the various 10 regions in Missouri as possible, as well as tried to hear from teachers who represent elementary, middle, and high school and teachers who represent rural, urban, and suburban schools, respectively At that point, I conducted semistructured interviews with 13 of the survey respondents to drill down further into their suggestions. I used the survey responses and the transcripts from the in-depth interviews to analyze, code, and identify common themes for qualitative analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The study excluded any teacher who has yet to be awarded in Missouri, which is a large number of teachers throughout the state. This study yielded findings about Missouri principal programming that can be transferable to principal programming in other states with similar demographics (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Limitations

One of the main limitations is that I solely focused on award-winning teachers and am missing a valuable population of teachers who have yet to be honored with an award but certainly have valuable insight. However, because I was named the 2019 Missouri State Teacher of the Year, I am a member of the network of State Teachers of the Year. This network comprises Missouri's Regional Teachers of the Year, State Semifinalists, State Finalists, and State Teachers of the Year. Because I am a member, responses to my survey and interview responses were easier to obtain. I am also in the MLDS program, actively training as an Assistant Principal and working closely with the

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Hence, the audience I hope to challenge is easily accessible.

Ravitch and Carl (2021) explain that a researcher must define their relationship and the roles they bring to the study topic. One of the critical factors of my relationship to this study is that I was a teacher for 21 years and have recently stepped into the position of assistant principal for the past 3 years. As such, one of the issues I needed to be aware of when I interviewed teachers is that they might see my move to assistant principal as threatening to their answers since they identify me as an administrator and not a teacher. When listening to answers, I needed to check my bias, as I could have been listening as an administrator and not as a colleague, as my lens has changed even in three short years of being an administrator. Another limitation was that the data I gathered could be biased because award-winning teachers are potentially more likely to feel valued and seen in the profession. However, the survey questions I asked should not be ones that were impacted by a more or less optimistic approach from a teacher. It was simply teachers determining to what degree specific principal competencies impact their role as a teacher. This study cannot determine causation, nor is it generalizable (Schoch, 2020).

Significance

The problem addressed through this study is that, despite the introduction of the MLDS and competencies created in 2016 to develop strong school leaders, the lack of effective leadership is still cited as a primary reason for the low retention rate of Missouri teachers. This qualitative descriptive study is significant because the data gleaned is from the perspective of Missouri teachers who had yet to be asked about their perceptions of

the competencies over which Missouri principals are currently trained. The information gained could shift Missouri principals' training through the MLDS program to align more with what Missouri teachers say they find essential in their school administrators. The goal is to create stronger school leaders in Missouri for whom teachers want to work, keep teachers supported in the profession, and improve the retention rate in Missouri.

Summary

Chapter 1 offers a brief overview of MLDS while explaining that principal programming does not have the full impact it desires because Missouri teachers continue to leave teaching because of ineffective school leaders. However, when measuring the impact of MLDS, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is currently only looking at the program’s impact on principal retention and how effective school leaders say this program is, rather than asking teachers for their perception of MLDS. Because one of the goals of MLDS is to improve teacher retention, it was critical to ask teachers how their school leaders could improve to retain them in the profession. A high-quality classroom teacher is the most critical factor for increasing student achievement, and principals are a crucial factor in retaining high-quality teachers (Campoli & Darling-Hammond, 2022). The demands on teachers are great, and a principal can serve as the most critical job resource to help buffer those job demands. To support Missouri in principal preparation being the best it can be, it was necessary to ask Missouri teachers which competencies they feel are most important for Missouri principals to learn. Chapter 2 will explain in more depth the importance of strong school leadership to teacher retention in the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In 2016, Missouri launched a statewide principal development initiative called The Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS), which provides professional development to every principal in the state, utilizing a standard set of leadership competencies. In 2022–23, 1,628 educators employed by 425 school districts, 15 charter schools, and 58 non-public schools (Liang & Slotnik, 2023) participated in professional learning through MLDS. Not all participating educators identified their roles, but of the 1,556 participants who did, 863 of them were principals (55.5%), 552 of them were assistant principals (35.5%), and 141 were identified as other educators (9.0%) (Liang & Slotnik, 2023). Today, 45% of Missouri principals participate annually (Duffrin, 2022). MLDS is reaching a large number of principals in the state of Missouri through its development program. However, there is still a disconnect between what Missouri teachers believe makes an effective school administrator and the competencies in which Missouri's school leaders are being trained, as evidenced by the data drawn from the Missouri Teacher Workforce report.

Despite having a strategic system to develop Missouri's school leaders, just 5 years after designing and implementing MLDS, Missouri teachers still struggle to stay in the profession because they do not feel like they are working with strong school administrators (Katnik, 2021). Missouri's 2021 Teacher Workforce report concludes that only 48% of the teaching workforce remains in the profession after the first 5 years (Katnik, 2021). In the 2021 report, Missouri teachers' second and third reasons for leaving the profession include a lack of strong administration and a lack of support

(Katnik, 2021). Though this information is specific to Missouri, the issue of teachers not feeling like they work alongside strong administrators is nationwide (Johnson et al., 2005).

Decades before the COVID-19 pandemic, educators were already leaving teaching in droves and citing a lack of solid school leadership as a primary reason; as early as 2005, nearly 450,000 teachers annually left American public schools (Johnson et al., 2005). Almost 17 years ago, research indicated that a principal's leadership style significantly influenced a teacher's choice whether or not to remain in their current school (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Unfortunately, current statistics do not point to improvement. The Learning Policy Institute conducted a study that showed the lack of support from a school leader was a main factor in whether a teacher stay or left their position (Sutcher et al., 2016). Bryant et al. (2023) corroborate the need for strong school leadership; in fact, at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, they surveyed more than 1800 United States educators, and from that survey, 33% of 1800 survey respondents claimed they are leaving due to uninspiring school leadership. Teacher attrition, specifically attrition caused by ineffective school leadership, remains an issue for new and veteran teachers. In a study by Szeto (2022), early career teachers reported that unsupportive school leadership and a toxic and hostile culture could be the primary factors driving their turnover intentions. Quality school leadership is a universal factor for educator retention; in fact, research from around the world highlights administrative support as the most significant factor influencing whether teachers choose to remain in

education (Horng, 2009; Martinez & McAbee, 2020; Tran & Smith, 2019; Yakavets et al., 2017).

The problem that will be addressed through this study is that, despite the introduction of the MLDS and competencies created in 2016 to develop strong school leaders, the lack of effective leadership is still cited as a primary reason for the low retention rate of Missouri teachers. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri regarding the appropriateness of the principal competencies in the MLDS for influencing teacher retention and their suggestions for refining the principal competencies to improve teacher retention. This literature review will focus on the research process, the JD-R framework used for this study, a review of the job demands teachers face and how influential leaders can buffer those demands, an analysis of the MLDS, the link between teacher retention and school leadership, the factors school leaders cannot control, and some themes in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

For this research, I focused on using Walden's online library. Key search terms and combinations of search terms included the following: *administrative support, school leadership, leadership, teacher retention, teacher shortage, teacher turnover, teachers' perceptions, job demands for teachers,* and *job resources for teachers.* When using the Walden online library, I searched various combinations of the terms above, each time including *teacher retention* or *teacher turnover* or *teacher attrition,* along with *school leadership*. The databases where I found most of the research included ERIC, SAGE

journals, Education Source, and the Directory of Open Access Journals. Once I found an article that helped advance my research, it was also helpful to look further into the references those authors listed to see what additional reading I could do. Ample research exists on the connection between teacher retention and strong school leadership.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation

The concept explored through this study is administrative support as a resource that can buffer between teachers and their job demands. The theory that underpins this qualitative descriptive study is the JD-R theory (Demerouti et al., 2001). The JD-R theory is centered around two key statements. This model proposes that individuals in demanding jobs can experience reduced stress when their organization offers supportive resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model suggests that stress and burnout are more likely to occur when job demands are high and resources are scarce. Conversely, positive job aspects or resources promote motivation and engagement, helping to decrease the impact of high job demands.

Key terms in this theory are job demands, job resources, and job positives. Job demands are the emotional or physical stressors inherent in a person's role (Mensah, 2021). These taxing elements include time pressure, role ambiguity, heavy workload, emotional labor, a stressful work environment, and poor relationships (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Job resources are physical, social, or organizational aspects that help people reach their goals and manage stress. According to Kim and Wang (2018), these include having autonomy, strong relationships at work, chances for advancement,

coaching, and opportunities for learning and development. Job positives is another term used as a synonym for job resources.

The JD-R theory provides a structure for designing interventions to promote teachers' well-being. The JD-R theory explores employee well-being by examining job demands and job resources. Job demands are the "most important predictors of such outcomes as exhaustion, psychosomatic health complaints, and repetitive strain injury" (Bakker et al., 2003b; Hakanen et al., 2006), whereas job resources lead to engagement, enjoyment at work, and motivation (Bakker et al., 2007, 2010). Job resources are defined as the physical, psychological, social, or organizational components of a job that either help in achieving work goals or reduce the physiological and psychological costs of job demands. They can also stimulate professional development, learning, and growth (Bakker, 2011; Bakker & E. Demerouti, 2007).

Demerouti and Bakker introduced this model in research literature in 2001. Their model was different than existing models of employee well-being. Previous models did not apply to all people or explain the impacts on occupational health. Previous models on job stress include two influential ones: the demands-control model (DCM) by Karasek (1979) and the effort-reward imbalance model. Unlike the original JD-R model, these earlier frameworks were limited in their scope, including only specific job demands and resources as predictors of work-related stress (Karasek, 1979). For example, the DCM only focused on psychological workload as a job demand and job control as a job resource, which limits its scope. Demerouti and Bakker's model still examined job demands and job resources. As noted above, their model allows the examination of many

types of job demands and resources. The model fits three types of occupations: employees who work with things, people, or information (Bakker & de Vries, 2020). The initial JD-R model primarily used a top-down approach to job design. In this view, management shapes the work environment for its staff by establishing goals, defining job tasks, and supplying necessary resources (Demerouti et al., 2001); however, in later years, the model shifted this approach. The JD-R Model by Demerouti and Bakker (2001) not only allowed for more variables than previous models, but also focused on six main propositions. First, all job characteristics can be sorted into two categories: job demands and job resources. Second, these demands and resources create two different processes: health impairment and motivation. Third, job resources can lessen the impact that job demands have on strain. Fourth, these resources can influence motivation when job demands are high. Fifth, personal resources like optimism and self-efficacy can act similarly to job resources. Finally, motivation has been shown to positively impact job performance, whereas job strain shows a negative impact.

Between 2011 and 2016, the JD-R model became the JD-R theory based on mounting empirical evidence. It gained significant attention in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology with the article, “Job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout,” which was frequently cited and utilized in many organizations and agencies around the world. One of the reasons for this attention was burnout, which had become prominent in most Western countries in the early 20th century. As a result, Demerouti and Bakker’s research inspired other researchers and practitioners to look more closely at employee well-being. Notable evolutions in JD-R theory were that it did

not stay top-down, and a seventh proposition was added. According to Proposition 7 of the JD-R theory, employees will engage in job crafting to make it fit their unique skills when they are more motivated by their jobs. This, in turn, results in higher levels of both job and personal resources, as well as increased motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). As an example, self-efficacy (a personal resource) influences a teacher's view of the school climate (a job resource). This, as a result, may strengthen their sense of commitment to their work (Collie et al., 2011). This puts some of the onus of job satisfaction and motivation on the employee and does not assume the work environment is controlled only by management and human resources.

Educational researchers also looked closely at the JD-R theory to examine employee well-being. Hakanen et al. (2006) examined this theory among teachers, using 2,038 Finnish educators to study two parallel processes affecting their well-being. The first is an energy-consuming process, where job demands lead to burnout and poor health. The second is a motivational process, in which job resources contribute to engagement and organizational commitment. A survey given to Finnish educators examined three of their job demands, namely student misbehavior, workload, and a negative work environment. Additionally, it explored five job resources: job control, information access, supervisory support, innovative school culture, and the social climate. The results of the study demonstrated that job demands caused more significant ill-health due to burnout, and job resources contributed to greater organizational commitment via engagement, proving that efforts to minimize the job demands of teachers and to prevent burnout should be a primary focus for schools and organizations (Hakanen et al., 2006).

As a result of the 2006 Finnish study, Bakker et al. (2007) sampled primary, secondary, and vocational teachers to extend the existing research. This study's primary job demand was student misbehavior. Job resources, on the other hand, were assessed based on several key areas, including a teacher's job control (their influence over the work), the level of supervisor support, access to information (whether relevant issues are shared with staff), the general school climate, innovativeness (the desire to always improve), and the appreciation they received from colleagues. The authors discovered each of the six job resources and the job demand are positively related to employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2007). Employee engagement was defined by excitement, pride, dedication, and involvement. These findings demonstrate that human resource management can use the JD-R model as a guide. As a result, it was applied to 130 different organizations with the hope that researchers would continue to apply this model to various occupations in other countries.

Recent studies have expanded this research beyond Finland, with researchers in various countries exploring job demands like quantitative overload, student misbehavior, time pressure, role stress, and poor student motivation (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Dicke et al., 2018; Evers et al., 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Tonder & Fourie, 2015). The findings consistently show a link between these demands and negative well-being, including higher emotional exhaustion, increased stress, more symptoms associated with depression, lower organizational commitment, and higher intentions to leave teaching (e.g., Hakanen et al., 2006; Lee, 2019; Leung & Lee, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Conversely, job resources were found to increase organizational commitment through greater engagement.

Looking at education with the JD-R theory as a framework brings to light specific implications for school leaders. In 2021, Granziera et al. (2021) outlined different types of job demands on teachers, including workload, disciplinary issues, and time pressure. They also outline the following job resources: school climate, supportive leadership, and social support. School leadership has a direct impact on both the job demands and the job resources.

Researchers have found that a teacher's social support from various groups like principals, other teachers, and students serves as a crucial job resource. At the same time, common job demands include pressure from school administration, a heavy workload, and student behavior (Collie, 2022). Autonomy-supportive leadership, as a specific job resource, has emerged as particularly relevant to teachers. Teachers' perceptions of this type of leadership (Ryan & Deci, 2017) have been directly linked to positive outcomes. Studies on teachers in both Australia and Finland have shown that perceived autonomy support is positively related to adaptability, engagement, and organizational commitment. At the same time, autonomy support is negatively associated with exhaustion and disengagement (Collie et al., 2018; Collie & Martin, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Other job resources like social support from peers and school leaders, aligned values, control over one's job, feeling appreciated, a positive organizational climate, autonomy, and participation in decision-making (Collie et al., 2018) and personal resources, such as self-efficacy and adaptability, have been linked to several positive outcomes. These

include improved subjective well-being, greater work-life balance, higher engagement, and stronger organizational commitment (Collie et al., 2018; De Carlo et al., 2019; Dicke et al., 2018; Hakanen et al., 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

When examining teacher well-being using the JD-R theory, three factors are identified as Job Resources. Supportive leadership is one of those three job resources, in addition to school climate and social support, which a school leader can also influence (Hakanen, 2006). The JD-R theory discusses the buffering effect. The 'buffering' effect is when specific job resources lessen the impact of demands on job strain (Bakker et al., 2005). This means a supportive school leader can be a significant factor in buffering how teachers perceive and respond to their job demands. Knowing that "job resources buffer the impact of job demands on strain" gives us an idea of the impact effective school leadership (a job resource) can have on improving teacher retention and avoiding teacher burnout due to job demands. While we know ineffective school leadership is just one factor Missouri teachers cited in 2021 for choosing to leave the profession, the JD-R theory shows that supportive leadership can reduce other sources of stress and can assist individuals to control their emotions and reactions to such job demands (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

Most recently, the Missouri State Teachers Association surveyed its members on the state of the profession in January and February 2024 (Missouri State Teachers Association, 2024). More than 2,300 members responded, including non-certified members, teachers, administrators, and retired members. One of their findings was that student behaviors significantly impact teacher recruitment and retention efforts. In 2024,

this survey indicated that student behaviors are the most significant reason Missouri educators are considering leaving the profession and the largest source of stress (Missouri State Teachers Association, 2024). Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, Bakker and Demerouti (2007) discovered that when Finnish teachers had high levels of support from their supervisors, a positive organizational climate, and a culture of innovativeness, their perceptions of student misbehavior had a minimal negative effect on their work engagement. This suggests that supportive leadership, as a job resource, provides teachers with support to buffer demanding situations like student behavior better. Helping improve Missouri school leadership could not only impact how Missouri teachers feel about their school leader, specifically, but could also help buffer some other factors for Missouri teachers considering leaving the profession.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

Teacher Turnover and School Leadership

Teacher turnover is a problem due to the job demands of the profession, and there is a link between teacher turnover and school leadership. According to the National Education Association, teacher burnout is “a condition in which an educator has exhausted the personal and professional resources necessary to do the job” (Walker, 2021). Teachers are no strangers to burnout. Among professions in the United States, K-12 teachers face the highest rates of burnout. A 2022 Gallup Poll on the topic found that 44 percent of American K-12 educators felt burned out either often or always (Marken & Agrawal, 2025).

As a result of job demands that cause burnout, many teachers are exiting education. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that about 300,000 public school teachers and other staff members left the profession between February 2020 and May 2022 (Dill, 2022). This migration accounted for nearly 3% of that entire workforce (Dill, 2022). For teachers who have not left the profession yet, the number of those desiring to leave is growing. According to a 2022 survey by the National Education Association, 55% of teachers said they intend to leave their current positions in education sooner than planned, which represents a significant increase from just one year earlier, when only 37% of teachers reported the same sentiment in August 2021 (Jotkoff, 2022).

The job demands on teachers often fall into one of two categories: the working conditions demand and the classroom demand, both of which can significantly impact teachers' health. A teacher's working conditions are one category of job demands, ranging from low compensation to staff shortages to worries about safety in the workplace. Much research demonstrates that teacher pay is lower than that of other professionals with the same degrees. It is, understandably, a factor impacting teachers' decisions to leave the profession. In 2023, Bryant et al. asked teachers why they are leaving the teaching profession as well as what would make them stay; their findings revealed that nearly half of the educators surveyed, specifically 48%, planned to exit the profession because of poor pay, while 42% have already left for that same reason.

In addition to low compensation, staffing shortages impact a teacher's working conditions. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics showed that, at the start of 2022, 44% of public schools had full-time or part-time teacher openings because

of unexpected resignations. This situation placed a significant burden on non-teaching staff (*Forty-four percent of public schools,* 2022). Essentially, nearly half of all U.S. public schools were actively looking for new teachers and were understaffed (Dill, 2022). In the past, there has been a pipeline of teaching candidates who have wanted to fill open teaching positions, but that is not the case any longer, and it is becoming increasingly challenging to fill open positions after teachers leave the profession. School administrators have difficulty filling their open positions (which includes counselors, mental health professionals, substitutes, teachers, and administrators). Since 2008, fewer college students begin and successfully finish teacher education and preparation programs, which means shortages continue to worsen (Bryant et al., 2023). As a result of being unable to fill open teaching positions, the remaining teachers have increasingly added to their workload. A survey found that roughly 74% of teachers had to assume additional duties because of staff shortages. Additionally, 80% of teachers reported that job vacancies required them to take on more work than their normal responsibilities (Jotkoff, 2022).

In addition to poor compensation and understaffing impacting a teacher's working conditions, teachers also have valid concerns about their safety in the workplace, particularly in recent years when the United States has seen incidents of school violence on the rise. There have been more than 750 shooting incidents since 2018 in American schools (CHDS School Shooting Safety Compendium, 2023). There were 250 shooting incidents in 2021 and 156 in 2022 (CHDS School Shooting Safety Compendium, 2023).

When teachers recognize that other professions do not fear for their safety in the workplace, this gives them additional cause to explore new occupations.

Besides working conditions, the other category of teacher demands is the classroom demands that teachers face. Student behavior is a classroom demand that impacts teachers' well-being the most. In 2022, the National Center for Education Statistics released a study that helps explain the teacher burnout data from 2023. One finding from the report is that educators believe student behavior has deteriorated in recent years (*Forty-four percent of public schools*, 2022). The research cited a rise in various issues, including more classroom behavior issues from student misconduct (56%), increased behavior issues outside of class (49%), and a higher frequency of disrespectful acts toward teaching staff (48%) (*More than 80 Percent of U.S. Public Schools Report Pandemic Has Negatively Impacted Student Behavior and Socio-Emotional Development*, 2022). Collie (2022) also examined the impact that disruptive student behavior had on teacher turnover intentions. These behaviors included shouting, creating noise, distracting fellow students, and an inability to concentrate (Collie et al., 2020). They collected data from 325 Australian teachers and found disruptive student behavior, along with time pressure, are two job demands that negatively impact teachers' sense of competence and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017) as well as consume their energy and give them a negative connection to their job (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

Another classroom demand is the workload that teachers say is unsustainable. Teachers say keeping up with the school and student demands is becoming too much. In a recent survey, 43% of these teachers reported sleeping less than 6 hours nightly, and 31%

used their weekends to complete classroom work (Anthony, n.d.). A study focused explicitly on Australian teachers found the unsustainable workload problematic, adding that what they are required to do does not fit into the constraints of a reasonable workday or week. For example, one respondent indicated their intention to leave education due to, 'Workload pressure, particularly administration requirements and the expected amount of time I spend doing school things outside of direct teaching (such as cocurriculum hours and meetings seems to increase; however, the number of hours in a day is finite' (Heffernan et al., 2022).

Both the working conditions and the classroom demands create health impairment for teachers. Based on a survey by the EdWeek Research Center in July 2021, approximately six out of every ten teachers frequently or always experienced stress related to their job (Will, 2022). Teachers noted the stress impacting their sleep, their family time, and their physical well-being. Will's (2022) research found that 41% of participants reported a drop in their work efficiency during times of stress. The study also revealed that just 9% of the teachers surveyed reported rarely or never experiencing stress. The stress teachers feel manifests itself in various ways that impact their health. The study found that about 38% of respondents regularly had headaches or stomach aches. In addition, 17% experienced chest pain or heart palpitations. Shortness of breath and dizziness were reported by another 25% of teachers (Anthony, n.d.).

While the symptoms referenced above demonstrate the toll stress can take on a teacher's physical body, the mental and emotional toll it takes is equally worth noting. It appears this impacts the teaching profession more than other professions. Twenty-eight

percent of teachers reported experiencing symptoms related to depression (Morrison, 2022), which compares to just 17% of people working in non-teaching occupations. In addition, 24% of teachers have reported being unable to handle job stress, a rate that is double that of other professions, where only 12% of workers share that feeling (Morrison, 2022). Other researchers also found the teaching profession is more stressful than other professions. A 2022 survey by the RAND Corporation revealed that teachers are over two times more likely to experience stress than other working adults (Steiner et al., 2022). Furthermore, a study by the American Educational Research Association found that U.S. teachers have 40% more anxiety symptoms compared to healthcare workers, 20% more than office workers, and 30% more than other fields, like farming and the military (Kush et al., 2022). These findings confirm that health impairment is a significant job demand for educators.

In terms of demands on a teacher, it is essential to note that beyond working conditions, classroom demands, and health impairment, many more demands have not been discussed, such as a lack of resources, expectations for technology, the pressure of standardized testing, and the political environment, many of which also significantly impact teachers' well-being. What is important to note, though, is that school leaders have an opportunity to help influence and address the demands placed on teachers. While there are a multitude of reasons teachers exit education, research points to one main factor in a teacher's decision to leave or stay: administrative support (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Podolsky *et al.*, 2016; Urick, 2016). Another study specifically examined the needs of special education teachers and general education teachers and found the

same to be true: When teachers felt they had strong administrative and collegial support, had better access to instructional materials, and possessed greater experience, they were more inclined to stay at their schools (Bettini et al., 2020). While this study pointed to additional reasons for teacher attrition, one of those repeating critical factors is the support of solid school administration. Teachers who perceive their administrators as unsupportive are over twice as likely to quit their jobs compared to those who feel supported by school leadership (Sutcher et al., 2016). Strong school administration is consistently identified as a crucial element in keeping teachers, but it is more than that. Numerous studies have shown support from school leadership to be the single most important factor in schools for retaining teachers (Horng, 2009; Martinez & McAbee, 2020; Tran & Smith, 2019; Yakavets et al., 2017).

The Missouri Leadership Development System

Because teacher retention is vital to Missouri and because strong school leaders are key to these efforts, Missouri officials has invested in the MLDS to offer professional development to school leaders as early as year one in their principalship, through principals with more experience. The MLDS, a principal development program, was started in 2016. MLDS was designed to ensure every Missouri student will attend a school led by a confident leader and to create stronger leaders to support Missouri teachers in staying in the teaching profession. Research-based evidence illustrates the importance of principal development programs such as MLDS. A study of California principals that was able to control for a wide range of other student, teacher, and school characteristics found that strong principal preparation and access to professional

development were significantly associated with increased teacher retention and student achievement (Campoli & Darling-Hammond, 2022).

The state of Missouri also realized that principal turnover was an issue. A group of school principals in Missouri will see a loss of nearly 70% of its members over the course of five years (Liang & Slotnik, 2023). Buckman (2021) studied principal influence on teacher turnover and used data from the South Carolina Department of Education as well as data from the National Center of Education Statistics and Common Core of Data between the years 2016 and 2020 to investigate this topic and found a relationship between teacher and principal retention. If principals remained in the school, the number of teachers staying was higher. Buckman (2021) noted that there are many struggles in retaining teachers, and there is no simple solution, but suggested that trying to retain school leadership is a step toward retaining teachers. Principals remaining in their roles for more than 2 to 3 years is also essential. Establishing a vision, improving the teaching staff, and implementing policies that positively affect a school's performance typically takes a principal five years on average (School Leaders Network, 2014).

Before 2016, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education brought together a group of stakeholders already involved in principal support and development to identify the 41 competencies on which Missouri principals would be trained through MLDS. Which competencies principals are trained on is essential to investigate, according to Tran et al. (2023). Tran et al. (2023) examined teachers' perceptions about the importance of school administrative support for teacher retention. The researchers used a sample of teachers from South Carolina. They devised a list of 13

administrative support attributes to see how South Carolina teachers ranked those attributes using a Best-Worst scale. The findings indicated that respect was the most crucial attribute of administrative support, and this was found across each of the subgroups of teachers (school type, retention status, and locale).

The 41 competencies Missouri selected were then grouped into five domains, which capture the various roles a principal manages to effectively lead a school focused on quality teaching and learning: a visionary leader, an instructional leader, a managerial leader, a relational leader, and an innovative leader. There is an overlap in the roles Missouri principals are trained on and the research Urick (2020) conducted. Urick (2020) examined four types of principal leadership--managerial, transformational, instructional, and shared--to identify how teachers perceive the different types of school leadership and the how these leadership types predict teacher retention. According to Urick (2020), teachers who felt their principal showed less leadership were more likely to quit. In contrast, educators who experienced shared leadership and frequent guidance from their principal were more inclined to stay. Though Missouri does not have a domain for shared leadership that Urick outlines as a quality helping teachers stay in the profession, the various roles Missouri principals are trained on should produce more impactful principal leadership, which Urick (2020) states helps teachers stay in the profession. The Missouri leadership competencies fall into a continuum to illustrate leadership growth and progress, including Aspiring, Emerging, Developing, and Transformational levels. It is important to note that the MLDS competencies are cross-walked with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) developed by the National Policy Board for

Educational Administration (NPBEA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

In 2020, just 3 years after the pilot MLDS cohort of 150 Missouri principals participated, MLDS began measuring its impact. This was done by examining the number of principals participating in the program and principal retention rates. In its third year, the number of Missouri principals participating in MLDS grew from 150 to over 1,000, representing 45% of principals in Missouri. One thousand principals represented 264 different school districts across the state, which accounts for 47% of Missouri school districts being represented. MLDS also saw noteworthy effects on principal retention rates. Across the nation and in Missouri, 77% of first-year principals return for a second year. In Missouri specifically, 51% of principals leave their positions within three years. After five years, only 30% of principals remain in their original role. In contrast, among principals who participated in MLDS training, 98.5% have continued to their second or third year as a school leader (Masters & Katnik, 2020). These statistics reveal a compelling early impact on MLDS leaders. Thus far, two organizations, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Comprehensive Center Network (Liang & Slotnik, 2023), have evaluated the MLDS. Both organizations have surveyed MLDS principals, superintendents, and specialists to assess the effectiveness of MLDS. In this survey, over 95% of principals who have participated in MLDS agree that the program is improving their instructional leadership and helping them become better overall school leaders (Liang & Slotnik, 2023). While the perspective of school and

district leaders is undoubtedly an essential part of determining effectiveness, it should not be the only perspective.

Thus far, despite having MLDS in place to develop Missouri's school leaders, just 5 years after developing and implementing MLDS, Missouri teachers are still struggling to stay in the profession because they do not feel like they are working with strong school administrators, which begs the question: How effective is the MLDS in addressing teacher retention through principal leadership development since there remain ongoing concerns about leadership quality? An influential group of stakeholders' feedback that is missing is feedback from teachers. There is no teacher voice in these MLDS survey results to show the impact of principal development on teacher retention. This study seeks to gather Missouri teacher input to see how effective MLDS is in terms of retention. While classroom teachers do not hold administrative positions, a recent study advocates for using standards-based teacher surveys for evaluating principal competencies. The research indicates that teaches can effectively identify various aspects of a principals' leadership (Jones et al., 2024).

Additional Factors Affecting Teacher Retention

While it is evident that a principal's years of service and leadership skill set significantly impact a teacher's staying in the teaching profession, it must be noted that there are other factors affecting teacher retention that a principal cannot control. A poor salary is one such factor. Of the educators surveyed, 48% planned to quit the profession because of their pay, while 42% have already left for that same reason (Bryant et al., 2023). Among teachers in California, Horng (2009) found that teachers will choose the

place they work based on salary more than student demographics. The 2021 Missouri Teacher Workforce Report illustrates that compensation is the number one reason Missouri teachers leave the profession (Katnik, 2021). Teacher salaries are determined based on local and state funding, not in the building where the principal has a locus of control.

The personal preferences of staff members are another factor a principal cannot control. For example, Husain et al. (2021) specifically studied female principals in schools in New York State and how females in leadership impact teacher turnover. To do this, they used teachers and principals from public schools in New York State from a 40-year panel. Husain et al. (2021) found that when a female principal leads a school, male teachers are 12% more likely to leave the school than when a male principal leads the school. This is not true for female teachers when a female principal leads the school. The authors also found that male teachers who request a transfer from their school to another school are more likely to request a school with a male principal than a female principal. A principal can hear and value teachers' personal preferences. Still, a teacher's comfort level with one gender of school leader over another is something that a school leader cannot control.

Student demographics play a role in where a teacher chooses and stays to work, but this is another factor a school leader cannot control. Studies conducted in California, Texas, New York, and Georgia show that teachers are hesitant to work with students of color, low-performing students, and those from low-income families. Schools that are difficult to staff often have a high concentration of these students, and teachers frequently

choose to move away from schools with high populations of poor, minority, and low-performing students (Carroll et al., 2000; Hanushek et al., 2004; Lankford et al., 2002; Scafidi et al., 2005). School leaders can build training on culturally responsive teaching practices and create tiers of intervention for students needing extra support. However, more is needed to keep teachers teaching in schools where working conditions could be more complex.

Additionally, school leaders often feel the impact of policies implemented outside their control that impact their teachers' desire to stay in education. For example, many school boards around the country have implemented policies around resources teachers can or cannot use in their classrooms, and school librarians have been given directives about which book titles students can be handed. This takes the autonomy out of the hands of educators and puts people who are not educational experts in charge of what happens in teachers' classrooms and learning spaces. Research indicates that different types of leadership yield more significant approval and results on outcomes, but one's leadership style is not enough to retain teachers. Sulit (2020) found that leadership alone does not significantly impact teacher retention; instead, policy changes are needed to support and retain teachers.

Controllable Factors for Teacher Retention and School Leadership

There are factors impacting teacher retention that a principal cannot control, but there are many factors a school leader can impact. Cells et al. (2022) studied the support teachers receive early in their careers and how that impacts the longevity of their teaching career, explicitly focusing on the factors that increase teacher retention beyond 5 years.

Cells et al. (2022) used three large public schools in Central Florida with students from various socioeconomic backgrounds and demographics to do this study. The researchers interviewed early-career educators, those in their first 5 years of teaching, to see which factors led to retention and turnover. The key conclusion is that teachers are more likely to stay in education if they have autonomy, time for collaboration, and effective professional development (Cells et al., 2022). The factors that teachers in Central Florida stated as necessary are all factors school leadership can impact and are among the competencies referenced by MLDS in a transformational school leader.

Sulit (2020) studied the phenomenon of distributive leadership because of its ability to sustain school improvement and positively impact student academic outcomes. Sulit looked at how distributive leadership affects teacher retention in elementary and middle schools. The study identified six qualities of this leadership style that may have a positive impact on keeping teachers: Making a Difference/Joy in the Classroom, Administrative Support, Culture/Climate, Extra Work/Teacher Responsibilities, and Work/Family Balance. School leaders may enact policies to reflect these positive themes and support our teachers' remaining in the classroom.

Another study about leadership style was conducted by Lung-Hsing and Pei-Hua (2023), who studied four of the multi-frame leadership styles: visionary, distributed, transformational, and transactional, to find out the effect size of the multi-frame leadership styles according to various categorical variables. The categorical variables include gender, age, education, years of service, and administrative duties toward teachers’ intentions for retention in Taiwan (Lung-Hsing & Pei-Hua, 2023). There were

multiple findings from this meta-analysis, but as it pertains to leadership style, teachers showed less intention for retention for the perceived leadership styles of visionary leadership and distributed leadership than teachers who perceived the styles of transformational leadership and transactional leadership (Lung-Hsing & Pei-Hua, 2023). Transformational leadership was found to have the most significant effect size.

Polatcan and Cansoy (2019) conducted a systematic review of multiple studies that analyzed principals' leadership behaviors and the impact those behaviors have on teachers' organizational commitment, specifically in Turkey. This study attempted to determine those leadership behaviors that associated with teachers' organizational commitment. They found that as principals used higher levels of certain leadership behaviors, teachers demonstrated increased organizational commitment. In their findings, they discovered five studies that reported transformational leadership was associated with organizational commitment, four studies discovered that ethical leadership significantly predicted organizational commitment, two studies showed that shared leadership was positively associated with organizational commitment, and two studies reported that cultural leadership behaviors were positively related to organizational commitment. This study illustrates that the higher level of leadership behavior displayed significantly impacts teachers' organizational commitment.

Van der Vyver (2020) designed a quantitative study to see if a relationship existed between a teacher's professional well-being and a principal's leadership behavior. Data was collected from teachers in 20 different schools in the Kenneth Kaunda District of the North-West Province of South Africa based on two instruments: The Institute of Work

Psychology Multi-Affect Indicator and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. To figure out how the two variables, teachers' professional well-being and principals' leadership behavior, are connected, the researchers used a non-probability, convenience sampling for selecting which 20 schools to survey, and from those schools, the researchers received 400 completed questionnaires. Leadership behavior was measured using the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire, and Professional well-being was measured using the Institute of Work Psychology Multi-Affect Indicator. The findings revealed that transactional and transformational principal leadership could positively impact teachers' professional well-being, while laissez-faire leadership can negatively impact teachers' well-being. Knowing that transactional and transformational leadership contributes positively to the well-being of teachers and teacher retention sets principals up to be more successful in establishing effective leadership practices to support and retain their teaching staff. Zhan et al. (2023) investigated 1558 teachers from various underdeveloped regions in Central and Western China to understand the relationship between teacher retention and the instructional leadership of a principal. The findings revealed that a principal's instructional leadership directly impacts teacher retention and indirectly impacts the role of stress and affective commitment to the school.

School leaders can also intentionally build relationships and celebrate their new teachers' accomplishments. Frahm and Cianca (2021) studied the leadership behaviors rural school leaders used to support their new teachers to increase teacher retention. To do this, Frahm and Cianca (2021) had three focus groups, including superintendents, principals, and aspiring administrators. The researchers focused their inquiry on the

challenges of rural districts in retaining talented teachers, the leadership behaviors they believe positively affect teacher retention, and the support systems or programs they employ to positively impact teacher retention. The findings demonstrated that rural school administrators should actively build relationships with new teachers, recognize achievement, and encourage collective support for new teachers. The researchers also found that rural school administrators must be more intentional about building relationships and allocating their time because they have diverse responsibilities. The importance of the interpersonal relationship between teacher and principal interactions is corroborated by Ford et al. (2019), who found that these positive interactions help cultivate organizational commitment among teachers and help counter burnout.

School leaders can also help when teachers are experiencing significant job demands. Kaiser and Thompson (2021) interviewed principals to hear their experiences on how they help support teachers to counteract stress and burnout. This study showed how leaders determine what teachers need and implement interventions to reduce the stressors that lead to attrition. Kaiser and Thompson (2021) found that the common sources principals see teachers stressed about are the workload, student discipline, and accountability or teacher evaluations. The ways principals were able to support teachers that proved to be most beneficial included autonomy, peer mentorship, and collaborative relationships. These are only some of the ways to support teachers. Shell et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review that synthesizes the findings of fourteen studies that all focus on the decline of teacher retention in U.S. schools. The findings include that clear communication and support are critical factors for teacher retention in the United States,

and they also noted that other qualities of principals who retain teachers include principals who recognize how hard their teachers are working, as well as principals who enforce discipline and are fair when they evaluate teachers. Shell et al. (2023) conclude that if principals want to help contribute to teacher retention, they must work on the qualities noted.

The way principals treat teachers makes a difference in retaining teachers. Tran et al. (2023) examined teachers' perceptions about the importance of school administrative support for teacher retention. The researchers used a sample of teachers from South Carolina. They devised a list of 13 administrative supports to see how South Carolina teachers ranked those attributes using a Best-Worst scale. The findings indicated that respect was the most critical attribute of administrative support, and this was found across each of the subgroups of teachers (school type, retention status, and locale).

Principal retention can also serve as a key factor in keeping teachers. DeMatthews et al. (2021) performed a quantitative study to examine how principal turnover impacts teacher turnover. The researchers used longitudinal data from students and employees in Texas, which included all K-12 schools from the 1999-2000 school year to the 2016-2017 school year (DeMatthews et al., 2021). This longitudinal employee-level data provides information about employees' roles and total experience. Employees' school-assignment data tracks their movement between K-12 schools. The student data includes ethnicity, qualification for free or reduced meals, and achievement results on standardized assessments. DeMatthews et al. (2021) compared teacher turnover in schools after a principal left with schools who had a principal who stayed. When there is principal

turnover, a study showed a notable increase in teacher turnover. The effects were more pronounced in high-poverty, urban schools, where the average teacher had little experience in the profession. Because determining a direct causal effect is difficult due to hidden school factors and the possibility of reverse causality where teachers leaving causes a principal to leave, the researchers used "school fixed effects and indicator variables to control for the timing of a principals' departure" (DeMatthews et al., 2021, p. 86). This method allowed DeMatthews et al. (2021) to track teacher attrition in the same school over time, both before and after a principal exit. It also enabled them to control for time-invariant school factors, such as a negative school culture or a lack of a professional work environment, and time-varying factors like the average achievement level and the student poverty rate.

Guthery and Bailes (2022) also investigated principal tenure and how it influences teacher retention rate. Between the years of 1999 and 2017, Guthery and Bailes (2022) followed over 11,000 principals from Texas as well as the teachers they hired in each of their years to see if principals were able to hire teachers who would stay in the school for both the three and five-year benchmarks the longer they were in their leadership position. The authors found that the longer a principal remained in a school, the more effective they were at hiring teachers who stayed in the profession for 3 to 5 years. Once a principal has led their school for 5 years or more, they hire teachers who stay in education at a higher rate. Another finding by Guthery and Bailes (2022) is that principals who stay at least 5 consecutive years at an unstable school can counteract that instability.

Summary and Conclusions

From this literature review, a few significant themes arise. Foremost, the second largest reason Missouri teachers are leaving the profession is that they say they lack a strong administrator. Over the past 20 years, teachers across the globe have been leaving the profession for this exact reason. Another prominent theme is that while the lack of a strong school administrator causes people to leave the profession, a strong school leader can help a teacher choose to stay; job resources must buffer the job demands of the teaching profession, and one of the most critical job resources is the support of a strong school leader. Finally, though there are many factors contributing to the complex issue of teacher attrition, many factors which are outside the control of a school leader, it remains clear that an effective principal can celebrate their teachers, impact their autonomy, offer quality professional development and strong mentoring, and provide transformational leadership, which all lead to higher teacher commitment to the organization.

To create strong school leaders, Missouri developed the MLDS, and almost half of all Missouri principals participate in the MLDS training annually. From its inception, the number of trained Missouri principals grew from 150 to over 1600 (Masters & Katnik, 2020). The principal retention rates of those leaders participating in MLDS are much higher at 98.5%, moving to their second or third year as school leaders, compared to national and statewide statistics that show only 77% of principals returning for a second year. What needs to be known is how teachers feel about the training their school leader receives, because teachers have yet to be asked to evaluate the MLDS program in terms of how it contributes to their professional retention.

Currently, the MLDS is being surveyed and evaluated by school leaders across the state about how they feel they are impacted by the learning they have taken part in, but this study took that a step further and asked Missouri teachers to evaluate the competencies Missouri principals are trained on to see how vital each competency is towards their retention as a teacher.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this qualitative descriptive study, I explored the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri regarding the appropriateness of the principal competencies in the MLDS for influencing teacher retention and their suggestions for refining the principal competencies to improve teacher retention. This chapter will include details on the qualitative descriptive study approach, design, and rationale for this study. A detailed description of the research methodology will follow. It will include the following: participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, the data analysis plan, strategies for ensuring trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. In this chapter, I will lay the groundwork for understanding the data presented in the following chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The following RQs underpinned this qualitative study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri about the appropriateness of the MLDS principal competencies for influencing teacher retention?

RQ2: What are the suggestions of award-winning teachers in Missouri for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention?

The concept explored through this study is administrative support as a resource that can serve as a buffer between teachers and their job demands (Tickle et al., 2011). Ravitch and Carl (2021) assert, “Qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 14). Qualitative researchers seek to understand people’s values, beliefs, and

lived experiences rather than prove or disprove a hypothesis by analyzing numerical data. I used a qualitative descriptive research approach to help describe teacher perceptions of the MLDS principal competencies. I chose a qualitative method because I ascribe to the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism assumes that reality is subjective, multiple, and created through social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This paradigm fits with this study since I interpreted teachers' perceptions of the MLDS principal competencies.

Descriptive research aims to gather information to describe a phenomenon. In the case of this study, the phenomenon studied was administrative support as a resource that can buffer teachers and their job demands (Bakker et al., 2005). Descriptive research can be done to help inform decision-making and program planning, and my goal was to collect data to share with MLDS leaders and trainers about which principal competencies Missouri teachers find most important, in hopes that they might shift the competencies on which the state of Missouri focuses its training of Missouri principals. In turn, I hope this makes Missouri teachers feel more supported by their school principals, potentially positively impacting Missouri's teacher retention rate.

Role of the Researcher

Ravitch and Carl (2021) discussed the importance of a researcher defining their relationship and the roles they bring to the study topic. Due to the significant role of a researcher, it is critical to acknowledge researcher subjectivity due to the unique perspectives each researcher brings to a study (Burkholder et al., 2020). Researcher reflexivity includes self-reflection on biases about settings and participants and reflection about how personal experiences impact your research (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

As an educator for the past 23 years, I am a participant in the education process. I was a high school English teacher for 20 years, and I genuinely believe teachers are the most important factor in student achievement. Teachers are the ones who impact students every day. As I moved from classroom teacher to school administrator, I maintained this belief in the impact of classroom teachers. My most significant purpose as a school leader is to support teachers so that teachers can support students. Because I have spent so much time in education, the most valuable support a teacher can have in their career is a strong school leader, and helping create strong school leaders for teachers is what drives this study.

One of the key factors in my relationship to this study is that I was a teacher for 20 years and recently stepped into the position of assistant principal for the past 3 years. As such, one of the issues I needed to be aware of when I interviewed teachers is that they might view me only through the lens of a principal instead of through the lens of a long-time teacher, and this could have made them guarded in their responses if they try not to offend me with their responses. When listening to answers, I needed to check my bias, as I could be listening as a school administrator and not as a teaching colleague, as my lens has changed even in 3 short years of being an administrator. However, no teacher in the building where I lead was part of the survey, as there have been no other Regional Teachers of the Year, so there were no power dynamics at play or no issue of a person feeling coerced into responding.

Though I do not work directly with anyone I asked to respond to my survey or to be interviewed, I was awarded the title of 2019 Missouri State Teacher of the Year, and

because of this, I am a member of the network of State Teachers of the Year. This network comprises Missouri's Regional Teachers of the Year, State Semifinalists, State Finalists, and State Teachers of the Year, the group I elected to survey. I surveyed these award-winning teachers from the past 11 years, from 2014 to 2025. Because I am a member of this network, I believe responses to my survey and interview responses were easier to obtain. However, it also means I know many potential respondents or interviewees. To avoid any biases in gathering this data, I did the following: First, I sent the survey to every award-winning teacher from 2014 to 2025, not just those I knew. Second, I gathered responses from all 10 regions, grade levels, and all types of schools, not just the region where I live. Thirdly, to ensure reflexivity, I discussed my research with colleagues and mentors to gain alternative perspectives and identify potential biases. Finally, after interviews, I shared transcripts with participants and sought their feedback and approval on the accuracy of my interpretations.

Finally, as an assistant principal, I am currently enrolled in the MLDS program, actively attending the professional development offered, and I have worked closely with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the past. Instead of serving as a barrier, there are advantages to both of these professional relationships. First, being a part of MLDS gives me first-hand experience and more insight, as I can hear the content and message with my ears. Additionally, having worked with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the past means I knew who to contact to share the findings from this study.

Methodology

The research methodology included two types of qualitative instruments and was conducted in two stages. The first stage used a qualitative descriptive study survey to survey 82 award-winning Missouri teachers (those who have been honored by the state as a Regional Teacher of the Year, a State Teacher of the Year semifinalist, a State Teacher of the Year finalist, or a State Teacher of the Year). I analyzed the mean and standard deviation for each survey item from the results. The second qualitative instrument I used is semistructured interviews with 13 teachers who took the descriptive survey for a more in-depth understanding.

Participant Selection

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website considers award-winning teachers a Regional Teacher of the Year, a semifinalist, a finalist, or a State Teacher of the Year. The ones who received the survey were named a regional, semifinalist, finalist, or Teacher of the Year. This person must be a full-time public or charter school teacher, holding a valid Missouri teaching certificate. They should be highly respected by students, parents, colleagues, and the community and an . active participant in the school community through service and leadership. They must also have a strong ability to foster excellence in education by improving student learning. Counselors and library media specialists are eligible if they spend over 50% of their school day in direct classroom instruction. Principals and assistant principals are not eligible. Districts can nominate their own teacher of the year, or individuals can submit open nominations, which are then reviewed by committees comprised of teacher and

administrator organizations as well as higher education institutions. Thirty-four Regional Teachers of the Year are then chosen based on the regional student population from each of the 10 regions in Missouri: Northeast (2), Northwest (2), South Central (2), Central (2), Southeast (2), Heart of Missouri (3), Southwest RPDC (3), Kansas City (6), St. Louis (10), and Southwest Center (2). From these regional honorees, a committee narrows the list to 17 semifinalists, then six or seven finalists, and finally the singular Missouri Teacher of the Year. Additional criteria for the state-level award include plans to remain teaching in the classroom, effectiveness in promoting student performance regardless of background or ability, and the ability to be an effective spokesperson (*Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education homepage).*

I used the regional, semifinalist, finalists, and teachers of the year between 2014 and 2025, a total of 321 award-winning teachers initially invited through email to take the descriptive survey. From 2014 to 2016, the state of Missouri only awarded seven finalists and named one of the finalists Missouri's Teacher of the Year. Beginning in 2017, Missouri established a new structure to recognize more teachers. As such, 34 teachers have been awarded the Regional Teacher of the Year title each year from 2017 to present. After I analyzed the mean and standard deviation from the survey results, the second stage was to conduct in-depth interviews, considered an effective approach to examining a participant's experience related to a phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I intentionally invited via email a small sample of 13 award-winning teachers from the original 82 survey respondents to investigate the critical ideas learned from the survey results.

I framed the interviews around the following question: What are the suggestions of award-winning teachers in Missouri for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention? Interviewees came from seven of the 10 regions across the state of Missouri, as well as teachers from the elementary and secondary levels and those who teach in rural, urban, and suburban schools, respectively, to reach a balance of gender, geographical, and teaching experience and multiple perspectives from across the state. This is an example of purposive sampling, a technique in which a researcher intentionally selects participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research question. The chosen individuals are believed to provide the most insightful information for the study, rather than being selected at random (Mason, 2002).

I conducted semistructured interviews (see Appendices A and B) with identified individuals to understand their ideas about the MLDS principal competencies and gather their recommendations. I used the interview data to conduct a thematic analysis and identify key findings that can be used to refine the MLDS in the context of teacher retention efforts. I am able to report which competencies and skills Missouri teachers find most appropriate for teacher retention, and share their suggestions for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve retention. I will ask the MLDS leaders and trainers to focus their training on the competencies most important to teacher retention.

I had two reasons for choosing award-winning teachers. The primary reason is that the audience I hope to challenge to hear what teachers say about the Missouri principal training is principals and the leaders who develop the training. While we know there are extreme flaws in any type of recognition system, the fact that award-winning

teachers say these things can carry additional weight with the audience. I also have access to the 2014-2025 Missouri State Teachers of the Year network, which is why I chose this group. I emailed the 2014 to 2025 Regional Teachers of the Year (including semifinalists, finalists, and the Teacher of the Year) to ask them to participate in the Google form survey about Missouri's principal competencies and how important each competency is for teacher retention. I gathered emails, geographical location, grade level, and years of experience identifiers from the survey respondents to recruit a balance of perspectives for interviews.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study: a survey and an interview protocol. The survey instrument (see Appendix C) was a Google Form, which listed the 41 MLDS competencies for Missouri principals and asked the 321 award-winning Missouri teachers to use a 5-point Likert Important scale (Very Unimportant, Unimportant, Neutral, Important, Very Important) to rank the following question for each of the principal competencies: How appropriate is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher? The Likert scale is recognized for its validity in capturing subjective opinions and attitudes. Likert scales allow respondents to express their views on a continuum, from Very Unimportant to Very Important, in the case of this study. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Likert scales in various research fields. For instance, a study by Dillman et al. (2014) highlights the advantages of Likert scales in terms of respondent comprehension and data quality. The 41 MLDS competencies the respondents were asked about are directly aligned with the PSEL

standards. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) outline the qualities and values of effective school leaders and provide a framework for evaluating and developing leadership skills. They are designed to ensure school leaders have the necessary skillset to create positive learning environments, improve student outcomes, and promote equitable educational opportunities (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

The Google Form also asked the following identifying questions:

1. What is your email address?
2. Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview via Zoom for additional input? This was a yes or no question. This protected those who did not wish to be interviewed or reveal any identifying information but were willing to answer the survey questions.
3. In which of the 10 geographical regions do you teach?
4. Are you an early career teacher (0 to 5 years), a mid-career teacher (6 to 15 years), or a late-career teacher (16+ years)?
5. What level of students do you teach? Elementary was identified as prekindergarten through Grade 5, and secondary was identified as Grades 6-12.
6. Is the school you teach in considered rural, urban, or suburban? I also turned off IP address tracking in the online survey as an added layer of protection for participant confidentiality.

From the survey respondents, the Google Form allowed me to select individuals to contact for a follow-up interview. I reached a balance of region, type of school, and grade level when determining who to ask for interviews. All interviews took place on Zoom, and they were semistructured. Each interviewee was shown the 41 competencies of a Transformational Principal, each subgroup at a time: the visionary leader, the instructional leader, the managerial leader, the relational leader, and the innovative leader. Multiple questions were asked in reference to the competencies, and after each subgroup was viewed, I asked the following question: What specific knowledge, skills, or dispositions should be added, strengthened, or eliminated within the MLDS principal competencies to enhance a principal's ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers?

On the Google Form, teachers were asked how appropriate each MLDS principal competency is for teacher retention. These responses helped address the first research question. The interview was when I asked the award-winning teachers what suggestions they had for revising the MLDS competencies to improve teacher retention, which is the second research question. The survey and the interviews addressed both research questions driving the study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

My first step with recruitment was to reach out to the Office of Educator Quality at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to get the email addresses of all Regional Teachers of the Year in the State of Missouri from 2014 to 2025. Everyone named a Regional Teacher of the Year, a semifinalist, a finalist, or Teacher of the Year meets the requirements of being an award-winning teacher in

Missouri, which is the group I surveyed. Next, I used the IRB-approved email explaining the purpose of the study and what I intended to do with the findings after gathering data. This email was sent to all 2014 to 2025 Regional Teachers of the Year, semifinalists, finalists, and Teachers of the Year. There are 34 Regional Teachers of the Year each year, beginning in 2017, so this means 321 award-winning teachers received the survey to get 50 to 100 responses by the deadline. Respondents could indicate on the survey if they agreed to participate in an interview. From those who agreed to an interview, I used purposive sampling to select individuals to ask to participate in an interview. This purposive sampling approach was focused on gaining the most diverse group of respondents by considering region, grade level, content, years of experience, and gender. Setting up the interview occurred through email, which was the method of contact information I had for the interviewees.

Once people agreed to an interview, I emailed them information with the IRB-approved informed consent and solicited their permission to conduct and record the interview (Naz et al., 2022). When we met virtually for the interview, I began by asking for the informed consent and recording permissions previously emailed, reminding participants that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw consent for participation at any point (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This allowed me to obtain participants' consent for participation and recording in writing and orally (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I only met with each interviewee once, and each interview lasted between 45 and 60 min. All interviews took place through Zoom because people live in different geographical regions throughout Missouri, and interviews were recorded on Zoom, so I could

accurately transcribe and code the responses. Participants were told in the interview email and at the beginning of the interview that the interview was voluntary, and they could change their minds about participating at any time. Interviewees were informed about the follow-up procedures, which included my transcribing the interview and sending a copy to them to check for accuracy. They were told they were welcome to make corrections or add context to any of their statements at that time. I also sent them a summary of my findings at the conclusion of my study. Finally, I explained to them that their anonymity would be preserved in data recording, analysis, and reporting, so that while they may recognize their own words, they will not be identifiable to others.

Data Analysis Plan

Using two different data-collection instruments was intentional to address each of the two research questions effectively. The first research question was, What are the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri about the appropriateness of the MLDS principal competencies for influencing teacher retention? The survey specifically asked these award-winning teachers to rank on a Likert Scale how appropriate each competency is for their retention. To analyze the results of this survey, I focused on the mean and standard deviation, which are displayed in a table in Chapter 4.

I analyzed the interview data to identify suggestions for refining the competencies to support better teacher retention, which is research question two. Getting suggestions required a more extensive conversation than exclusively using a survey would provide. I used a thematic analysis to find patterns and themes within the dataset. This approach is

flexible and can be applied to different kinds of qualitative data, including interviews and surveys.

The thematic analysis approach I used is as follows. I read the data multiple times to become familiar with it. After that, I did descriptive first-cycle coding to generate initial codes. A code is a word or short phrase that gives text or visual information a specific attribute (Saldaña, 2021). After codes were assigned, I created categories from the codes. This is called second-cycle coding, and I used coding to analyze and organize data into categories and subcategories. A category is a collection of codes that share attributes, meaning, and intent. Like a code, a category is labeled with a word or short phrase (Walden University, 2015). Once categories were created, I then looked for extended phrases or sentences that identify what various categories are about or what they mean (Saldaña, 2021), called themes.

I used Excel to organize the interview data during the analysis. I created an Excel spreadsheet on a single tab with a separate row for each of the eleven interview questions. I made 12 columns on that same tab. Each column included answers for each of the interviewees for each of the questions. There was also a separate column for codes and a separate column for categories. Discrepant cases in interview responses, where an interviewee answers in a way no other respondent answered, were reviewed to see how they do not fit the typical pattern. This discrepant case led to a new category being created, so all information was included. Discrepant cases provide alternative explanations, which were helpful to see how different people think about what supports teachers need from their leaders.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research gets more scrutiny than quantitative research because people find it more subjective than objective. Trustworthiness is critical to qualitative research because it ensures the credibility and rigor of a research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). However, there are frameworks for ensuring the rigor of qualitative research, and Shenton (2004) and Dahal (2023) reference some of those frameworks that originated with Guba and Lincoln (1989). Those five frameworks for evaluating the quality of qualitative research include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity.

For a study to be credible, a researcher must "promote confidence that they have accurately recorded the phenomena under scrutiny" (Shenton, 2004, p. 64) and help ensure honesty in the participants' responses by allowing them to refuse to participate as well as encouraging them to be frank with their responses (Shenton, 2004). Encouraging frankness and honesty was part of my dialogue with interviewees before they responded. Another way to ensure credibility was to employ triangulation. Triangulation can involve using participants from multiple sites and a wide range of participants to ensure multiple viewpoints and experiences (Shenton, 2004), which is why I sought feedback from teachers in all 10 regions across Missouri. Reflexivity is the practice of reflection on the researcher's role, biases, values, and how these factors influence the research process. Particularly during the interviews, I needed to ensure I was listening objectively and consistently neutral in asking the questions to avoid influencing or guiding the interviewee's responses.

Transferability means examining whether or not one study can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Dahal (2023) uses the term generalizability when discussing whether the research findings can be applied to a larger group of people or other situations. While this is often not possible with qualitative research, Shenton (2004) says the possibility should not be rejected entirely; instead, it should be "pursued with caution" (Shenton, 2004, p. 70). Some important considerations in determining whether or not transferability is an option are that the researcher needs to consider the number of participants, the methods of data collection, and the time period in which the data was collected, among other factors (Shenton, 2004). Transferability is not possible with my study because of the limited number of participants and respondents, its focus solely on award-winning teachers, and it being a single snapshot from educators rather than being asked over a prolonged period. However, this study could inspire similar studies in other states with a similar focus and group of award-winning teachers as participants.

Ensuring dependability means using techniques so that a researcher would get similar results if the study were repeated with the same participants and in the same context (Shenton, 2004). This requires the researcher to be incredibly detailed and accurate when describing the study design and implementation, how they gathered data, and their reflection on the study process (Shenton, 2004). According to Dahal (2023), part of this is to make sure to follow the quality standards for each paradigm, which for this study is interpretivism. Interpretivism offers a framework for comprehending social phenomena by examining peoples' subjective experiences and their interpretations (Farrow et al., 2020). Interpretivism highlights the importance of understanding the

meanings and values that people connect to their experiences. This approach uses qualitative research methods, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, to collect rich, contextual data. The survey ensured dependability by collecting the respondents' opinions using the Likert Scale. Using first- and second-cycle coding and reporting results using Excel provides a framework that could be replicated in a subsequent study and produce similar results.

To ensure confirmability, a researcher tries to make certain the study's findings are an accurate reflection of participants' views and experiences, not their own thoughts (Shenton, 2004). A big part of this is the researcher examining their biases and predispositions to account for how that impacts the study (Shenton, 2004). A researcher must also explain and note their bias to make the study more trustworthy. Dahal (2023) states that part of doing this is for the researcher to be critically aware of personal and methodological biases and expose and be conscious of the subjectivity they bring to the topic of study. As noted before, I identified the potential biases I brought to the study in my roles as an MLDS participant, as a former State Teacher of the Year, as a 20-year educator, and as a current assistant principal, and pay careful attention to only include respondents' answers and not my ideas or conclusions.

Ethical Procedures

One of the ways a researcher can protect participants' privacy is to use pseudonyms or change identifying facts so participants cannot be identified. Ravitch and Carl (2021) suggest not using participants' names, job titles, or specific unique identifying features that would allow others to know who they are in a final report.

Another essential part of the discussion about the ethics of protecting privacy is that decisions need to be made and discussed with the participants. Hence, they know how these will be handled (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Additionally, in an age of advanced technology, protecting people's privacy can be an even more significant concern than it used to be. A person's data could be easily compromised because of options like cloud storage and social media, so taking multiple precautions is necessary. The Google form and the Excel coding document are stored on a personal device that is password-protected. The interviews took place over Zoom, and those recordings will be stored on the same personal device. This information will be stored for 5 years before being deleted.

There are many ways a researcher can harm participants during a study. Some ways include pressuring a person to engage in the study, being deceptive about the study's purpose, using language that makes people feel marginalized, or misrepresenting the study's results (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To minimize harm, Clark-Kazak (2021) mentions multiple considerations for a researcher, which include the following: making sure participants would not be put in physical harm's way due to participating in a research study, trying to challenge oppressive systems and structures, and taking into account the emotional toll it takes on participants to tell their story repeatedly, depending on the nature of the topic.

To respect the shared experiences of others, Ravitch and Carl (2021) discuss being proactive by setting boundaries between researcher and participants, assuring participants that the data will be treated ethically, providing participants opportunities to

share aspects of their lives openly, and affirming or validating people's lived experiences. Compensating people can have its own ethical concerns in that it could make people feel coerced into participating. Ravitch and Carl (2021) suggest offering compensation through means besides money, such as providing a meal or snack, which helps the shared experience. Still, because these interviews took place over Zoom, this will not be a consideration for my study.

For the survey portion of this study, participants could remain completely anonymous if they chose. They were given the option to include their email address only if they were willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview, which was an option to opt in rather than opt out. If an individual offered their email address and agreed to participate in a follow-up interview, an email invitation was sent to schedule an interview. The participant could decline this scheduled interview, allowing them to withdraw from the study. The only information identified in the final survey and interview findings is the region of the state where they work, making it incredibly difficult to connect with any individual.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined this qualitative descriptive research study to describe teacher perceptions of the MLDS principal competencies. This chapter also explained how surveying 50 to 100 award-winning teachers in Missouri from 2014 to 2024 to see their perception of the importance of each principal competency to teacher retention can improve principal preparation in Missouri to better support teacher retention. Interviewing thirteen teachers from seven of the 10 regions in the state should offer

diverse perspectives from across the state and help establish more credibility for the study. However, this study is not generalizable to other settings. Analyzing the survey findings using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviations) and analyzing the interviews using coding to determine themes ensured dependability. Finally, Chapter 3 explained that all procedures for IRB approval were followed to ensure that the study was completed ethically with no harm to human participants, ensuring participants were kept anonymous for their protection and allowed to not participate in the study at any point they chose. Chapter 4 will describe the results obtained during the data collection process.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative descriptive study aimed to explore the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri regarding the appropriateness of the principal competencies in the MLDS for influencing teacher retention and their suggestions for refining the principal competencies to improve teacher retention. The following research questions underpinned this qualitative study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri about the appropriateness of the MLDS principal competencies for influencing teacher retention?

RQ2: What are the suggestions of award-winning teachers in Missouri for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention?

Chapter 4 will discuss the setting, data collection process, data analysis, and the study results.

Setting

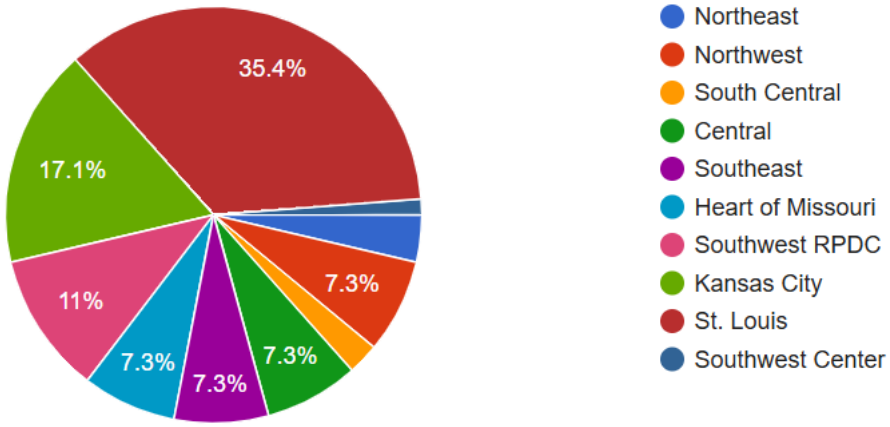
Any conditions that may have influences the participants or their work experience during the study as well as participant demographics and characteristics relevant to the study will be presented in this section. The survey was emailed to the regional, semifinalists, finalists, and Missouri Teachers of the Year from 2014 to 2025 in March, during spring break for many of them. A positive aspect of this timing was that some teachers had more time to respond during a week when they were not also teaching, but a negative is that some teachers did not check their email during break. The Zoom interviews were semistructured, lasted 45 to 60 min, and were conducted during April.

Some interviews took place at the end of a school day, which could have impacted interviewees' focus and disposition.

Figures 1–4 represent the demographic breakdown of the 82 teacher respondents. Three hundred twenty-one teachers were sent the survey, and 82 teachers responded, which is a 26% response rate. As shown in Figure 1, 29 teacher respondents were from St. Louis, which represents 35.4% of the respondents. Fourteen Kansas City teachers responded, representing 17.1% of the total. Nine respondents were from Southwest RPDC (11%). Six teachers were from Heart of Missouri (7.3%). Six were from Southeast (7.3%). Six were from Central (7.3%). Six were from Northwest (7.3%). Three were from the Northeast (3.7%). Two were from South Central (2.4%), and one was from Southwest Center (1.2%).

Figure 1

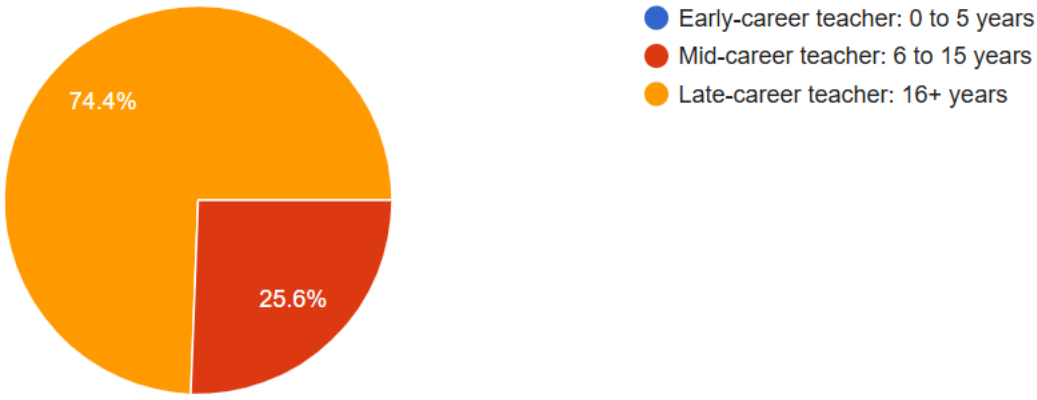
Survey Respondents by Region of Missouri



Of the 82 survey respondents, none were early-career teachers, which is considered 0 to 5 years of teaching experience. As shown in Figure 2, 21 of the 82 respondents (25.6%) were mid-career, meaning they have taught between six and 15 years. Sixty-one teachers (74.4%) are late-career teachers, meaning they have taught 16 or more years.

Figure 2

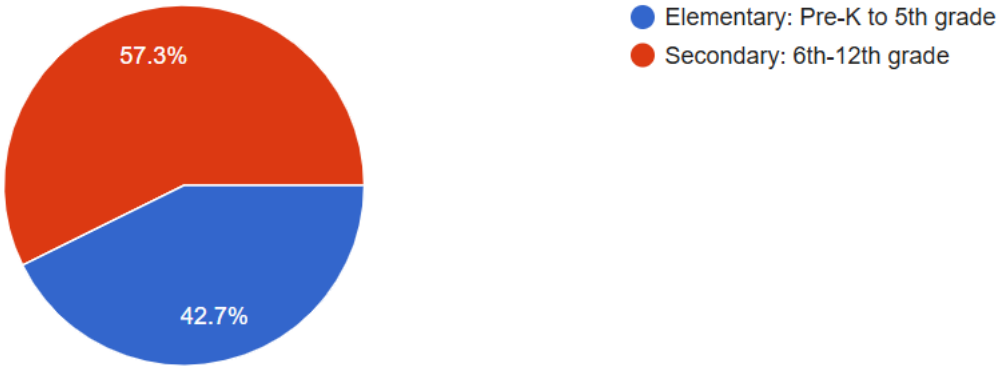
Survey Respondents by Years of Teaching Experience



Thirty-five survey respondents (42.7%) were elementary teachers, which was categorized by teachers teaching prekingarten through fifth grade. As shown in Figure 3, 47 respondents (57.3%) were considered secondary teachers, which means they teach Grades 6–12.

Figure 3

Survey Respondents by Level of Students Taught



As shown in Figure 4, 38 teacher respondents (46.3%) represented suburban school districts, 36 (43.9%) represented rural school districts, and eight (9.8%) represented urban school districts.

Figure 4

Survey Respondents by Locale

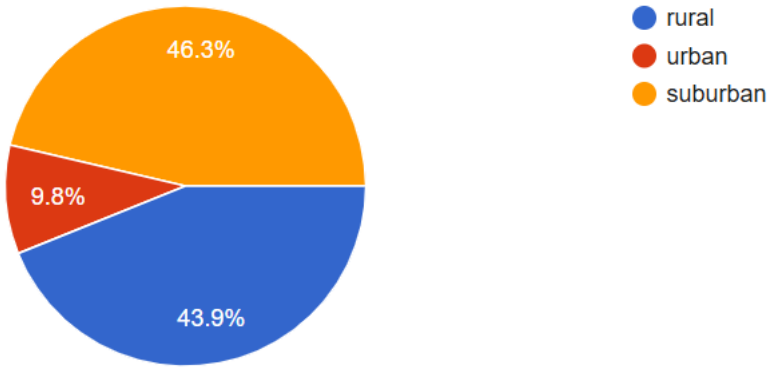


Table 1 includes the demographic information for the 13 participants selected for an interview. Each teacher participant below is identified by their region of Missouri,

their years of teaching experience, the level of students they teach, and their locale. The interview participants represented seven of the 10 regions of Missouri, and all interviewees were late-career teachers. Six of the teachers were elementary teachers (prekindergarten through fifth grade), and seven of the teachers were secondary teachers (sixth through 12th grades). Of the participants, two represented urban locales, three suburban, and eight rural. All participants were late career (i.e., 16+ years of experience).

Table 1

Interview Participant Information

Participant	Region of Missouri	Level of students	Locale
1	St. Louis	Elementary	Urban
2	Northwest	Elementary	Rural
3	Heart of Missouri	Secondary	Rural
4	Kansas City	Secondary	Suburban
5	South Central	Secondary	Rural
6	Kansas City	Elementary	Suburban
7	South Central	Secondary	Rural
8	Southeast	Elementary	Rural
9	Southwest RPDC	Secondary	Rural
10	St. Louis	Secondary	Urban
11	Northwest	Elementary	Rural
12	Southwest RPDC	Secondary	Rural
13	Heart of Missouri	Elementary	Suburban

Note. Elementary level includes prekindergarten through Grade 5. Secondary level includes Grades 6–12. RPDC = Regional Professional Development Center.

Data Collection

This section will describe the number of participants, the location, frequency, and duration of data collection, a description of how the data were recorded, variations in data collection, and any unusual circumstances encountered during data collection. I will present this for both phase one and phase two.

Phase 1

After receiving approval from the Walden University IRB (approval no. 03-03-25-1012307), I requested partner approval from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to obtain the email addresses from the Regional, semifinalists, finalists, and Missouri Teachers of the Year from the years 2014 and 2025. After that was granted, I sent an email with the Google survey to that entire group of teachers, which totaled 321. The Google survey mimicked Tran et al.'s (2023) idea of using the Best-Worst system for teacher rankings of each of the administrative support attributes and extended that to using the Very Important to Very Unimportant Likert Scale while maintaining the same question Tran asked: How important is this to your retention?

All 321 teachers were given a 3-week window to complete the survey. I sent out two email reminders during that 3-week window. Eighty-two out of 321 teachers responded to the survey. There were no variations in data collection from the original plan. However, an unusual circumstance was that no early-career teachers responded to the survey. There was no indication of how many early-career teachers make up the 321 teachers who were sent the survey.

Phase 2

The last question on the Google survey asked respondents if they would be willing to engage in a follow-up interview. Of the 82 respondents to the survey, 33 indicated their willingness to be interviewed. Interviewees selected were sent a Sign-Up Genius form to select an interview timeslot. Interview timeslots were offered throughout April and were allotted for 1-hr blocks of time after the school day during the week and on the weekends. All interviews took place on Zoom. Willing interviewees who were not selected were sent an email as well, thanking them for the offer of their time and expertise.

All interviews were audio recorded using Zoom. At the end of each interview, I reminded the participants they could withdraw their participation at any time, and I noted that I would send them the transcript to check for accuracy. After each interview, I used the Zoom transcription service to get a full interview transcript. I created a document for each interview transcript and saved it as their pseudonym (i.e., Teacher 1, Teacher 2). I had to go back and listen to the interviews, as there were minor mistakes in the transcription service that I needed to correct before sending it to the participants to check for accuracy. Once I made revisions, all thirteen individuals were sent their transcript and asked only to reply if they needed to make changes. None indicated needing any revision.

Variations from the plan were the number of teachers interviewed and the representation of the group. The original design was to interview at least one teacher from each of the 10 regions in Missouri. However, of the 33 teachers who agreed to be interviewed, only seven of the 10 regions of Missouri were represented (St. Louis,

Northwest, Heart of Missouri, Kansas City, South Central, Southeast, and Southwest RPDC). Six of the seven regions represented had at least two representatives from the region willing to participate in an interview, except the Southeast region, which only had one willing interviewee. The St. Louis region, however, had 18 representatives of the 33 respondents. To be equitable, two candidates were randomly selected from six of the represented regions (St. Louis, Northwest, Heart of Missouri, Kansas City, South Central, and Southwest RPDC), as well as the one willing respondent from the Southeast. This resulted in a total of 13 semistructured interviews. Regions not represented in the interviews include Northeast, Central, and Southwest Center.

The representation was another variation. Because no early-career teachers responded to the survey, no early-career teachers agreed to a follow-up interview, so no early-career teachers were represented in the interview responses. Only six of the 33 teachers who agreed to an interview were considered mid-career teachers (6 to 15 years of experience) and were all from the St. Louis region. All six mid-career teachers represented rural and suburban school districts, but no urban representation came from this sample. At the expense of hearing from mid-career teachers, I chose two teachers from St. Louis who represented urban school districts. This is why all interviewees represent the perspectives of late-career teachers. The only unusual circumstance was that two interviewees were driving their cars while interviewing, which may have impacted their responses.

Data Analysis

This section will report the process used to analyze survey data and the process used to move from codes to themes and will describe the codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the data. It will also describe any discrepant cases and how they were factored into the analysis.

Phase 1

To address research question one and find which principal competencies teachers rated highest, I first translated verbal descriptions into numerical values by assigning a numerical value to Likert Scale descriptors. An if/then statement was entered into the Google sheet to give *Very Important* the value of five, *Important* a four, *Neutral* a three, *Unimportant* a two, and *Very Unimportant* a one. Once verbal descriptors were translated into numerical values, a formula was entered to determine each competency question's mean and standard deviation. Once I analyzed the mean and standard deviation for each of the 41 competency questions, I selected the eight top-ranked and the eight lowest-ranked competencies, focusing first on the highest or lowest mean and second on the lowest standard deviation. This selection was important because it revealed which competencies were significant to most respondents (mean) and the range to which respondents answered similarly or differently about each competency's importance (standard deviation).

Phase 2

I used the Zoom transcription service to transcribe each interview to address research question two. During the transcription revision process, I did line-by-line coding

to write summaries in the margin about what I was hearing to start the very beginning stages of determining codes, categories, and themes. After that, I read through each interview multiple times. At this point, I also created a table with each interview question I asked and every participant's response to that question. This gave me eleven total columns reflecting the eleven interview questions with all 13 interviewees' responses to each of the questions. This helped me filter what all interviewees said about the same question. From there, I reread through all thirteen responses to each question. I then created codes. Codes that emerged through first-cycle coding included the following: challenges, support systems, leader impact, actionable recommendations, visionary, instructional, managerial, relational, and innovative.

In the second coding cycle, I looked for categories within the codes. The categories that emerged included: relationship-building between administration and teachers, student behaviors, student motivation, lack of principal support for student behaviors, overwhelming workload, principal support through systems, need for teacher support, teacher voice, negative societal views, principal mentorship, principal collaboration, lack of principal support, teacher pay, principals teaching, principal isolation, principal training, tailored professional development, time, teacher leader supporting principal, and the need to prioritize the competencies.

During the third cycle of coding, I tallied each time the categories arose in an interview to determine which ones stood out as most important. The categories that stood out the most included: relationship-building between principals and teachers, student behaviors, lack of principal support for student behaviors, overwhelming workload,

teacher voice, principal mentorship, principal collaboration, tailored professional development, and the need to prioritize competencies. I took the categories that got the most mentions and turned those categories into themes. I also ensured the themes aligned with the research questions I addressed, which Saldaña (2021) notes as essential to the data collection and research process.

Through the interviews, four themes emerged to address the second research question: What are the suggestions of award-winning teachers in Missouri for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention? The themes were

1. Teachers want principals to be supported through principal mentoring and collaboration.
2. Teachers want a say in prioritizing the competencies and in school practices.
3. Teachers are challenged by negative student behaviors and need more principal support to address behaviors.
4. Relationships between principals and teachers are foundational for teacher retention.

Table 2 displays examples of codes, categories, and themes that emerged through data analysis.

Table 2

Example of Codes, Categories, and Themes

Participant code	Line #	Response	First cycle codes	Second cycle categories	Third cycle themes
Teacher 1	14	"I think the main thing is the relationship building between [a teacher] and a building administrator.	Challenges	Relationship-building between leaders and teachers	Relationships between principals and teachers are foundational for teacher retention.
Teacher 11	16	"In [our]small school…we feel like leaders are here for us, and that comes down to the relationship we have with admin.	Challenges	Relationship-building between leaders and teachers	Relationships between principals and teachers are foundational for teacher retention.
Teacher 5	161	"There is no learning without relationship. Strengthening relationships between faculty and administrators is the best way for everyone to fulfill the building or district's goals."	Leader Impact	Relationship-building between leaders and teacher	Relationships between principals and teachers are foundational for teacher retention.
Teacher 2	19	"A lot of the teachers that I work with across the state are complaining about their number one stressor being student behaviors.	Challenges	Student Behaviors	Teachers are challenged by negative student behaviors and need more principal support to address behaviors.
Teacher 13	29	"Student behavior is definitely way different now than it ever was in all of my years of teaching."	Challenges	Student Behaviors	Teachers are challenged by negative student behaviors and need more principal support to address behaviors.
Teacher 4	103	"When everything that's in my toolbox has been exhausted, or when the behavior was so egregious that I don't have a tool that effectively addresses it is when that goes to the leadership team."	Managerial	Principal support for student behaviors	Teachers are challenged by negative student behaviors and need more principal support to address behaviors.
Teacher 11	118	"But I don't know that I feel like my principals lately have really let us seek the professional development opportunities we wanted to address.	Innovative	Teacher Voice	Teachers want say in prioritizing competencies and in school practices.
Teacher 13	70	"Sometimes teachers are so left out of this process [system responsive to student needs], and often it's just handed over to us with this plan of implementation. That's something we have to follow that we may or may not even agree with or want to implement within our classroom.	Relational	Teacher Voice	Teachers want say in prioritizing competencies and in school practices.
Teacher 12	93	"Even if one person from the 6th grade team is on the committee that can talk to the rest of the 6th grade team and can take our voice back to the meeting, teachers feel like they've had voice.	Managerial	Teacher Voice	Teachers want say in prioritizing competencies and in school practices.
Teacher 3	234	"Maybe we need to develop a mentor program with our administrators.	Support Systems	Principal Mentorship	Teachers want principals to be supported through principal mentoring and collaboration.
Teacher 4	206	"They [principals] need the same as any, you know, beginning teacher needs. They've got to have some sort of mentorship structure in their life.	Support Systems	Principal Mentorship	Teachers want principals to be supported through principal mentoring and collaboration

Teacher 4	207	"Whether that is another colleague in the district, whether that is a cadre of colleagues, whether that is a, you know, Administrator Association that has a structure in place. They'll share what they're doing and hear what other people are doing and what's working and what's not working there."	Leader Impact	Principal collaboration	Teachers want principals to be supported through principal mentoring and collaboration.

Results

The results will address each research question, present data to support each finding, include tables and figures to illustrate results, and discuss any discrepant cases.

Phase 1

Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the results to address research question one: What are the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri about the appropriateness of the MLDS principal competencies for influencing teacher retention? There are 41 principal competencies in total, and each competency falls into one of five categories as determined by MLDS. Competencies one through four are in the category of a visionary leader, five through 13 are in the category of an instructional leader, 14-24 are in the category of a managerial leader, 25-33 are in the category of a relational leader, and 34-41 are in the category of an innovative leader. Table 3 shows the highest-rated competencies by teachers.

Table 3

Highest-Ranked Competencies from Survey

Competency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Relational Competency 30: Fosters a collaborative culture where support and respect among staff are the norm.	4.81	0.38
Relational Competency 27: Ensures positive and ethical relationships are an integral part of the culture of the school.	4.64	0.59
Relational Competency 31: Develops and sustains a collaborative team culture that effectively integrates teacher leadership.	4.58	0.68
Managerial Competency 14: Inspires stakeholders to continuously improve an environment that is safe and supports student learning.	4.58	0.64
Instructional Competency 7: Develops a systemic process to ensure all students have equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support and other resources necessary for success.	4.57	0.72
Instructional Competency 5: Facilitates opportunities for collaboration and modeling of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content.	4.54	0.66
Managerial Competency 17: Systematically monitors and revises behavioral intervention structures and strategies with input from students, staff, families, and community.	4.46	0.57
Relational Competency 29: Establishes systems and structures to promote and sustain open dialogue and respect for multiple perspectives.	4.40	0.76

Note. This table presents the highest-ranked competencies based on their mean scores.

As Table 3 illustrates, a school leader *foster[ing] a collaborative culture where support and respect among staff are the norm* (Competency 30), is the highest-ranked competency with the lowest standard deviation. This competency was significant to most respondents, and most respondents feel similarly about its importance. It is important to note that the top three highest-ranked competencies all fall into the relational leader category: Competency 30 as stated above, Competency 27, which says a school leader *ensures positive and ethical relationships are an integral part of the culture of the school*, and Competency 31, which states a school leader *develops and sustains a collaborative team culture that effectively integrates teacher leadership*. Competency 29, *establishes systems and structures to promote and sustain open dialogue and respect for multiple perspectives*, also falls under the relational category and is ranked among the top eight. In

total, four out of the eight highest-ranked principal competencies all fall into the category of relational leader. Competency 30 stood out due to its 4.81 mean and its 0.38 standard deviation, while the other Relational competencies (27, 31, and 29) had a higher standard deviation and therefore were not as closely agreed upon by respondents.

In the category of instructional leadership, competency five, *facilitates opportunities for collaboration and modeling of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content,* and competency seven, *develops a systemic process to ensure all students have equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success,* ranked among the highest from survey respondents.

In the category of managerial leader, competency 14, *inspires stakeholders to continuously improve an environment that is safe and supports student learning,* and competency 17, *systematically monitors and revises behavioral intervention structures and strategies with input from students, staff, families, and community,* are represented. No competencies in visionary or innovative leader categories ranked among the highest. Table 4 shows the lowest-rated competencies.

Table 4

Lowest-Ranked Competencies from Survey

Competency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Managerial Competency 21: Monitors and revises systems to ensure compliance with all records and reports.	3.5	0.94
Innovative Competency 35: Assumes leadership positions in diverse professional networks to help others gather new knowledge and understanding.	3.58	1.01
Instructional Competency 13: Develops a systemic and continuous plan for reviewing instructional plans for the inclusion of student identities, lived experiences, abilities, and modes of learning.	3.62	1.04
Innovative Competency 38: Intentionally devotes a high percentage of time to school priorities.	3.81	0.94
Visionary Competency 2: Uses multiple methods to effectively communicate the school mission, vision and core values to all external and internal groups.	3.82	0.78
Instructional Competency 10: Develops a systemic, collaborative process for the development and use of formative and summative assessments.	3.84	0.86
Relational Competency 33: Maintains support for the school program by intentionally partnering with diverse community stakeholders to empower an inclusive network for engagement.	3.81	0.91

Note. This table presents the lowest-ranked competencies based on their mean scores.

Table 4 illustrates that the lowest-ranked competency is 21, with a mean of 3.5. Out of all 41, participants ranked this competency, a school leader *monitoring and revising systems to ensure compliance with all records and reports,* as least important for retention. This competency falls into the managerial category. In the visionary leader category, teachers ranked competency 2, *uses multiple methods to effectively communicate the school mission, vision, and core values to all external and internal groups,* as the lowest. For the instructional category, competency 10, *develops a systemic, collaborative process for the development and use of formative and summative assessments,* and competency 13, *develops a systemic and continuous plan for reviewing instructional plans for the inclusion of student identities, lived experiences, abilities, and modes of learning,* were ranked the lowest. Competency 33, *maintains support for the school program by intentionally partnering with diverse community stakeholders to empower an inclusive network for engagement,* was lowest-ranked in the relational category. Finally, for the innovation category, teachers ranked Competency 35, *assumes leadership positions in diverse professional networks to help others gather new knowledge and understanding,* and Competency 38, *intentionally devotes a high percentage of time to school priorities,* as least important for their retention.

Phase 2

The interview data was used to address research question two: What are the suggestions of award-winning teachers in Missouri for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention? Four themes emerged from the qualitative interview portion of this study.

1. Teachers want principals to be supported through principal mentoring and collaboration.
2. Teachers want a say in prioritizing the competencies and in school practices.
3. Teachers are challenged by negative student behaviors and need more principal support to address behaviors.
4. Relationships between principals and teachers are foundational for teacher retention.

Theme 1: Teachers Want Principals to be Supported Through Principal Mentoring and Collaboration.

The first theme that emerged was that teachers want principals to be supported through principal mentoring and collaboration. The topic of principal mentorship came up with Teacher 1, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, Teacher 8, and Teacher 11 when they were asked what support systems would help principals develop the competencies related to teacher retention. Teacher 4 said, "They [principals] need the same as any beginning teacher needs. They've got to have some sort of mentorship structure in their life." Teacher 3 agreed stating, "We have mentor teachers. Maybe we do something with our administrators as well." Teacher 8 noted that principal mentorship can be vital, especially in a rural school with often only one principal.

Teachers also discussed the importance of principal collaboration. Teacher 1 discussed the importance of principal collaboration by noting they can learn a lot by "visiting other schools, similar size schools with similar demographics but also [schools with] completely opposite demographics…[to] show what other people are doing."

Teacher 11 agreed that principal collaboration is essential and described school leaders needing "…a cohort of principals that you know, communicate together to kind of talk about issues that they're facing…" Teacher 7 pointed out that principals need other principals to "see things that run well," and see principals "that are successful, and that have systems in place" but went on to offer the disclaimer that "you can't take every…thing and apply it to every school, but they [principals] need that connectedness."

Theme 2: Teachers Want a Say in Prioritizing the Competencies and in School Practices.

The second theme that emerged was the need for teacher voice in prioritizing competencies. Teacher 2, Teacher 6, Teacher 7, Teacher 8, Teacher 9, and Teacher 13 mentioned that having a voice in shaping these competencies could help focus on which skills principals are trained and could offer insight into qualities that matter most to teacher retention. Teacher 2 described the potential for collaborative efforts when developing competencies: "…especially [have] teachers and administrators come together on that and work together to identify priority [competencies]…you are allowing teacher voice to be a part of that conversation." Teacher 7 said from their perspective, the competencies are too broad and could be focused with a specific lens on teacher retention. "I think they [competencies] need to be boiled down to very key things because there's key things that make people leave, and there's key things that make people work really hard for them [school leaders]." Teacher 9 explained that the list of 41 competencies is comprehensive in scope and expectation for principals, stating "I think if you could streamline what you're asking of principals maybe that makes their life easier,

and in turn makes them not burn out and be able to be a more effective leader, which then is going to retain teachers."

Teachers also articulated the importance of having their voices heard in the school where they work. For example, Teacher 3, Teacher 6, Teacher 9, Teacher 11, Teacher 12, and Teacher 13 all noted the importance of having their voices impact school practices. Teacher 12, when discussing administrative support with student behaviors, said, "Teachers need to be heard and not only hear from students." This teacher was stressing the importance of the principal making sure to hear from all parties after a behavior incident happened. Teacher 13 agrees that teachers must contribute to the conversation in order to support students. "Sometimes teachers are so left out of this process, and often it's just handed over to us with this plan of implementation that's something we have to follow, that we may or may not even agree with or want to implement within our classroom." Teacher 12 wants a voice in designing school-wide systems and expectations, as noted by their comment: "If you're just gonna make rules and you don't care what we think or you don't have buy-in, we're not going to have success in it anyway."

Theme 3: Teachers are Challenged by Negative Student Behaviors and Need More Principal Support to Address Behaviors.

Challenging student behavior was explicitly mentioned by five out of the 13 teachers in their interviews: Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 6, and Teacher 13. Teacher 2 said, "A lot of the teachers that I work with across the state are complaining about their number one stressor being student behaviors," and Teacher 6 corroborates

this. “Student behaviors are the number one reason that my colleagues and friends are contemplating a change, and specifically, it is the expectations and requirements that they do all the things necessary to teach every child in that class…while also having to manage these impossible behaviors. One person can’t do that every day.” Teacher 13 was a veteran teacher and said, “Student behavior is definitely way different now than it ever was in all of my years of teaching,” and they attribute that, in part, to post-COVID as well as changing societal norms. Teacher 2 expresses hope that working on this challenge could make a significant impact on teacher retention: “I think once teachers start seeing a decline in the students’ behaviors and get to teaching, which is what they were drawn to the profession to do, then I think that would help them find that love of teaching again.”

One of the ways Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, Teacher 10, Teacher 11, and Teacher 13 recommended addressing challenging behaviors is through the support of the principal. Teacher 3 said, in their experience and from listening to their colleagues, teachers do not always feel principal support for student behaviors. “They [teachers] feel that the administrators, like, there isn’t a follow-through on student discipline.” Teacher 11 explains how behaviors have “Become more and more of a struggle for teachers to deal with…as kids are changing and society is changing and having an administrator who’s willing to help you in your class…is really big for retention.” Teacher 4 stressed the need for principal support when working through student behavior. “When everything that’s in my toolbox has been exhausted, or when the behavior was so egregious that I don’t have a tool that effectively addresses it is when that goes to the leadership team. If I don’t feel good about how it was addressed, I’m not going to stick around for long.”

Theme 4: Relationships Between Principals and Teachers are Foundational for Teacher Retention.

Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 5, Teacher 6, and Teacher 9 all mention the importance of the relationship between a principal and a teacher. When asked about what support systems could be implemented to help principals meet the competencies, Teacher 9 stated: “A big part of that is all about personal relationships and how you’re forming them and fostering them and cultivating them. I think that is vital for principals.” Teacher 9 continued, “Education is not about jumping through the hoop. Education is about taking care of other human beings on this earth as people.” Teacher 5 notes, “There is no learning without relationship. And I think that strengthening relationships between faculty and administrators is the best way for everyone to fulfill the building or the district’s goals.”

Teacher 7, Teacher 9, and Teacher 10 illustrate the importance of relationships by showing what principals have done to damage their relationship with teachers. Teacher 7 recounts a time when a principal was yelling at a teacher. “I remember walking in on my first day…and I’m hearing the principal and another teacher in the hallway yelling at each other, and it was like maybe we need to get out of this district.” Teacher 9 said, “I worked with a leader that had very little compassion for teachers. Tons of compassion for data. And…it felt like she encouraged teachers to quit, to leave the profession.” Teacher 10 points out that an egocentric attitude can harm the relationship and impact teachers' buy-in. “The principal had one vision. The staff didn’t support it. It [the principal’s attitude] was like, this is my building.”

Not having a strong relationship between a principal and staff is one issue, but balancing what that relationship looks like is also essential. Teacher 2 observes a relationship mistake they have seen first-hand. “That [principals transitioning from teacher to administrator within the same building] has been one of the biggest culture killers that I’ve seen…when building leaders can’t make that transition effectively and then begin to maybe unknowingly show favoritism…but I also don’t know if it’s always unknowingly.”

Interviews also helped reinforce which competencies were most important to the award-winning teachers for their retention, and Table 5 below illustrates which competencies had the most mentions during interviews. This information helps address RQ1 and RQ2.

Table 5

Priority Competencies that Emerged from Thirteen Interviews

Type of Leader	Competency	# of times teachers noted its importance for teacher retention
Visionary Leader	Competency 1: Inspires stakeholders to focus on how each person can actively participate in developing a shared mission, vision, and core values.	8
	Competency 4: Establishes and models equitable consideration and cultural proficiency as the organizational foundation for all goals, policies, initiatives, and practices.	8
Instructional Leader	Competency 6: Develops a systemic process for the continuous improvement of all teachers' instructional practice.	7
	Competency 5: Facilitates opportunities for collaboration and modeling of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content.	5
	Competency 12: Develops a cycle for continuous, focused collaborative professional learning and growth.	5
Managerial Leader	Competency 14: Inspires stakeholders to continuously improve an environment that is safe and supports student learning.	5
	Competency 17: Systematically monitors and revises behavior intervention structures and strategies with input from students, staff, families, and community.	5
Relational Leader	Competency 30: Fosters a collaborative culture where support and respect among staff are the norm.	6
	Competency 29: Establishes systems and structures to promote and sustain open dialogue and respect for multiple perspectives.	5

Innovative Leader	Competency 34: Leads a systematic process for selection and delivery of professional development experiences to support continuous improvement of teaching and learning.	7
	Competency 36: Models reflective practice and engages in intentional professional development program to continuously improve performance.	4
	Competency 37: Utilizes an intentional feedback system to continuously improve and refine performance.	4
	Competency 40: Creates a culture of innovation that continuously examines strategies for change and improvement.	4

Note. This table presents the competencies award-winning teachers mentioned most often in interviews.

Table 5 confirms there is overlap in the qualitative data from interviews and the quantitative survey data illustrated in Tables 3 and 4. For example, five of the highest-ranked competencies from the survey were also among the competencies most mentioned in the interviews:

- Competency 5: Facilitates opportunities for collaboration and modeling of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content.
- Competency 14: Inspires stakeholders to continuously improve an environment that is safe and supports student learning.
- Competency 17: Systematically monitors and revises behavior intervention structures and strategies with input from students, staff, families, and community.

- Competency 29: Establishes systems and structures to promote and sustain open dialogue and respect for multiple perspectives.
- Competency 30: Fosters a collaborative culture where support and respect among staff are the norm.

Three competencies that were noted as highest-ranked on Table 3 did not come up frequently in interviews, including the following:

- Competency 27: Ensures positive and ethical relationships are an integral part of the culture of the school.
- Competency 31: Develops and sustains a collaborative team culture that effectively integrates teacher leadership.
- Competency 7: Develops a systemic process to ensure all students have equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.

Additionally, the interviews support the accuracy of Table 4. None of the lowest-ranked competencies noted in Table 4 were mentioned during the interview when teachers commented on which competencies were important for their retention. There were no discrepant cases in the survey responses. During the interviews, one interviewee focused most of their responses on new teacher development. While their information was included in the initial codes, it did not develop as a separate theme.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As stated in Chapter 3, there are five frameworks for ensuring the rigor of qualitative research, and Shenton (2004) and Dahal (2023) reference some of those

frameworks that originated with Guba and Lincoln (1989): credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity. Part of ensuring credibility is ensuring honesty in the participants' responses by allowing them to refuse to participate as well as encouraging them to be frank with their responses (Shenton, 2004). When participants were given the survey, it was done anonymously, so I had no way of knowing which of the 321 teachers participated or chose not to (unless they decided to give me their name and contact information for a follow-up interview). This encouraged frank responses because no one's answers were linked to their names. Before interviews, I ensured all interviewees were told their anonymity would be preserved in data recording, analysis, and reporting. Interviewees were told that while they may recognize their words in the final summary, what they said in the interview would not identify them to others. This provided even more opportunity for respondents to be frank with their answers.

Another way to ensure credibility is to employ triangulation, which is when a researcher uses multiple methods and data sources to study the research question. The combination of the survey results in addition to the interview feedback showed overlap in which competencies teachers believed were most and least important from two different sources of information. Triangulation can involve using participants from multiple sites and a wide range of participants to provide multiple viewpoints and experiences (Shenton, 2004). My original plan was to get feedback from teachers in all 10 regions across Missouri to gain a wide range of responses from multiple locations. Eighty-two teachers representing all 10 regions of Missouri who teach in rural, urban, and suburban

schools, and with a wide range of teaching experience, responded to the survey, which provided a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints.

I spoke with 13 different teachers who represented seven of the 10 regions for the interviews. They also represented a balance of rural, urban, and suburban schools. However, every teacher who agreed to an interview was a late-career teacher who fell in the 16+ years of teaching experience category. Hence, the years of experience perspective was not as diverse as I originally intended. Finally, to ensure credibility, it was important that I examined my role as a researcher, my biases, values, and how these factors influenced the research process. I tried to largely adhere to the scripted questions to avoid influencing or guiding the interviewee's responses in a direction I was interested in. I also had to make sure I tried to listen as a neutral person, not as a former teacher or as a current assistant principal.

Transferability means examining whether or not one study can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Some important considerations in determining whether or not transferability is an option are that the researcher needs to consider the number of participants, data collection methods, and the time period in which the data was collected, among other factors (Shenton, 2004). The number of participants for this study is in line with expectations for qualitative research, having gathered 82 survey responses and 13 interviews. This study is not generalizable to a different audience, but replicable. For example, many states have similar Teacher of the Year structures in place. States with the same regional, semifinalist, finalist, and Teacher of the Year system could replicate this study with their award-winning teachers from the past 10 years. States could potentially

have different principal competencies than Missouri, though, so while they could use the same survey and format, they would need to input their own state's principal competencies. It is also important to note that the survey responses represent a single snapshot of how teachers felt in that moment, not longitudinal data.

Ensuring dependability means using techniques so that a researcher would get similar results if the study were repeated with the same participants and in the same context (Shenton, 2004). The survey ensures dependability by collecting the respondents' opinions using the Likert Scale, standardizing responses. The same Google form could be utilized in the same manner by asking the same question: How appropriate is this particular competency for teacher retention? If a state had different principal competencies, those could be inserted instead of the ones used in Missouri, while still ensuring the dependability of the process. A researcher could also use the same framework of questions I used in my semistructured interviews while inserting their competency categories into the questions and shifting the questions to reflect their own state. Replicating this framework in a subsequent study could produce similar results. Coded interviews helped reinforce survey results and added more context to the quantitative data collected.

Confirmability means trying to ensure a study's findings accurately reflect the participants' views and experiences rather than the thoughts and ideas of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). The Google survey is more objective and based on numbers, with more respondents, whereas the interview opens up the opportunity for more bias in the process. Dahal (2023) states that part of ensuring confirmability is the researcher being conscious

of the subjectivity they bring to the topic of study. As noted before, it was important, particularly during the interview process, that I paid careful attention to only include respondents' answers and not my ideas or conclusions since I do have a close connection to the topic as an MLDS participant, as a former State Teacher of the Year, as a 20-year educator, and as a current assistant principal. This is why, during interviews, I may have stuck too closely to the script instead of asking more probing follow-up questions because I was aware my follow-up questions could veer to topics I was specifically interested in.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I described the setting, participant demographics, data collection, data analysis, and the processes I used to ensure the study's trustworthiness. I also reported the results of the study. The survey study results yielded the eight highest-ranked principal competencies for teacher retention, according to award-winning teachers in Missouri, and the eight lowest-ranked principal competencies. Through the interviews, 13 principal competencies were the most important to teachers for influencing teacher retention. They could be labeled as priority competencies as determined by the number of times the competency was mentioned during the interview. Also, through the interviews, teachers gave suggestions for refining the competencies to help aid in teacher retention.

One suggestion teachers gave, which confirms the work already being done through the MLDS, is that they want their principals to be supported through mentorship and collaboration. Teachers also want a say in prioritizing these competencies to help focus on those that are most important to teacher retention. Another suggestion the

teachers gave was to ensure they have a voice in school practices. Teachers also acknowledged the challenge that negative student behaviors are causing and the need for principals to help them address such behaviors. Finally, teachers recommend an investment in the relationship between themselves and principals. In Chapter 5, I will present an interpretation of the study's findings, discuss the study's limitations, and offer recommendations for further research. Finally, I will provide implications for positive social change as a result of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

I explored the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri regarding the appropriateness of the principal competencies in the MLDS for influencing teacher retention and their suggestions for refining the principal competencies to improve teacher retention through this qualitative descriptive study. The quantitative portion of the study involved surveying 321 award-winning teachers, with 82 respondents providing data about their perspective on the appropriateness of the MLDS principal competencies for their retention. The qualitative portion involved 13 semistructured interviews with award-winning teachers who provided suggestions for refining the MLDS principal competencies.

The study was conducted to help inform decision-making and program-planning, and my goal is to share the collected data and findings with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and with MLDS leaders and trainers about which principal competencies Missouri teachers find most important. This will encourage them to shift the competencies on which they focus their training of Missouri principals based on what teachers recommend. This shift may make Missouri teachers more satisfied with their school principals, potentially positively impacting Missouri's teacher retention rate.

Survey data analysis revealed the eight highest-ranked and eight lowest-ranked competencies according to award-winning Missouri teachers. Interview data analysis identified the 13 competencies most referenced as important. Additionally, the interviews revealed four major themes:

1. Teachers want principals to be supported through principal mentoring and collaboration.
2. Teachers want a say in prioritizing the competencies and in school practices.
3. Teachers are challenged by negative student behaviors and need more principal support to address behaviors.
4. Relationships between principals and teachers are foundational for teacher retention.

In Chapter 5, I will present my interpretation of the findings, explain limitations of the study, offer recommendations for refining the MLDS principal competencies, suggest areas of focus for future research, and describe implications for social change as a result of this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section will describe in what ways findings confirm and extend knowledge in the discipline and analyze and interpret the findings in the context of the JD-R framework.

Survey Findings

The survey portion of this study confirms and extends the work from Tran et al. (2023) about the importance of school administrative support for teacher retention. Tran et al. sampled teachers from South Carolina, and my study extends that scope to teachers in Missouri. While Tran et al. devised their own list of administrative support attributes, I used the preexisting 41 competencies of a transformational leader as designed and used by the MLDS. I took Tran et al.'s idea of the Best-Worst system for teacher rankings of

each of the administrative support attributes and extended that to using the Very Important to Very Unimportant Likert Scale while maintaining the same question Tran et al. asked: How important is this to your retention? The findings from the Tran et al. study demonstrated that respect was the most crucial attribute of administrative support. The idea of respect being the most crucial centers on the importance of relationships to teachers. My study illustrated that four of the eight highest-ranked competencies teachers labeled as important for their retention dealt with relationships.

The highest-ranked competency, Competency 30, is that a principal *fosters a collaborative culture where support and respect among staff are the norm.* This finding confirms what Shell et al. (2023) found: that support from school principals who listen to teachers and engage in open communication are key factors in teacher retention. The second highest-ranked competency, Competency 27, is that a school leader *ensures positive and ethical relationships are an integral part of the culture of the school.* Martin and Benedetti (2025) focused their teacher retention study on urban schools, while my research has representation from rural, urban, and suburban schools. Still, one of their findings confirms the importance of the need for positive relationships as stated in Competency 27. Martin and Benedetti found the importance of collaborative teacher-to-teacher relationships when fostering a supportive school environment, contributing to teacher retention.

Interview Findings

Theme 1

From the interviews, the theme of teachers wanting principals to be supported through mentoring and collaboration arose. This finding aligns with the research by Campoli and Darling-Hammond (2022) that noted that strong principal preparation and access to professional development were significantly associated with increased teacher retention. Teachers want to work for high-quality school leaders, and training programs in which principals can learn from and with one another are key to principals becoming more effective leaders. In a different research study, Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) explain that high-quality learning programs for principals are associated with multiple positive outcomes, two being teacher retention and staff perceptions of school climate. While my study focuses specifically on what teachers want for their school leaders, Rieckhoff and Larsen (2021) published a study that indicates principals want the same. Their study explores the impact a professional development school partnership can have on leadership development, and they found principals felt participation in such a network brought about positive changes in their leadership abilities and increased their collaboration time.

Theme 2

Another finding from the interviews was that teachers want a say in prioritizing the competencies and in school practices. For the competencies, teachers have not yet had a say in contributing to the MLDS competencies as they are currently designed. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Comprehensive

Center Network (Liang & Slotnik, 2023) have evaluated the MLDS by asking principals and other school leaders to assess their effectiveness. Even though over 95% of principals who participate in MLDS believe that training has improved their school and instructional (Liang & Slotnik, 2023), their perspective should not be the only perspective. Award-winning teachers are asking for a voice to help refine these. I recommend extending the existing MLDS data by asking teachers to contribute their voices to the MLDS competencies.

As far as teachers wanting a say in contributing to school practices, Urick (2020) found that teachers who experienced shared leadership were likelier to stay. Urick's (2020) findings are confirmed by my study, where teachers are asking for shared leadership as it relates to school practices and for principals to consider them in shared decision-making. Ozmen and Karagoz (2022) show that teachers' involvement in decision-making positively impacts their psychological empowerment and leads to higher organizational commitment and a lower intent to leave, which aligns with teachers in my study asking for more of a voice in school practices.

Theme 3

One of the repeated topics teachers brought up in interviews, as well as one of the highest-ranked competencies (Competency 17), noted that teachers feel they need help from administrators in supporting student behaviors. This confirms what A. B. Bakker et al. (2007) found in the study of Finnish teacher. With high or positive ratings of supervisor support, teacher perceptions of student misbehavior had less negative impact

on their work engagement. This suggests that supportive leadership is a job resource that helps buffer demanding situations like student behavior.

Teacher 2 said that teachers “across the state are complaining about their number one stressor being student behaviors,” and the topic of negative student behaviors came up six different times in my interviews. This also aligns with the Missouri State Teachers Association survey of its members on the state of the profession in January and February 2024, where results from 2,300 members indicated that student behaviors are the most significant reason Missouri educators are considering leaving the profession and the largest source of stress. The fact that teachers are citing student behavior as one of their biggest job demands also aligns with a study with Australian teachers, too, who found disruptive student behavior, along with time pressure, are two types of job demands that negatively impact teachers’ sense of competence and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Teachers’ call for administrative support with behaviors is an important next step for their retention. Teachers who feel their administrators are unsupportive are over twice as likely to quit their jobs as those who feel supported by school leadership (Sutcher et al., 2016). My study also aligns with a survey done by Shell et al. (2023), which shows that principals who recognize how hard their teachers are working and who enforce discipline are better at retaining their teachers.

Theme 4

In the study, teachers explained that principal-teacher relationships are foundational for teacher retention. This confirms the study by Szeto (2022), where early career teachers reported that unsupportive school leadership and a toxic and hostile

culture could be the primary factors driving their turnover intentions. My study extends this to late-career teachers who are stating the same. Ford et al. (2019) showed the importance of the interpersonal relationship between teacher and principal interactions and found that positive interactions help cultivate organizational commitment among teachers and help counter burnout. It is unsurprising that my study revealed that four out of the eight highest-ranked competencies fell into the Relational Leader category.

Overlap Between the Survey and Interview Findings

There was significant overlap between this study's survey and interview findings, which speaks to the credibility of having both data-collection instruments to address research questions in order to offer a broader understanding of a research phenomenon (Sharma et al., 2023). The survey data alone would have addressed research question one. Still, it would not have shown that five of the highest-ranked competencies from the survey were also among the most mentioned competencies in the interviews. I would also have not discovered that none of the least-ranked competencies were mentioned in the interviews when teachers had to go through each category and explain which competencies were most important to their retention. “Employing both data sets allows the researchers to answer the same research question with greater certainty” (Maxwell, 2016; Morgan, 2014). For this study, the interview responses overlapped with the information revealed in the survey, and the interview responses also offered additional anecdotal information.

Interpretation of the Findings Through the Lens of Job Demands-Resource Theory

The findings of this study reinforce existing literature regarding the critical role of school leadership in teacher retention by looking through the lens of the JD-R theory. The JD-R theory recognizes the school leader's impact on buffering effects. The 'buffering' effect is when job resources buffer or lessen the demands, which in turn, reduces job strain (A. B. Bakker et al., 2005). This means that a supportive school leader can be a significant factor in buffering how teachers perceive and respond to their job demands. Knowing that "job resources buffer the impact of job demands on strain" (Bakker et al., 2005) shows us the impact effective school leadership as a job resource can have on improving teacher retention and avoiding teacher burnout. Teacher 4 proved the need for principal support as a buffer: "As a teacher, I need to feel like I've got the support I need when either 1. There are no behavior and management interventions that I can implement that will effectively allow me to teach, or 2. If I'm pretty confident in the structures I've got in place and those fail. When everything that's in my toolbox has been exhausted…that goes to the leadership team." JD-R theory shows that supportive leadership as a job resource can reduce sources of stress and help individuals respond effectively to job demands (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011), which directly aligns with Themes 3 and 4.

Limitations of the Study

One of the methodological limitations is sample size. There are approximately 70,000 teachers in the state of Missouri, and my study only engages with 82 award-winning Missouri teachers. Being solely focused on award-winning teachers means

missing a valuable population of teachers who have not been honored with an award but certainly have valuable insight. Another limitation could be that the data I gathered could be biased because award-winning teachers are potentially more likely to feel valued and seen in the profession. My survey questions focused specifically on the degree to which principal competencies impacted teachers for their retention, though, so it is unlikely their optimism would have swayed their answers.

Because I asked teachers to remark on each category (Visionary, Instructional, Managerial, Relational, and Innovative), they were asked to pick competencies under each of the five categories instead of only selecting ones from the list of 41 they thought were most important. That might be why visionary competencies were not mentioned at all on the list of highest-ranked competencies but were discussed in the interviews. In the interviews, there were three competencies not mentioned that were noted in the highest-ranked competency chart (Table 3). These competencies (Competency 27, Competency 31, and Competency 7, as indicated in Chapter 4) centered around positive and ethical relationships, teacher leadership, learning opportunities, academic and social support, equitable access to effective teachers, and other resources. As award-winning and late-career teachers, this group may have experienced more positive relationships with their leaders and been given more opportunities for teacher leadership, which may explain the absence of these competencies in the interview conversations. As noted in Chapter 4, no early-career teachers responded to the survey and therefore could not be interviewed. This lack of representation might reveal that early-career teachers are not likely to be named Teacher of the Year.

Another limitation is that only 7 of the 10 regions of Missouri were represented by the interviewees. While the study still utilizes the perspectives from a wide range of award-winning teachers, there is not representation from all regions of Missouri. This means I cannot confidently claim that these insights represent teachers across the entire state of Missouri. Additionally, teachers who left education were not part of this study. I only spoke with current educators or educators who had recently retired. A final limitation is that interviewees reflected on the competencies as written but did not provide clear and direct guidance for revision.

Recommendations

One recommendation from this study is to integrate teacher voice to help refine MLDS competencies. In 2020, MLDS began measuring its impact on school leaders. As previously stated, 95% of principals participating in MLDS believe the training is improving their ability to lead (Liang & Slotnik, 2023). It is time to add the teacher's voice to see how teachers perceive that their principals are growing due to this professional development. It is also time, possibly through a teacher work group, for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to ask for teachers' advice on refining the competencies to help school leaders better meet teachers' needs.

Next, a recommendation from this study is to train principals on strategies for how to include teacher voice in school practices. Missouri does not have a domain for shared leadership, which Urick (2020) notes makes teachers more likely to continue teaching. Sulit (2020) also studied the phenomenon of distributive leadership and explained how it contributes to teacher retention. These studies make the case for

allowing teachers to share their voices, so adding a competency around shared leadership could make it more of a priority. Perhaps showing principals how to create and implement a Teacher Advisory Board in their buildings, where teacher input is genuinely sought and used, would be a starting point.

Another recommendation is that MLDS principal training should emphasize relational competencies. Researchers have determined school leaders' support as a job resource can buffer job demands (Collie, 2022). Frahm and Cianca (2021) focused their research on rural school leaders. They demonstrated that rural school administrators should actively develop relationships with new teachers, recognize achievement, and encourage collective support for new teachers—all recommendations centering around relationships. Kaiser and Thompson (2021) found that the common sources principals see teachers stressed about included workload, student discipline, and accountability or teacher evaluations, and one way principals were able to support teachers that proved to be most beneficial included collaborative relationships.

MLDS should also provide principals with specific training on supporting teachers with student behavior. With more than 2,300 Missouri teachers in 2024 noting in their MSTA survey that student behaviors are the most significant reason Missouri educators are considering leaving the profession, teachers are letting us know that student behaviors are a primary job demand, and principal support can serve as a buffer (Missouri Teachers Association, 2024).

Finally, MLDS should continue existing mentorship structures and potentially create more networks for principal collaboration. In 2022, Duffrin reported that 45% of

Missouri principals participate annually. Structures should be implemented to make mentorship and collaboration a reality for a larger percentage of Missouri principals. This could be particularly beneficial in schools with only one principal, which was noted in both rural and urban conversations. Teacher 8 mentioned, “In our small schools, where you’re the only principal, it doesn’t really seem like they have anyone to depend on.”

Future research could be done to replicate this study, specifically in Missouri, with early-career teachers or non-award-winning teachers whose perspectives are also significant. Research from Missouri’s 2021 Teacher Workforce report concludes that only 48% of the teaching workforce remains in the profession after the first 5 years (Katnik, 2021), so it is essential to hear early-career teacher voices as part of this conversation. This study could also be replicated in other states with similar teacher award systems.

Implications

For policy and practice, the findings from this study could inform and guide MLDS in refining its training of Missouri principals. If the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education incorporated teachers to refocus and revise these competencies, Missouri principals could be more specifically trained in the areas that matter most to teachers. A strong principal who manages student behavior serves as a buffer to teachers’ job demands. Principals who provide teachers a voice as well as support establish a more positive workspace and higher staff morale, which aids in retention. Retaining teachers also means students can access high-quality, experienced teachers, which enhances student achievement outcomes.

Conclusion

Principals must focus their efforts on supporting teachers, so teachers can focus their efforts on supporting students. This study offers the next steps to ensure that leaders focus on what teachers tell them they need to continue teaching. The study also demonstrates the need to develop principals so that they have the capacity to support teachers best. Principals have the greatest impact on teacher retention. Therefore, investments must be made to effectively support principals in order to retain teachers.

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Appendix A: Introductory and Concluding Statements for Interviews

Introductory Statement for Interviews

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study. I appreciate your generosity with your time and expertise.

Before we get started, I wanted to share a bit about myself and why I am doing this study as part of my doctoral research. I am currently in my 23rd year in education, 20 as a classroom teacher and three as an assistant principal, and I have worked in Missouri throughout my entire career. I want to be the kind of school leader teachers want to work alongside, and I want to help develop the kind of school leaders who help teachers want to stay in the profession. My current research will explore how award-winning Missouri teachers,such as yourself, feel about the competencies on which Missouri principals are trained through the Missouri Leadership Development System.

There are a few terms I would like to make sure we are using in the same way throughout this interview:

Administrator: For this study, administrator will be defined as a person currently serving as an assistant or head principal in a school building. In Missouri, to obtain this role, the administrator must have completed a master's degree or higher in educational administration from a Missouri-approved program and have a valid classroom teaching certificate and at least two years of classroom teaching experience.

Award-winning teachers: According to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, Missouri has a Teacher of the Year recognition system to recognize the contributions of the classroom teacher. Missouri identifies various levels of

award winners, including Regional, semifinalists, finalists, and Missouri Teachers of the Year.

MLDS: The Missouri Leadership Development System is a principal development program designed to support the development of effective school leaders. In the fall of 2014, a group of critical stakeholders engaged in principal development and support was convened by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to identify the essential competencies of a transformational principal.

Do you have any questions about any of these terms?

All of my questions for you today relate to principal competencies and your perspective on their importance for teacher retention. Your answers today will help me address my research questions.

My research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of award-winning teachers in Missouri about the appropriateness of the MLDS principal competencies for influencing teacher retention?

RQ2: What are the suggestions of award-winning teachers in Missouri for refining the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention?

In the coming weeks, I will transcribe the interview and send it to you to check for accuracy. You will be welcome to make corrections or add context to any of your statements at that time. I will also send you a summary of my findings at the conclusion of my study, and you will be welcome to make corrections or additions at that time. Your

anonymity will be preserved in data recording, analysis, and reporting, so while you may recognize your own words, they will not be identifiable to others.

I am obligated to remind you at this time that the state's mandated reporter laws require me to report any suspected child or elder abuse or neglect.

Before we get started, do you have any questions?

I would like to record the interview today to make a transcript of what you shared with me. Do I have your permission to record?

Okay, I'm going to start recording now.

[START RECORDING]

Concluding Statement for Interview

Thank you so much for your time today. I really do appreciate you sharing your thoughts and experiences with me. If you change your mind about participation, email me at the email address we used to arrange the interview.

As part of my research, I will analyze both the survey and interview responses.

When I have completed transcribing your interview, I will share it with you so you can check it to ensure its accuracy. I will also share the completed dissertation with you before submission so you can give feedback on the findings.

Again, I deeply appreciate your time and will be in touch soon.

Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Questions

Interviewees will be given this link to the 41 competencies of a Transformational School Leader to reference as they interview.

Understanding Current Competencies & Teacher Retention:

1. In your experience, how well do the current Missouri Leadership Development Standards (MLDS) principal competencies reflect the qualities and skills needed to effectively lead a school?
2. Considering your own experience and the experiences of colleagues, what are the biggest challenges teachers face that contribute to teacher turnover in Missouri?
3. Do you believe the current MLDS principal competencies adequately address the challenges that contribute to teacher turnover?

Identifying Areas for Refinement:

4. Please take a look at the competency section called Visionary Leader, numbers 1-4. What specific knowledge, skills, or dispositions should be added, strengthened, or eliminated within the MLDS principal competencies to enhance a principal's ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers?
5. Please take a look at the competency section called Instructional Leader, numbers 5-13. What specific knowledge, skills, or dispositions should be added, strengthened, or eliminated within the MLDS principal competencies to enhance a principal's ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers?
6. Please take a look at the competency section called Managerial Leader, numbers 14-24. What specific knowledge, skills, or dispositions should be added,

strengthened, or eliminated within the MLDS principal competencies to enhance a principal's ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers?

7. Please take a look at the competency section called Relational Leader, numbers 25-33. What specific knowledge, skills, or dispositions should be added, strengthened, or eliminated within the MLDS principal competencies to enhance a principal's ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers?
8. Please take a look at the competency section called Innovative Leader, numbers 34-41. What specific knowledge, skills, or dispositions should be added, strengthened, or eliminated within the MLDS principal competencies to enhance a principal's ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers?

Exploring Implementation and Support:

9. What kind of support systems and resources would be most beneficial to help principals develop the competencies related to teacher retention?

Gathering Specific Examples and Recommendations:

10. Can you share a specific example from your own experience where a principal's actions (or lack thereof) significantly impacted teacher retention, and how this relates to the MLDS principal competencies?
11. What specific, actionable recommendations would you offer to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (or other relevant stakeholders) to refine the MLDS principal competencies to improve teacher retention?

Appendix C: Survey Given to Award-Winning Teachers

In what region of Missouri do you teach?

- ☐ Northeast
- ☐ Northwest
- ☐ South Central
- ☐ Central
- ☐ Southeast
- ☐ Heart of Missouri
- ☐ Southwest RPDC
- ☐ Kansas City
- ☐ St. Louis
- ☐ Southwest Center

Which of the following best describes your years of teaching experience?

- ☐ Early-career teacher: 0 to 5 years
- ☐ Mid-career teacher: 6 to 15 years
- ☐ Late-career teacher: 16+ years

Which best describes the level of students you teach?

- ☐ Elementary: Pre-K to 5th grade
- ☐ Secondary: 6th-12th grade

Which best describes the school in which you teach?

- ☐ rural
- ☐ urban
- ☐ suburban

1. **How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?**

   Inspires stakeholders to focus on how each person can actively participate in developing a shared mission, vision and core values.

   - ☐ Very Important
   - ☐ Important
   - ☐ Neutral
   - ☐ Unimportant
   - ☐ Very Unimportant

2. **How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?**

Uses multiple methods to effectively communicate the school mission, vision and core values to all external and internal groups.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

3. **How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?**

Establishes a systematic and ongoing cycle of continuous improvement that includes data collection, analysis, planning, and evaluation.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

4. **How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?**

Establishes and models equitable consideration and cultural proficiency as the organizational foundation for all goals, policies, initiatives, and practices.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

5. **How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?**

Facilitates opportunities for collaboration and modeling of instructional practices appropriate to the learning content.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important

□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

6. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops a systemic process for the continuous improvement of all teachers' instructional practice.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

7. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops a systemic process for the continuous improvement of all teachers' instructional practice.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

8. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops a systemic process to assess the level of academic expectations for all students and the inclusivity of diversity and cultural assets into daily instructional practices.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

9. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Ensures staff regularly collaborates to continuously monitor and adjust the vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum to improve student learning.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

10. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops a systemic, collaborative process for the development and use of formative and summative assessments.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

11. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops a systemic data teaming process for the analysis of student level data to improve the instructional process and student growth..

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

12. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops a cycle for continuous, focused collaborative professional learning and growth.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

13. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops a systemic and continuous plan for reviewing instructional plans for the inclusion of student identities, lived experiences, abilities, and modes of learning.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

14. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Inspires stakeholders to continuously improve an environment that is safe and supports student learning.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

15. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Continuously monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of culturally proficient routines, procedures and schedules that ensure a safe, healthy and equitable learning environment.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

16. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Collaborates with a diverse group of stakeholders to review and revise policies and practices to ensure comprehensive equity considerations.

☐ Very Important

□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

17. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Systematically monitors and revises behavior intervention structures and strategies with input from students, staff, families, and community.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

18. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Establishes processes to sustain a culture that attracts and retains applicants of diverse cultural backgrounds.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

19. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Empowers staff to continuously hold each other accountable to the highest professional expectations.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

20. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Maintains a system of interventions and supports for resolving personnel issues, including turnover and succession.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

21. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Monitors and revises systems to ensure compliance with all records and reports.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

22. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops and implements a system to continuously address school goals and priorities through the effective allocation of fiscal resources.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

23. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops and implements a system to continuously address school goals and priorities through the effective allocation of non-fiscal resources.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

24. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Creates and sustains a culture in which equity of access to institutional support and social capital inherently exists.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

25. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Collaboratively establishes a system responsive to individual needs for ensuring equity in the teaching and learning process.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

26. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Collaboratively integrates in and out of school strategies and resources to provide for the well-being of each student.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

27. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Ensures positive and ethical relationships are an integral part of the culture of the school.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important

□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

28. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Systemically monitors and adjusts the effectiveness of systems and structures created to promote equity, understanding and appreciation of cultural differences.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

29. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Establishes systems and structures to promote and sustain open dialogue and respect for multiple perspectives.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

30. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Fosters a collaborative culture where support and respect among staff are the norm.

□ Very Important
□ Important
□ Neutral
□ Unimportant
□ Very Unimportant

31. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Develops and sustains a collaborative team culture that effectively integrates teacher leadership.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

32. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Sustains transparent relationships with all families through intentional collaboration and connection structures.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

33. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Maintains support for the school program by intentionally partnering with diverse community stakeholders to empower an inclusive network for engagement.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

34. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Leads a systematic process for selection and delivery of professional development experiences to support continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

35. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Assumes leadership positions in diverse professional networks to help others gather new knowledge and understanding.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

36. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Models reflective practice and engages in an intentional professional development program to continuously improve performance.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

37. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Utilizes an intentional feedback system to continuously improve and refine performance.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

38. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Intentionally devotes a high percentage of time to school priorities.

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unimportant
- ☐ Very Unimportant

39. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Establishes a culture of inquiry in which members of the staff and community openly and respectfully discuss important beliefs about teaching and learning.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

40. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Creates a culture of innovation that continuously examines strategies for change and improvement.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

41. How important is this particular competency to retaining or supporting you as a teacher?

Establishes processes to continually examine and remediate effects of institutional biases of marginalized students, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, culture, language, gender, sexual orientation, disability or special status.

☐ Very Important
☐ Important
☐ Neutral
☐ Unimportant
☐ Very Unimportant

Are you interested in participating in a follow-up interview via Zoom for additional input? This will take between 45-60 minutes of your time.

☐ yes
☐ no

Please only respond to this question if you are interested in a follow-up interview.

What is your email address?