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# Teachers' Perceptions of Employer-Provided Afterschool Childcare as a Retention Strategy: A Herzberg-Informed Qualitative Case Study

Lakinsha R. Swinton  
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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Lakinsha R. Swinton

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2025

Abstract

Teachers' Perceptions of Employer-Provided Afterschool Childcare as a Retention

Strategy: A Herzberg-Informed Qualitative Case Study

by

Lakinsha R. Swinton

MPhil, Walden University, 2025

MA, Walden University, 2021

BS, Capella University, 2016

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

February 2026

## Abstract

Teacher retention has been a growing issue, as the rate of teacher vacancies has continued to increase after the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in teacher vacancies after the pandemic highlighted the importance of retaining and attracting highly qualified teachers for schools and school districts. A coastal South Carolina school district had been providing employee support services to retain current staff and create a competitive advantage over other school districts in attracting new staff. The purpose of this generic qualitative study is to examine the perception of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of free afterschool childcare as an employee support service to increase the retention rates of teachers after the pandemic. Herzberg's two-factor theory served as the theoretical framework for exploring the concepts of job satisfaction, focusing on two key factors: hygiene and motivation. Purposeful sampling was used, and 10 semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of these analyses indicated the perception and value of employee support services in retaining school staff. School and district administrators can benefit from the results of this study by understanding the importance of data-driven decisions in providing employee support services to retain and attract school staff. This research study impacts education access and quality, as well as social determinants of health, to increase educational opportunities and help children succeed in school by enhancing staff retention and reducing attrition. The findings in this study may affect incomes by reducing out-of-pocket costs for school staff for services such as afterschool childcare and mental health counseling services.

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## Dedication

First and foremost, to my sweet husband, Steven, thank you for your patience and support throughout this educational journey. I am sure you are excited to know that there will be no more middle-of-the-night writing sessions! I love you with all of me.

To my Mom & Dad (Anne & Ricky)- I bet you always believed I could do this. I just wish you were here to witness. But I know God's plans are never wrong! I love you and miss you more than I can say!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

The topic I addressed in this study was the efficacy of employer-provided childcare in retaining classroom teachers. Teacher retention has been a significant challenge that has impacted public education in the United States and worldwide, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Bastian & Fuller, 2023; Booth et al., 2021; Duong et al., 2023). Although teacher shortages became more prevalent during the pandemic, teacher retention is not a new topic. According to the National Education Association (NEA) (2022), there were 600,000 fewer educators present in schools across the United States in 2022 than in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Employer-provided childcare is not a new concept, as evidenced by corporations in the 1990s and early 2000s addressing their employees' dependent care responsibilities to create a competitive advantage (Connelly et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1991; Oekerman, 1997). Oekerman (1997) identified that in 1982, approximately 600 employers provided some form of employer-provided childcare assistance. Employer-provided childcare options, as identified in Table 1, included direct care, indirect care, temporary care, pre-paid care, and referral care.

This study was conducted to understand whether non-traditional teacher retention strategies, such as implementing employer-provided childcare, offering free mental health counseling, or other identified services, are beneficial in meeting the needs of employees. The findings of this study highlight the critical role of increasing childcare accessibility in supporting educators, who often must balance demanding work schedules

and personal responsibilities. The results of this study could encourage policymakers, school administrators, and district administrators to prioritize family-friendly workplace policies, supporting the creation of a more supportive work environment.

**Table 1**

*Employer-provided Child Care Options*

<b>Direct Care</b>	Businesses provide on-site or nearby care centers for daily care, afterschool programs, and summer camps.
<b>Indirect Care</b>	Companies contract with existing centers which provide care for employees' children. Businesses contribute monetarily to care facilities or finance the upgrade of private home-care providers in return for preferential treatment for the children of employees.
<b>Temporary Care</b>	Businesses arrange for emergency childcare including care for sick children.
<b>Pre-Paid Care</b>	Companies institute special accounts into which employees contribute pre-tax income to be used toward childcare.
<b>Referral Care</b>	Employers contract with referral services that maintain up-to-date information on childcare available in the area.

*Note.* Adapted from Oekerman, R. (1997). Corporate-Sponsored Child Care: Benefits for Children, Families, and Employers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 25(2), 89-92. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025668303209>

In this chapter, I will provide background on the impact of teacher vacancies during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. I will also share background information on the efforts of a particular school district to help reduce teacher vacancies by providing employee support services aimed at improving teacher retention. This chapter provides insight into Herzberg’s two-factor motivational theory and its application to this study, explaining the nature of this research.

**Background**

Teacher vacancies became a growing issue in the months and years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Retention of classroom teachers has required a shift in the traditional methods used to maintain the connections between employees and their

employers. According to the United States Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (2022) data report, 44% of public schools reported having at least one teacher vacancy as of January 2022. Teacher shortages following the COVID-19 pandemic were reported to have reached rates as low as 60% in some schools, prompting some countries to implement policy initiatives to address recruitment and retention issues (See et al., 2020). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sutchter et al. (2016) reported that 42 states and the District of Columbia reported teacher shortages in math, and in 40 of those states, science shortages were reported. These shortages led to a shift in traditional methods of supporting teachers and school staff during and after the pandemic, sometimes with a focus on meeting the social and emotional needs of employees. Leaders in this coastal South Carolina school district have incorporated human services into their leadership and decision-making processes regarding the recruitment, retention, and attrition of school staff. The coastal South Carolina school district utilized available funding to provide specialized employee support services, aiming to retain current staff, reduce attrition rates, and gain a competitive edge in recruiting new employees. One of those services was free afterschool childcare for the children of employees.

I filled the gap in the literature by addressing the perceptions of classroom teachers to identify the impact of employer-provided support services on teacher retention in a coastal South Carolina school district. A search of the Walden University library and Google Scholar did not yield results for previously conducted research on the impact of employer-provided afterschool childcare on teacher retention, either before or after the COVID-19 pandemic. Teacher retention remains a topic of ongoing research and

policy; this research can provide valuable insights for other school districts and organizations to develop effective strategies to support their staff. This study was conducted to understand the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy and benefits of employer-provided support services in helping to retain classroom teachers.

### **Problem Statement**

This research study aimed to understand the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare on teacher retention after the COVID-19 pandemic, from the perspective of those who utilized the services. Personal commitment dilemmas faced by classroom teachers during the pandemic included balancing the care of their children with teaching in new modalities (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Sanders and Erzumulu (2020) found in their research that employees of companies with family-friendly benefit programs exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy (motivation) and a greater overall commitment to the organization. After conducting an extensive literature review, I found no scholarship addressing the perception data on the implementation of employer-provided free afterschool childcare for employees and other employee support services to recruit and retain teachers. Efforts to understand the perceptions of the efficacy of employee support services in meeting teachers' needs need to be implemented, which could provide valuable insights to school leaders and policymakers seeking to improve and support teacher retention rates. Addressing the lack of access to afterschool childcare provided an opportunity for school and district administrators to utilize human services ideals in seeking to address one of the social and community context needs of classroom teachers and other staff.

The Walden University Social Determinants of Health (Walden University, n.d.) illustrates how social and community context can have a major impact on the health and well-being of classroom teachers and others in the public education field. Studies have shown that teachers' well-being has an impact on their decision to remain in their current school, position, and within the education profession (Bastian et al., 2023; Blair et al., 2023; Steiner & Woo, 2021). Research conducted during and after the COVID-19 pandemic has largely focused on students' mental health and well-being, while the recognition and acknowledgment of teachers' well-being, experiences, and needs concerning their work have shown little research currently available (Kim & Asbury, 2020). The need to focus on recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers has become a high priority to support students' academic achievement.

Reviewing the significance of teacher occupational well-being, Duong et al. (2023) documented that those responding teachers identified financial support, relaxation aids, communication and interaction, appreciation and motivation, and physical health support as initiatives that could boost occupational well-being. In addition to staff retention issues, absenteeism rates among American workers were reported to have increased by 144% during the pandemic due to the lack of childcare (Malik, 2021). A coastal South Carolina School District implementing employer-provided afterschool childcare for the children of employees was one of the strategies chosen to help recruit and retain teaching staff during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Offering free afterschool childcare provided the district with new opportunities to recruit and retain teachers, support staff, and administrators, as well as improve their overall well-being by

removing barriers to needed services. The provision of afterschool childcare afforded teachers opportunities to remain at school and provide necessary remedial educational services and extended learning opportunities for students who were impacted by the learning loss associated with the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A search in the Walden University library and other scholarly resources reveals ample literature indicating that the education field has proven methods to support novice and tenured teachers. Still, the COVID-19 pandemic brought many new, exigent needs to the forefront, which require a new approach to employee support.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This research study was conducted to understand the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase employee retention following the COVID-19 pandemic. The target organization for this research study was a coastal school district in South Carolina that provides employee support services to school staff, including employer-provided afterschool childcare and free mental health counseling. This research study will address the limited availability of evidence examining whether employer-provided afterschool childcare influences teachers' decisions to remain in the profession.

### **Research Question**

The research question for this study was:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of free afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase the retention of employees after the COVID-19 pandemic?

### **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

Herzberg's two-factor theory, which posits that job satisfaction is based on hygiene and motivation, guided this research study. The major theoretical propositional hypothesis of Herzberg's two-factor theory states that hygiene factors, such as expectations for working conditions, job security, salary, and company policies, can lead to dissatisfaction among employees when not met, but may not be motivating to employees when they are present. The motivating factors are more intrinsic and can lead to increased job satisfaction and motivation when factors such as recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for growth are present.

I used Herzberg's two-factor theory as the theoretical lens for this research study. I applied Herzberg's two-factor theory to understand the motivation and hygiene factors that influenced classroom teachers' decisions to remain in the classroom during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Nature of the Study**

To address the research question in this qualitative study, a generic qualitative research design was employed to understand the research topic. This design utilized semi-structured interviews, support service usage data, and exit interview data to ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings.

Distribution of the research plan announcement was granted permission by the Chief Administrative and Human Resources Officer and the Chief Instructional Services Officer, who are both responsible for approving dissertation research within the coastal South Carolina school district. Once approved, the research invitation was sent

electronically to school and district staff. The sample of participants provided the necessary answers to the questions posed in this research study.

### **Definitions**

*Childcare:* The care provided to children younger than age 13 during periods of school closures, and parents and caregivers' obligation to ensure proper supervision and care for children during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, including early childhood and afterschool childcare (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020).

*Hygiene:* The force that drives an individual to feel satisfied by a good environment (Herzberg, 1959).

*Induction and mentoring:* Comprehensive support for teachers, including mentor observations, conferences, professional development, study groups, and veteran teacher observations (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017)

*Learning deficits:* The change to learning progress and loss of skills and knowledge experienced by school-aged children associated with school closures, remote and hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Betthäuser et al., 2023)

*Learning loss:* Measurable academic loss in reading and math for school-aged children associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (Locke et al., 2021).

*Motivation:* The driving force (intrinsic) that induces an individual to feel satisfied by what they do (Herzberg, 1959).

*Professional development:* Activities used by schools and districts to provide educators with the knowledge and skills to support student learning. (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015)

*School closures:* Social distancing measures implemented during the period beginning in March 2020, when schools had to close to students and staff for several weeks or months to reduce the spread of COVID-19. (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020; DiPietro, 2023; Kim & Asbury, 2020)

*Teacher retention:* Teachers remaining employed in their schools (Donley et al., 2019)

### **Assumptions**

The empirical assumption in this research study was that participants answered the interview questions truthfully and factually based on their perceptions. The assumption of this research study was that classroom teachers who used employer-provided afterschool childcare perceived this retention strategy as an impactful benefit for teacher retention. This assumption was based on anecdotal evidence and prior observations of teacher retention strategies; however, this generic qualitative research study explored whether this assumption holds true by gathering insights through semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers who have utilized the service. This research study was conducted under the assumption that historically employed teacher retention strategies will not be sufficient to retain teachers at the levels necessary to address post-pandemic teacher shortages and vacancies. The assumption of this research study was that human behavior and social interactions are best understood by researchers through in-depth contextual descriptions and thematic analysis of personal experiences. Another assumption of this research study was that participants provided truthful responses to the semi-structured interview questions regarding their personal experiences.

Following the basic qualitative study as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the aim of this research study was to understand the meaning that the phenomenon of employer-provided free childcare holds for teachers who were able to utilize the service after the COVID-19 pandemic. The assumption was that employer-provided free afterschool childcare had an impact on classroom teachers' decisions to remain employed within the same school district, thereby increasing employee retention and decreasing employee attrition and turnover. The underlying assumption of this research study was necessary to understand the perception of the efficacy of meeting employee needs through support services in addition to traditional teacher retention methods. The assumption cites recent research on the issue and foundational research that informs the current findings.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The delimitations of this study included interviewing classroom teachers who have been employed since 2020 in the coastal South Carolina School District, which provided no-cost afterschool childcare as an incentive for retaining employees following the COVID-19 pandemic. The classroom teachers had school-aged children enrolled in grades K-8, who attended the employer-provided afterschool program. I did not recruit classroom teachers from school districts that did not provide employee support services to increase teacher retention. There were no requirements for gender or race to participate. Qualifying questions included whether the teacher was a classroom teacher prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and whether the teacher had children who attended the employer-provided afterschool program.

I used the term 'classroom teachers' as distinguished from 'employees' to denote those in an educator role. I employed measures to ensure that the study could be replicated by other researchers using a similar methodology, population, and sample size; however, this study was unique in its findings, as classroom teacher perceptions were shared through an exploratory approach. The use of qualitative design limits the applicability of this study to a specific geographic area, making it unsuitable for national or international application.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was considered for this research study. Social Cognitive Career Theory explains the processes that relate to individuals investigating, choosing, and succeeding in chosen careers (Dziak, 2020). Another theory considered for this study was the social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory is commonly used by researchers to discuss norms, behaviors, and beliefs, as well as how these are influenced by the decisions of those around them (Bandura, 1995). Although these theories aligned with the study, they were not essential to this study.

### **Limitations**

A potential issue for this research was that only one school district in South Carolina was available for this study. After conducting a search to determine if any districts in South Carolina offer employer-provided afterschool childcare for employees, it was found that no other districts provide this service. Conducting a single-site study enables an in-depth exploration, focusing on a comprehensive understanding of the unique process of providing employer-sponsored afterschool childcare to support and retain employees.

Other public school districts in South Carolina have offered various incentives to employees to improve retention. Incentives for employee retention during and after the COVID-19 pandemic included financial incentives, which were also provided in the coastal South Carolina school district, in addition to the afterschool childcare employee support service. According to See et al. (2020), financial incentives are based on the assumption that if sufficiently well compensated, people can be encouraged to enter teaching or persuaded to stay in the profession. I was unable to find national data that identifies school districts that have provided or currently provide afterschool childcare as an employee benefit or support service.

Generalizability in qualitative research in the field of education has seen increased interest after years of being overlooked as applicable to the social sciences (Donmoyer, 2009; Schofield, 2009). To ensure that internal generalizability is addressed, the account of the interview was understood as a valid representation of the participant's perspective as expressed during the semi-structured interviews and not applied to their perspective outside of the interview context (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014). Generalizability for this research study means that a reasonable margin of error exists between the research study and its results, and if this study were to be duplicated, the results for similar populations would likely be similar but not identical.

Challenges that impacted this research included the limited time available to conduct research outside of work hours, which was particularly significant for participants employed in a school district. As a school district employee, I faced time constraints, along with the research study participants, due to the required work schedule.

To conduct focus groups and semi-structured interviews effectively, it was necessary to request special permission to modify the researcher's schedule to accommodate planning periods and other breaks for school staff to conduct research during the school day.

Barriers to this research included gaining an appropriate sample size to ensure validity. Employees seemed guarded about participating in this research study, fearing that their responses might be shared with the school administration. Understanding the sentiments regarding other survey administrations and opportunities to seek input from employees provided a barrier for this research study.

### **Significance**

The results of this study provide much-needed insights into classroom teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase employee retention following the COVID-19 pandemic. Insights from this study should aid school districts, state, and national education advocacy organizations in helping to retain and attract school staff, by providing beneficial employee support services. Organizations that would benefit from this research include the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDOE), the United States Department of Education (USDOE), the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA), the Palmetto State Teachers Association (PSTA), the South Carolina Education Association (SCEA), the National Education Association (NEA), the Foundation for Excellence in Education (FIEE), and other teacher advocacy programs invested in the well-being of school staff in the state of South Carolina and the nation.

This research study impacts the education access and quality, social determinants of health, to increase educational opportunities and help children succeed in school by increasing the likelihood of increased school staff retention and attrition. In addition, this research study addressed the social and community context by increasing social and community support for educators, thereby addressing the social determinants of health. The focus of this research also has the potential to help stabilize incomes by reducing out-of-pocket costs for school staff, such as services like afterschool childcare and mental health counseling.

This research study focused on the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase employee retention after the COVID-19 pandemic. This research aims to impact social change by increasing the likelihood of schools providing high-quality education and educational support services for students, ultimately improving student outcomes. Increasing the overall well-being of school staff by providing beneficial employee support services offers an opportunity to promote the development of both the individual recipients and the organization that has implemented the services.

### **Summary**

As a researcher, I sought to contribute to the literature related to this subject, specifically addressing the needs of classroom teachers following the COVID-19 pandemic and their perceptions of employer-provided afterschool childcare as an employee retention incentive. The literature on teacher retention and employee support services indicates that the needs of classroom teachers have shifted since the COVID-19

pandemic, and that traditional retention strategies may not be sufficient to impact teacher retention at a high enough rate (Cipriano et al., 2020). There was potential to create positive social change and enhance the experiences of classroom teachers and school districts, while raising awareness of the strategies available to help meet the needs of classroom teachers and improve teacher retention.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

An in-depth review of the literature that supports the topic of employer-provided afterschool childcare to impact teacher retention after the COVID-19 pandemic is provided in the content of this chapter. This qualitative research study was conducted to gather the perceptions of classroom teachers who have utilized employer-provided afterschool childcare services provided by their school district, aiming to understand whether these services truly impact the retention of classroom teachers. This research study examines how classroom teachers perceive the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare in retaining teachers after the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific focus on teachers who utilized the service. By conducting the research study within a school district that offers employee support services, the researcher applies a generic qualitative case study design to explore the phenomenon in its natural setting (Priya, 2021). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with classroom teachers who have utilized the employer-provided support services provided by their school district to understand their perceptions of whether these services impacted their decision to remain in the classroom during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter will focus on the topics that have been presented in the literature for this research study, including the impact of COVID-19 on education, teacher vacancies after COVID-19, teacher retention and attrition, school and district strategies for retention, employee support services provided by other fields, and childcare needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

This literature review cites sources including peer-reviewed articles, briefs, and books that were accessed through library databases and search engines. The library databases utilized in this research study include the Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCO, EBSCO Discovery, EBSCO Host, ERIC, ProQuest Education, SAGE Journals, and SAGE Institutions. The Clemson University Library, Google Scholar, and the Walden University Library were the search engines used during this research study. Searches focused on teacher retention in K-12 schools, teacher retention after the COVID-19 pandemic, afterschool childcare benefits, and employee support services. The search terms used included: *teacher retention, employee retention, COVID-19 pandemic, post COVID-19, employee support services, retention, attrition, recruiting, hiring, and retaining, teacher turnover, teacher well-being, teacher shortages, school closures, mental health during COVID-19, learning loss, teacher well-being, childcare, and afterschool childcare.*

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Herzberg's two-factor theory was the theoretical framework that I used for this research study, because it is useful for understanding how employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction can influence a teacher's attitude and motivation toward their work, ultimately impacting teacher retention and attrition (Herzberg, 1959, 1987). Frederick Herzberg's seminal work was published in his 1959 book, *The Motivation to Work*. In this book, Herzberg introduced a two-factor theory for assessing employee satisfaction, aiming to better understand an employee's attitude and motivation towards their work

(Herzberg, 1959, 1987). Herzberg's two-factor theory was based on interviews with 200 engineers and accountants (Orobosa, 2023). From those interviews, Herzberg identified two kinds of needs: hygiene factors, which aligned with negative feelings about the job, and motivators, connected to positive feelings and increased employee performance (Offiong, 2009).

Herzberg's two-factor theory served as the theoretical foundation for this research study, which explored the concepts of job satisfaction based on the two factors of hygiene and motivation. This theory contrasts with others that employ a single continuum of job satisfaction, as if job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction operate on different continua (Tran & Smith, 2020). The original tenets of Herzberg's two-factor theory postulate that the elements intrinsic to work motivation must be met to affect employee satisfaction; doing so will likely not result in dissatisfaction among that employee (Herzberg, 1959). Tran and Smith (2020) provided examples of workplace conditions and pay as extrinsic factors that can affect how well a job is performed, but also as factors that can lead to dissatisfaction among employees. Herzberg's groundbreaking theory on work motivation can be used to understand the concept of job satisfaction, which, in this study, is linked to teacher retention (Tran & Smith, 2020). Recent positive psychology research has suggested that this theory aligns with a focus on human well-being (Sachau, 2007).

Herzberg's two-factor theory provides a valuable framework for determining whether employee support services influence the retention of classroom teachers (Herzberg, 1959, 1987). *Motivators* include achievement, recognition, responsibility, opportunities for advancement, growth opportunities, and finding meaning in the work

itself, making workers more productive and committed (Orobosa et al., 2023). *Hygiene factors* consist of company policies, supervision, relationships, work conditions, salary, and job security, leading to employee dissatisfaction with the work environment, which in this study could include policies regarding social distancing guidelines when returning to in-person instruction, mask mandates, and quarantine requirements for students and staff that test positive for the coronavirus (Orobosa et al., 2023).

Herzberg identified hygiene factors, including salary, supervision, working conditions, and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, this research study included factors such as teacher-school leader relationships, school and district policies, administrative practices, benefits, and physical working conditions. According to Herzberg, hygiene does not increase the work capacity of employees. It does little to motivate employees to go above and beyond in discharging their duties and responsibilities (Herzberg, 1959, 1987). In their research, Zamorra et al. (2021) found that higher levels of job dissatisfaction and increased consideration could negatively impact teacher effectiveness and hinder student academic progress.

The elements necessary for establishing and maintaining a satisfactory workplace can be found in Herzberg's (1959) two-factor motivation theory, which includes extrinsic hygiene factors and intrinsic motivation factors (Herzberg, 1959; Herzberg, 1987). Herzberg's two-factor theory served as the framework for a recent study by Zhi et al. (2024), which identified the internal factors influencing the stability of teaching staff and the measures necessary to improve teacher retention rates in rural schools in western China. A field investigation and survey were conducted in this study to evaluate the

internal teaching staff in eight cities and countries. Zhi et al. (2024) found in their research that the individual characteristics of rural teachers were influenced by factors existing in Herzberg's two-factor theory and some perceived occupational adaptations. Regarding the hygiene factors, significant differences were identified in the intensity of the workload, gender, class hours, and occupational titles. The research participants identified several motivating factors, including being highly satisfied with the educational policies and having good overall conditions. The researcher notes that policymakers should continuously increase the satisfaction of rural teachers (Zhi et al., 2024). Finally, the researchers describe routes to improvement that expand teacher professional development, increase satisfaction with the demand for professional development, enhance welfare and benefits, and create a pleasant work environment.

A research study conducted by Land (2023) applied Herzberg's Two-factor theory to the predictable relationship between principals' leadership styles, principal demographic factors, school-related factors, and the perceptions of suburban middle school teachers regarding attrition. In this quantitative research study, Land (2023) applied Herzberg's two-factor theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs to examine the relationships and perceptions of the teachers who participated in the study. Land (2023) noted in their research that certain factors in the workplace can cause dissatisfaction, while others can foster happiness and help employees attain self-actualization.

As a school district employee tasked with helping to meet the needs of school staff, I applied a human services lens and found that the teacher retention rates during and after the COVID-19 pandemic were very concerning and needed to be addressed. By

exploring the impact of hygiene factors and motivators on classroom teacher retention, as well as how employer-provided support services and other retention efforts affect these factors, there is an increased likelihood of effectively impacting teacher retention rates. This study aimed to understand the relationship between job satisfaction, teacher retention, and the perception of employer-provided support services as a retention strategy. At a time when the well-being of employees is critical to employers' recruiting and retention efforts, the application of this theory is timely.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

This literature review provided an overview of the concepts, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, teacher retention and attrition, South Carolina's efforts to address teacher retention and attrition, Herzberg's Two-factor theory, teacher support strategies, teaching vacancies after the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher shortages, challenges of retention for districts and schools, childcare needs during the pandemic and employer-provided support services for fields outside of education.

### **The Impact of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic on Education**

In March 2020, nationwide school closures were enacted in nearly all countries worldwide to curb the spread of the coronavirus disease, the infectious virus that caused the COVID-19 global pandemic. This pandemic had effects that spread globally and impacts that were felt around the world. In a 2020 Letter to the Editor published in the Elsevier Current Medicine Research Practice by Abid Haleem, Mohd Javaid, and Raju Vaishya stated "*that the effects of COVID-19 on daily life were extensive and had far-reaching consequences*" (Haleem et al. 2020, p.78). The education field was no different

than the rest of society when it came to feeling the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic affected many aspects of daily life, including healthcare access, social interactions impacted by social distancing requirements, and the economy to varying degrees (Haleem et al., 2020). In a March 2022 news release, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2022) provided some explanation for the increase in stress during the COVID-19 pandemic: social isolation, constraints on people's ability to work, the inability to seek support from loved ones, and decreased opportunities for engaging with their communities. Mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress increased during the pandemic, and the mental health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt by teachers and students alike (Haliwa et al., 2021). In their research, Dawes et al. (2020) found that the changes to everyday routines required by the pandemic were a source of distress for many. Dawes et al. (2020) examined the impact of the required changes on parents' mental health and overall well-being, highlighting how the pandemic altered their everyday lives. One of those alterations was the closure of schools and childcare centers during the pandemic, which affected teachers, parents, caregivers, and children (Dawes et al., 2020).

### ***School Closures***

The sudden decision to close schools to avoid the rapid spread of the virus associated with the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools into an immediate transition from in-person to remote and hybrid models of instruction. The shift significantly challenged educators due to the minimal preparation and adaptation time (Kim & Asbury, 2020). With the closure of schools, teachers were forced to navigate the transition from

in-person to remote and hybrid instruction, with little time to prepare (Kim & Asbury, 2020). In their research, Kim and Asbury (2020) noted that little was understood about the impact of school closures on teachers transitioning from in-person learning to virtual instruction (Kim & Asbury, 2020). In addition to navigating the new educational delivery, the roles of teachers, administrators, and district personnel include training parents, guardians, and students to adjust to the new instructional modalities (Baker et al., 2021). With many schools suddenly closed due to the pandemic, teachers and students were taxed emotionally and cognitively (Kim & Asbury, 2020). Symptoms of moderate to severe anxiety or depression were highly prevalent among educators during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to high levels of stress and burnout (Hirschberg et al., 2023; Diliberti et al., 2021).

The transition from remote to hybrid to in-person instruction created heightened stress levels, increased workload demands, and increased uncertainty among educators (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Kraft et al.; Kipp et al., 2023). Elbogen et al. (2022) conducted a national study examining the effects of remote working conditions, highlighting what became known as “Zoom fatigue” and its impact on the overall well-being of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes led to teachers reporting a sense of a lack of agency during the remote learning period, hybrid learning, and the return to in-person instruction (Kipp et al., 2023). Teacher agency is defined by Biesta and Tedder (2007) and Kipp et al. (2023) as the person’s opportunity for action within a context. Kipp et al. (2023) describe the achievement of agency as the action resulting from deliberation between personal and environmental conditions, considering their history,

goals, and environmental capital, and identifying different opportunities and acts to create their vision.

Pas et al. (2012) defined self-efficacy as a person's general belief in their ability to execute the tasks required by their job. During the COVID-19 pandemic, those tasks increased exponentially. Baker et al. (2021) found that at the start of remote instruction due to the pandemic, teachers, administrators, and other district personnel had to train parents, guardians, and students on how to stay academically engaged under the new instructional modalities. To maintain academic engagement, teachers, students, and caregivers often had to learn how to access lessons and navigate technology issues to stay up-to-date with synchronous learning (Zamarro et al., 2022). Meisner and McKenzie (2023) noted that teaching online requires a different pedagogical approach to keep students engaged and motivated to learn. The authors also posit that emotional arousal that occurs during stressful situations, as well as the perceived locus of control, are factors that can have a significant impact on teachers' self-efficacy (Meisner & McKenzie, 2023). Results from their study indicate that nearly 50% of respondents (N = 553) agreed or strongly agreed that they know how to deliver rigorous instruction online, while approximately 27% of respondents indicated that they were unsure if they possessed the requisite knowledge to deliver rigorous online instruction (Meisner & McKenzie, 2023). Geraci et al. (2023) focused on teachers' self-efficacy and how switching teaching formats hindered it. In the same article, Geraci et al. (2023) also noted that lower teacher self-efficacy impacted the quality of lessons and motivation to teach students.

Survey data on teacher well-being, working conditions, and access to mental health services indicated that 23% of the responding teachers (N = 1,439) were likely to leave their jobs by the end of the 2022–2023 school year (Doan et al., 2023). Kipp et al. (2023) investigated the impact of environmental factors implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, including state-issued mandates and institutional changes. The findings from that research study indicated that while teachers understood that some constraints were not in the control of school and district administrators, they continued to develop feelings of disenfranchisement and fatigue with the changes (Kipp et al., 2023). Kipp et al. (2023) also noted in their research that implementing state and district mandates reduced the agency of campus administrators to help their teachers. Bayham and Fenichel (2020) stated that school closures for in-person instruction had negative implications, including a decline in the workforce due to unforeseen childcare responsibilities at home.

Overall, the research agrees that teachers, students, and parents felt the impact of school closures. The transition of instructional delivery impacted learning for students, creating academic deficits, with documentation of slowed learning progress across educational levels in K-12; and brought about heightened feelings of stress on classroom teachers, who had to take on extra responsibilities regarding remote and hybrid instruction, sometimes to the detriment of their own well-being, self-efficacy, and autonomy (Betthäuser et al., 2023; Di Pietro, 2023; Geraci et al., 2023; Kim & Asbury, 2020; Kipp et al., 2023; Meisner & McKenzie, 2023).

### ***Learning Loss and Learning Deficits***

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly contributed to learning deficits across various grade levels, particularly in reading and math, and may have long-term implications for educational systems. Learning deficits for students increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers have observed that many children experienced learning deficits during the pandemic, which hindered their learning progress (Betthäuser et al., 2023; Di Pietro, 2023). Di Pietro (2023) identified in their meta-analysis that the COVID-19 pandemic consistently affected students across different levels of education. The author suggested that most would expect the pandemic to have had a more negative impact on younger students than older students; the effect could have been offset by parental involvement for younger students (Di Pietro, 2023). The meta-analysis conducted by Di Pietro (2023) found that parental involvement for younger students may have mitigated some of the negative effects of academic transitions. The overall learning deficits caused by the shifts related to the COVID-19 pandemic are projected to have long-term implications for the educational system if not addressed (Betthäuser et al., 2023; Di Pietro, 2023; Zamarro et al., 2022).

Research by Locke et al. (2021) suggests that student learning loss was more pronounced for students entering second grade during the pandemic, compared to students in third grade, who lost 2 months, and the gap continued to widen as grades increased. A study by Locke et al. (2021) examined the learning losses experienced by students in reading and mathematics due to COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures. The research indicated that students lost approximately two months of reading progress in

April and May 2020, and at least one summer month of reading, resulting in summer reading loss (Locke et al., 2021). When comparing the math learning loss, the authors identified a greater loss than reading by an additional month of student learning loss (Locke et al., 2021). The United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goal (SDG) 4.2 ensures that by 2030, “*all girls and boys will have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education to prepare them for primary education*” (Statistics, U.N., 2019). The 2024 assessments of the SDG reveal a significant decline in math and reading scores, indicating that progress toward Goal 4 has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and other factors (United Nations, n.d., p. 16). The 2024 update to this goal states that data from 2015–2023 for 76 mainly low and middle-income countries show that only two-thirds of young children are developmentally on track, with wide variations among different countries and regions (United Nations, n.d., p. 16).

Researchers indicate that the learning deficits resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to be significant and have long-term effects on the educational system if left unaddressed (Betthäuser et al., 2023; Di Pietro, 2023; Zamarro et al., 2022). Mazrekaj and De Witte (2024) found that the unprecedented scale and length of school closures significantly impacted children’s learning and deepened the learning loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The research agrees that increased learning deficits and deepened learning loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly become the primary responsibility of teachers to address. As research indicates, mitigating learning deficits will require concerted efforts from educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to prevent lasting educational setbacks and overcome

COVID-19-related learning loss by implementing targeted strategies to bridge the gaps and ensure that students regain lost learning opportunities.

### ***Overcoming COVID-19-Related Learning Loss***

The learning loss of students deeply increased teachers' responsibility for helping to address student learning loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. One strategy used by schools and school districts to recover some of the learning loss associated with the school closures was extended learning opportunities. Locke et al. (2021) offered the use of expanding learning time as an approach to address learning loss. Mazrekaj and De Witte (2024) suggested that more attention should be given to students who needed the most interventions, including social-emotional learning programs, evidence-informed mental health support, and academic support. Each of these strategies requires teachers to be able to provide support outside of the normal school day, which provides opportunities for employer-provided support, such as free afterschool childcare.

Research from Steiner and Woo (2021) noted that one in four teachers planned to leave the education field at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Teachers indicated they suffered additional stress from taking care of their own children amid the instructional transitions related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Diliberti et al. (2021) found that many teachers thought about leaving the field of education while others did, and many chose to remain despite all that has occurred. It was important to apply an appropriate theory to this research study to understand what helped retain teachers in the field of education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Herzberg's Two-factor theory helped put this study into the appropriate perspective to increase understanding of

the perception of employer-provided childcare to help retain teachers despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

The increased learning loss among students due to the COVID-19 pandemic has placed a greater responsibility on teachers to implement strategies aimed at academic recovery. Extended learning opportunities, targeted interventions, and social-emotional learning programs have been used to mitigate these deficits, all of which place additional demands on the time and efforts of classroom teachers. The resulting stress and increased workload have contributed to higher teacher attrition rates and increased mental health strain, and many have reconsidered their careers in education. Addressing student learning and teacher retention requires a balanced approach that considers instructional recovery efforts and teacher retention. Moving forward, policies that support teachers in managing their professional and personal responsibilities will be essential in maintaining a stable and supportive education system.

### ***Mental Health***

The COVID-19 pandemic strained the mental health of individuals around the world (World Health Organization, 2022). Cohen-Fraade and Donahue (2022) identify in their research the importance of focusing on teachers' mental health because of its impact on students, schools, and the retention of teachers. Latino et al. (2021) found that interventions addressing teacher burnout can improve job satisfaction and retention rates. Haleem et al. (2020) highlighted the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on daily life, specifically noting that access to healthcare, social dynamics, and economic stability were all impacted. Education was not exempt from that impact. Haliwa et al.

(2021) reported increased stress levels globally because of social isolation, work limitations, and access to community, which all exacerbated mental health issues for students and teachers. The mental health challenges associated with the isolation and decreased social interactions because of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted students, parents/ guardians, and teachers (Amreen et al., 2022; Cohen-Fraade & Donahue, 2022; Elbogen et al., 2022; Morton & Maresh, 2024; Wolfe et al., 2024). In addition to mental health challenges that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers also dealt with the pressure that came with having to balance their own families and their students.

The research found that participants reported an increase in mental health symptoms after having become teachers, noting that 31.2% of respondents indicated it was extremely difficult or very difficult to do their work, take care of things at home, or get along with others during the height of the pandemic (Cohen-Fraade & Donahue, 2022). Amreen et al. (2022) found that the respondents in their research study with an increased intention to leave reported higher levels of anxiety and depression symptoms after the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent research by Morton and Maresh (2024) emphasizes the importance of focusing on the factors that contribute to teacher burnout. Steiner and Woo (2021) noted that one in four teachers planned to leave the profession by the end of the 2020-2021 school year, citing the stress that was compounded by balancing personal and professional responsibilities.

Cipriano et al. (2020) identified that the COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges and stressors for educators, both personally and professionally, related to their roles. Participants in a recently published research article described 7 stressors that

impacted their mental health during the pandemic: making decisions to keep people safe, struggling to find cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment, financial concerns, lack of control, inability to social distance, isolation, and emotional exhaustion (Wolfe et al., 2024). Wolfe et al. (2024) also note that some of the stressors described in the research study were long-standing, but they were exacerbated by the pandemic.

A national study conducted by Elbogen et al. (2022) underscores the importance of supportive services that help mitigate the mental strain on teachers as they navigate the transition between in-person, remote, and hybrid learning environments. Wolfe et al. (2024) posited that the value of educators' mental health is evident, while few supports are widely available to manage stress. A research study on the impact of an 8-week yoga-based exercise intervention to mitigate teacher burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic found that even a brief yoga program could improve psycho-physical well-being and enhance resilience to the job (Latino et al., 2021). Another study by Elbogen (2022) highlights the importance of supportive services in reducing the mental strain on classroom teachers who navigate remote and hybrid teaching environments.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced many new factors that were not previously existent or impactful to teachers, students, or parents. Understanding how the pandemic impacted efforts to recruit and retain teachers is important. To effectively understand the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, attention must be given to the efforts to retain teachers during and after the pandemic.

## **Teacher Retention During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Teacher retention is not a new issue in education; however, the decision to remain in the classroom has become increasingly complicated with the added layers of the pandemic. Sutchter et al. (2019) noted that teacher retention is widely acknowledged as a crucial step toward avoiding or solving teacher shortages. Research has shown that teachers who feel supported through professional development have more time for collaboration with colleagues, experience greater autonomy, and are more likely to remain in the teaching profession (Sabina et al., 2023; Van Den Borre et al., 2021). Booth et al. (2021) suggest that teacher retention is a global concern. Research contributed by See et al. (2020) indicated that the task of retaining and attracting qualified teachers is a persistent problem that has plagued many countries for decades. The literature consistently indicates that teacher retention has been previously addressed through various initiatives, including teacher induction and mentoring programs, professional development, school administrator support, teacher pay, and other efforts (Luesse et al., 2022; Sabina et al., 2023; See et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to surpass traditional methods for addressing teacher retention by implementing more comprehensive and sustainable retention efforts that cater to the evolving needs of educators in a post-pandemic landscape.

The post-pandemic landscape presents the issue of teacher vacancies and their impact on student education. According to the United States Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (2022), 44% of public schools reported having at least one teacher vacancy as of January 2022. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

(2024) indicate that there were 270,000 fewer school workers between January 2020 and July 2022. While issues of teacher shortages and identifying efforts for teacher retention are not new, research studies indicate that the strategies previously proven to be effective are not sufficient to sustain the necessary teacher retention rates after the COVID-19 pandemic (Booth et al., 2021; Carver-Thomas, 2018; See et al., 2020; Shuls & Flores, 2020). In an article by Sutchter et al. (2016), the author identified that teacher shortages were common from the late 1990s to the early 2000s and were resolved by lowering teacher quality standards in many states, including South Carolina. Research conducted by Carver-Thomas (2018) stated that when some districts and states experienced teacher shortages, some attempted to increase teacher supply by increasing teacher recruitment efforts and even lowering the bar for entering the teaching field. Research indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated existing teacher shortages nationwide (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Morton & Maresh, 2024; Sutchter et al., 2019). Public school teachers who voluntarily left their profession after the 2011-2012 school year noted various factors that contributed to their decision, as identified in the study conducted by Podolsky (2019). The use of teacher recruitment efforts to attract educators is not a new strategy; however, the use of lowered teacher standards did not yield the intended results of retaining teachers, as shown in research (Carver-Thomas et al., 2018; Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Morton & Maresh, 2024; Podolsky, 2019; Sutchter et al., 2016; Sutchter et al., 2019). Overall, the literature on teacher shortages resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that efforts to address shortages by lowering standards will have an adverse impact on educational institutions.

Another layer of teacher retention issues impacting education is teacher turnover, which can significantly impact districts' efforts to retain teachers. Carver-Thomas (2018) suggested that teacher turnover is a primary driver of teacher shortages, and districts must create policies to recruit new teachers and retain teachers for the long haul. Recent research by Sorensen and Lad (2020) highlighted how teacher turnover can adversely affect students' academic outcomes. Previous research identified significant factors that influence teacher's decisions to enter, stay in, or leave the teaching profession, including salaries and compensation, preparations of costs to entry, hiring, personnel management, induction and support for new teachers, working conditions, including school leadership, professional collaboration, and resources for teaching and learning (Podolsky et al., 2019; See et al., 2020; Shuls & Flores, 2020).

The impact of teacher shortages is not limited to the classroom. In line with Herzberg's two-factor theory, survey participants in research conducted by Sutchter (2019) identified areas of dissatisfaction, including class sizes, salaries, and unhappiness with administrative practices, that led to their leaving. The impact of teacher shortages places not only a financial burden on schools but also has negative effects on the remaining staff and students (Shuls & Flores, 2020). Rodgers and Skelton (2014) offer a historical perspective on the significant implications that reducing teacher turnover has for school funding. The efforts used to impact teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition that were effective before the COVID-19 pandemic now require new approaches to be combined with previously used strategies (Podolsky et al., 2019; See et al., 2020; Shuls & Flores, 2020). The research indicates that school districts and individual schools must

continually focus on efforts to address teacher recruiting, retention, and attrition to ensure that student outcomes are not impacted by teacher shortages and vacancies (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Podolsky et al., 2019; See et al., 2020; Shuls & Flores, 2020). With the increase in K-12 teacher shortages following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that effective strategies are identified and implemented to address teacher shortages and vacancies.

Individual and contextual factors related to teacher retention have been examined in research conducted by Casely-Hayford et al. (2022), which identifies that the perceived health of teachers influences their retention intentions. The study conducted questionnaires with 5,903 elementary school teachers from 2004 to 2011, yielding findings that indicate teachers' decisions to remain in the profession are predominantly explained by individual factors, such as their perceived health state, work motivation, and collegial support. Conversely, a research study conducted by Matthews et al. (2022) indicated that the decision to resign from teaching or remain in the field over the past 5 years was not always attributed to the pandemic, but was also influenced by school and district leadership. Many factors influence the decision to remain in the classroom, including teacher relationships, as a primary factor in overall well-being (Blair et al., 2023). Research into the persistence of special area teachers indicates that their decision to remain in the profession is more likely to depend on the interaction between environmental and intrinsic factors, including those identified in Herzberg's Two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1959, 1987; Scott et al., 2022). While the aforementioned research

focused on national and global studies, it is essential to examine the teacher retention efforts of the state of South Carolina, as it is the state being researched in this study.

### **South Carolina's Teacher Retention and Attrition Efforts**

South Carolina's efforts to impact teacher retention and attrition provide specific strategies for retaining teachers during and after the pandemic. In addition, efforts to increase enrollment in education training programs and teacher recruitment strategies are shared. Research has shown that teacher retention was an issue prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; this research study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of an employee support service implemented in South Carolina following the pandemic.

Teacher recruiting, retention, and attrition have been tracked annually since 2001 for all public school districts in the state of South Carolina (SC) via the SC Annual Educator Supply and Demand Survey (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention & Advancement [CERRA], 2024). CERRA researchers analyzed the data to identify teachers entering the profession, movers and leavers, and any remaining vacant positions. Data indicates that the number of vacant positions continually increased over the five-year period since the start of the 2019 school year. The CERRA annual report on supply and demand provides insight into the total number of teacher departures, retirements, and position vacancies that occurred after the start of the 2019-2020 school year. Over the five-year period associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher departures in South Carolina increased from 6649.8 to 7352.6, as reported in the Annual SC Educator Supply and Demand Report (CERRA, 2023). The 2024-2025 Annual SC Educator CERRA Supply & Demand Data Tables indicated that, on average, approximately 7,000 educators

in over 70 school districts in South Carolina public schools leave their positions each year across the state (CERRA, 2024).

Diving deeper into the data, CERRA identified that the number of teachers departing by their years of experience increased incrementally by years of experience (CERRA, 2024). Due to the continued teacher vacancies across the state during and after the pandemic, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) convened the Educator Recruitment and Retention Task Force (ERRTF) to examine and propose revisions for improving teacher recruitment, retention, and advancement under Proviso 1.114 of the state's General Assembly bill for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (SCDE, 2023). The South Carolina Teacher Recruitment & Retention Task Force (TRRTF) is a separate group focused on recruiting teachers, retaining teachers in the field, and encouraging students to apply to education programs (Budds, 2022). The final recommendations from the ERRTF to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate included creating a culture that retains great educators, increasing focus on support for new teachers, principals, and leadership teams, and reviewing state retention and effectiveness data (SCDE, 2023a).

Research has shown that a significant portion of teacher retention is influenced by the strategies schools and districts employ to support their teachers. Teacher support strategies, such as professional development, induction, and mentoring, as well as support from school administrators, were all utilized prior to the pandemic. The pandemic prompted schools and school districts to implement additional strategies, including retention bonuses, aimed at enhancing teacher retention. South Carolina's ongoing efforts

to address teacher retention and attrition highlight the persistent challenges faced by educators, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SC Annual Educator Supply and Demand Survey data highlight a steady increase in teacher vacancies, underscoring the need for targeted retention strategies. In response, state initiatives, including the ERRTF, have sought to implement solutions such as support for new teachers, leadership development, and retention incentives. While traditional strategies, such as professional development and mentoring, remain essential, the pandemic has necessitated additional measures, including retention bonuses, to stabilize the educator workforce. Continued evaluation of these initiatives will be crucial to ensure their effectiveness and maintain a strong, motivated teacher workforce in South Carolina.

### **Teacher Support Strategies**

During the early to mid-2000s, studies suggested that within the first five years of the profession, 20-40% of teachers resigned from their positions (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Gray & Taie, 2015; Ingersoll, 2003). Teacher attrition has been extensively studied to identify its causal impact on student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) identified how state, district, and school policymakers implemented induction and mentoring programs in the early to mid-2000s for early-career teachers. Recent research findings by Morton and Maresh (2024) suggest that a number of teachers considered leaving the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Professional Development***

Title VIII (p.129) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) defines professional development as activities that are “sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-

embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused". In their research paper, Luesse et al. (2022) identified that the general consensus regarding the effectiveness of professional development is that it should be content-focused, learner-centered, and long-term. While policies and research emphasize the importance of professional development and retention of early career teachers, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the necessity for teachers' professional development at every stage of their careers (Booth et al., 2021). Luesse et al. (2022) concluded in their research that the pandemic has heightened the value and importance of teachers, and one of the critical strategies for impacting teacher retention includes paying attention to teacher development across a teacher's career life cycle.

See et al. (2020) stated that professional development is considered a method for improving teachers' satisfaction with their jobs and potentially reducing their workload, resulting in greater teacher retention. While research studies highlight the importance of professional development in teacher retention, research by Van den Borre et al. (2021) finds that uncertainty remains about the value of professional development in comparison to other mechanisms of teacher support. Luesse et al. (2022) suggest that there is limited evidence regarding the effectiveness of professional development on teacher retention. Correspondingly, See et al. (2020) concluded that the lack of robust studies on the effectiveness of continued professional development to retain teachers in the profession makes for weak evidence for this approach. Alternatively, Sabina et al. (2023) found that professional development is a teacher support strategy that makes teachers more likely to remain in the profession.

### *School Administrator Support*

An article written in the early 2000s by Leightwood and McAdie (2007) stated that principal leadership catalyzes many other school conditions and structures that support teachers. Research from that same period indicates that teachers' perception of their administration strongly predicts whether they will remain in the field (Arrowsmith, 2007). Findings from Matthews et al. (2022) posited that district leadership impacts teacher retention through structural and interpersonal mechanisms. Pas et al. (2012) also found that schools with positive principal leadership have higher levels of teacher efficacy and lower levels of burnout. Conversely, Pas et al. (2012) noted that inconsistency with school leadership, especially with principal turnover, increases the likelihood of burnout from teachers within the school.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, school and district administrators were forced to increase demands on classroom teachers, causing some teachers to feel less supported (Blair et al., 2024). Robinson et al. (2022) conducted a research study on teachers, stress, and the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting how teachers experienced high stress levels due to the decisions made by leadership at the school and community levels. In a research study by Gillani et al. (2022), respondents identified their perceived satisfaction with having a sense of personal agency with COVID-19 prevention strategies within their school/ district. Those who perceived that they were not given the opportunity to provide input on decisions regarding the opening and closing of schools during the pandemic had higher proportions of responses indicating their preparedness to leave the field (Gillani et

al., 2022). Administrative practices such as shared leadership have been shown to promote success in retaining and growing highly qualified teachers (Sabina et al., 2023).

### ***Induction and Mentoring***

The value of induction and mentoring programs has been widely documented as effective staff development. Induction and mentoring are generally restricted to novice teachers or those new to a school or district. Mentoring has been noted for years to offer novice teachers the support and encouragement needed to remain in the classroom, as stated by Stafford et al. (2008). Strategies such as teacher induction programs aimed to improve performance and retain new hires to prevent the loss of new teachers and improve student growth and learning (Ingersoll, 2012). Many teachers' complete induction and mentoring programs through their district, and additional guidance and collaboration from a veteran teacher have been shown to increase teacher retention (Sabina et al., 2023). Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) conducted secondary analysis research on the relationship between teacher induction programs and teacher retention, identifying that teachers who received more combined teacher induction supports were significantly less likely to migrate schools or leave teaching in their second year and across 5 years. See et al. (2020) synthesized existing literature at the time, finding the need for closer scrutiny of the research between induction and retention with more experimental studies in this area.

### ***Teacher Salary and Retention Bonuses***

One of the important considerations for recruiting and retaining teachers is offering competitive teacher pay. The effects of financial incentives on teacher retention

can be challenging to analyze, recognizing the difficulty in identifying exactly how much money will prevent a teacher from leaving (Schwartz, 2021). Financial incentives such as retention bonuses are commonly used to encourage people to go into teaching or stay in the profession (See et al., 2020). Research has found that states like California allocated some COVID-19 relief funds specifically to recruit and retain teachers (Carver-Thomas et al., 2022). Some school districts utilized federal COVID-19 relief funds to offer pandemic bonuses for classroom teachers (Schwartz, 2021). Schwartz (2021) states that pay isn't the only consideration for teachers deciding whether to remain in the profession; other factors, including working conditions and administrative support, play big roles in teacher retention. According to See et al. (2020), financial incentives are premised on the assumption that if sufficiently well compensated, people can be encouraged to go into teaching or be persuaded to stay in the profession. However, See et al. (2020) conjectured that targeted money for recruiting or retention bonuses can recruit people into teaching but does not significantly impact them remaining in the profession.

Schwartz (2021) speculates that the COVID-19 pandemic brought heightened stress and mounting responsibilities for teachers. The passion for the work that kept some teachers from leaving despite the lack of financial trade-offs may quickly erode (Schwartz, 2021). The relationship between teacher pay and turnover is not new to educators or education policymakers (Hendricks, 2014). Hendricks (2014) noted that the direct causal link between district salary schedules and student achievement is challenging to extract strong evidence in this area. Statistics show that teachers make less money compared to other jobs with similar education levels and training requirements

(Schwartz, 2021). Sabina et al. (2023) noted that the overarching theme in the literature indicated that the connection between supportive leadership, collaborative structures, resources, and environment supersedes the need for higher pay. Hendricks (2014) found that novice teachers receive the most significant positive impact from increased teacher pay. The research suggests that consistently raising teacher pay for experienced teachers, particularly those with 19 or more years of experience, benefits all teachers (Hendricks, 2014). Education has traditionally provided the same support services to recruit and retain teachers. Still, policymakers and school leaders realized during and after the pandemic that some strategies used in other fields might be beneficial in supporting those efforts.

### **Employer-Provided Support Services in Fields Outside of Education**

Employer-provided childcare and other support services have long been offered by corporations as an incentive to attract and retain employees. Literature is readily available to validate the benefit of employer-provided support services to corporate entities. Companies realized that to attract and retain employees and increase productivity, they needed to offer competitive advantages, which sometimes included employer-provided childcare (Shapiro, 2004). Research conducted by Braddock et al. (2023) highlighted the effects of childcare availability on the workforce dynamics and employee well-being of healthcare workers. Chennamsetti (2020) stated that childcare is crucial for families working during the pandemic crisis. Research in the nursing field indicates that meeting the needs of nursing staff by providing on-site childcare was “very” or “extremely important” during and after the COVID-19 pandemic to more than

half of the survey respondents participating in their national survey (Braddock et al., 2023). A national study conducted by Braddock et al. (2023) found that nearly half of the survey respondents reported that emergency childcare needs had disrupted their work over the past year, underscoring the impact of childcare on fields beyond education. This was not always the case in public education, as pre-pandemic research from Morrissey and Warner (2011) indicated that access to reliable, high-quality childcare for educators was not a concern that needed to be addressed through employer-provided benefits. The value of employer-provided benefits has become increasingly prevalent since the COVID-19 pandemic, and research in this section highlights the continued need for childcare support services to be included in employer-provided benefits.

Many school leaders were compelled to take necessary measures to address the needs of students and staff during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, including assessing the support services available to help retain staff (Duong et al., 2023). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, more interventions have been utilized to address the retention of school staff in education. A research study on multi-pronged management strategies found that plans were necessary to assist parents in locating emergency childcare when they need to return to work (Chennamsetti, 2020). Steiner and Woo (2021) found that teachers experienced high stress levels while trying to care for their children and balance their teaching responsibilities. While employer benefits have traditionally been made available to teachers, providing employer-provided childcare or afterschool childcare is not a widely used strategy to address teacher retention or recruitment. This research gap

presented an opportunity to understand the benefits of employer-provided support services and their applicability in supporting teacher retention.

### **Child Care Needs During the Pandemic**

While a considerable amount of research has been conducted on teacher retention strategies, less attention has been given to meeting the needs of staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, and even less to addressing the childcare needs of teachers during and after the pandemic. Publications in The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and the American Academy of Family Physicians state that public health efforts must address the social determinants of health to increase community resilience to environmental and infectious disasters, which include access to childcare (Daniel et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2021). A journal article in the American Academy of Pediatrics described how pediatricians have recognized social determinants as influencing the health and well-being of children and their families, including the circumstances in which children live, learn, and play (Daniel et al., 2018; Gard et al., 2015). Kalluri et al. (2021) stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for safe, enriching childcare that allows parents to work became more pressing and required urgent attention. Parents and guardians of young children (12 and under) were equally impacted by the closure of schools during the pandemic, showing increased parental stress due to the increased childcare responsibilities at home and reduced access to social networks (Dawes et al., 2020). A Gallup (2020) poll indicated that parents with school-aged children shared concerns about exposure to COVID-19. Helping parents balance working while protecting their family's health and their children's education was an

important contributing factor to health and economic recovery (Adams & Todd, 2020). As schools prepared to return to in-person instruction in the fall of 2020, the necessity for teachers to educate students was met with the added responsibility of childcare for their own children. The requirement to return to in-person instruction also meant that teachers had to be concerned about the spread of COVID-19 not only for themselves, but also for their own children and students.

The need for access to programs offering supervision and childcare for children during the COVID-19 pandemic became more prevalent. Adams and Todd (2020) suggested in their research that working parents faced the challenge of finding full-time supervision and learning options for their children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lee and Parolin (2021) note that childcare responsibilities were abruptly placed on many parents with the significant closures of daycare centers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of school closures was felt by healthcare workers, with 28.8% needing to provide care for children ages 3-12, as identified in a research study by Bayham and Fenichel (2020). Responses from a national online survey conducted by the Afterschool Alliance (2020) indicated that 16% of afterschool programs stayed open to serve the children of essential workers during the COVID-19 closures. States had to take measures to assist with the lack of adequate childcare facilities and access to childcare. Some states, like South Carolina, chose to extend opportunities to increase access to childcare by opening temporary opportunities for designation as a childcare provider.

While this research focused on the childcare needs of classroom teachers during the pandemic, it is important to note the findings of the impact of the pandemic on

working women. More research is emerging on the direct impact of childcare center closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating that the true impact of these closures was felt primarily by working women with young children (Dutra Carolina et al., 2023; Fabrizio et al., 2021). Research conducted by Dutra Carolina et al. (2023) suggests that the closure of childcare centers during the pandemic had a significant and negative impact on the female employee rate. A data analysis conducted by Fabrizio et al. (2021) shows that women employed in social industries (including education) with young children were disproportionately affected by the gender employment gap and childcare needs during the pandemic.

Childcare licensure applications are typically reserved for businesses that serve as childcare providers. However, the need to offer childcare options for those individuals who had to return to work during the pandemic became a priority. In August 2020, the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS; n.d.) opened its temporary application process, allowing providers interested in providing childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic to apply for temporary licensure. The Governor of South Carolina declared a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which enabled the implementation of emergency plans for childcare. With the temporary application process opened, organizations that were not normally licensed to provide childcare had an opportunity to set up a temporary childcare site, allowing them to operate without a license under the South Carolina Legislature (n.d.) § 63-13-440. These steps by the state of South Carolina underscore the importance of getting employees back to work and meeting their childcare needs as the state recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Summary and Conclusions

This literature review examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, teacher retention during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the effectiveness of teacher support strategies, and the childcare needs of employees. This chapter aimed to analyze the literature on topics related to this research study. To understand teachers' perceptions regarding the efficacy of employer-provided childcare in impacting teacher retention, it was necessary to analyze the history of teacher recruiting, retention, and attrition efforts, and why it was necessary, following the COVID-19 pandemic, to prioritize new strategies. I provided a historical overview of the long-standing teacher retention issues and the strategies used prior to and after the pandemic to support teachers. I also provided some new teacher support strategies that have been researched. Additionally, I shared the efforts of the state of South Carolina to address teacher retention and attrition, as well as the strategies employed to increase access to childcare for essential workers who were required to return to work during the pandemic. I synthesized the literature on the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on education and teacher retention research from studies conducted nationally, internationally, and specifically in South Carolina.

While conducting this research, I identified themes in this literature review, including teacher support strategies, employer-provided support services, and childcare needs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education globally is still emerging, but the initial research indicates the profound and far-reaching effects across society. Research addressing the impact of

school and childcare center closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic on employment is emerging. However, limited qualitative research focuses specifically on teachers' perceptions of employer-provided afterschool childcare as a retention strategy. Limited research has highlighted the impact of childcare needs on educators during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to other employment fields. More in-depth research could provide valuable insights into the specific needs of teachers regarding support services. Several studies have addressed the impact of mental health on teacher job satisfaction. Few studies have explicitly linked job satisfaction to employer-provided afterschool childcare initiatives. Despite the insights gained from existing research related to these themes, research gaps remain in this study.

The COVID-19 pandemic had profound effects on the education sector, and addressing those challenges requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates policy changes, technological support, and resources to mitigate the long-term impact on the educational landscape. The current literature suggests a positive correlation between support services for teachers and job satisfaction; however, the impact of employer-provided afterschool childcare remains unexplored. Future research could investigate the direct effects of afterschool childcare on teacher well-being, retention, and attrition, as well as the long-term impact of support services on teacher retention. In summary, offering free afterschool childcare as an employee support service presents an opportunity to enhance teacher retention in the evolving education landscape following the COVID-19 pandemic. In the next chapter, I described the methodology used in this study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine classroom teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase employee retention following the COVID-19 pandemic. Although teacher retention rates represent a quantifiable phenomenon, teacher perception data can be analyzed to conclude the effectiveness of employer-provided afterschool childcare in impacting classroom teacher retention. The findings of this research study will contribute to the existing literature on classroom teachers' perceptions of teacher retention, specifically regarding the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare. In Chapter 3, I provided a rationale and justification for the choice of a generic qualitative design, a description of the research design, and an explanation of the researcher's role within the study. In the following section, I provide an overview of the data collection methods, data analysis, sampling strategy, trustworthiness issues, confidentiality, ethical concerns, and a description of the data collection and analysis process.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The following research question will be addressed in this generic qualitative research study: What are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of free afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase the retention of employees after the COVID-19 pandemic? Using a qualitative research design will provide insight into the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the

efficacy of employer-provided childcare in retaining them after the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualitative research design was more suitable for investigating the perceptions of research participants than the quantitative research design when examining people's subjective views on actual external events (Percy et al., 2015). By conducting qualitative research, I was able to collect in-depth information from participants on their perception of efficacy associated with providing employer-provided afterschool childcare services. Percy et al. (2015) explained that the generic qualitative research method investigates people's reports of their subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or reflections on their experiences.

I chose to employ a generic qualitative approach in this research study due to the need to contextualize classroom teachers' perceptions regarding the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare services as an effective tool for teacher retention. I chose to employ the generic qualitative research design, which allows the researchers to understand people's perceptions of their experience while not seeking to inquire as deeply as lived experiences or narratives. (Percy et al., 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In this study, I sought to understand the perceptions of classroom teachers who utilized employer-provided afterschool childcare for their children after the COVID-19 pandemic. Using semi-structured interviews, I was able to use the participants' experiences to develop codes and themes.

I selected the generic qualitative design because it was unnecessary to use a more focused qualitative research design, such as ethnography, grounded theory, or phenomenology, which would have required more in-depth analysis (Percy et al., 2015).

Meanwhile, phenomenology investigates the lived experiences of participants, while the use of generic qualitative research enables a researcher to understand the participants' beliefs and attitudes regarding the efficacy of employer-provided childcare as an incentive for teacher retention (Percy et al., 2015). Caelli et al. (2003) stated that the philosophical assumptions in established qualitative methodologies do not guide generic qualitative research. The qualitative research methodology enables researchers to employ inductive methods, where the researcher tends to shape the aspects of the study, such as identifying insights that emerge from the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). During qualitative studies, the researcher conducts interviews for data collection, and the collected data are then coded to identify themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

When considering the appropriate research approach for this study, I explored various qualitative research designs, including phenomenological, generic, narrative, and ethnographic approaches (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). One of the primary considerations for this study was to examine classroom teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase employee retention following the COVID-19 pandemic. With careful consideration, I decided that a generic qualitative research design would align appropriately with the study's purpose and provide the flexibility to incorporate semi-structured interviews, rather than undertaking a deep dive into rich research content. By employing a generic qualitative design, I was able to elucidate classroom teachers' perceptions of the employer-provided afterschool childcare services and their effectiveness in increasing teacher retention.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative studies, the researcher is a primary instrument, and their identity and positionality become central to the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Ravitch and Carl (2019) described positionality as the intersection of how the researcher's role and identity intersect with the context and setting of the research. In this instance, I am a school district administrator in a public school district interviewing classroom teachers. As the researcher in this study, my role required that I maintain objectivity throughout the data collection and analysis processes. A strong consideration was given to reflexivity to identify and address any biases, perceived power imbalances, or conflicts of interest during this process (Merriam et al., 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). My role as a school district administrator can create a perceived power imbalance for participants, and it is essential for me to be aware of this. Being conscious of reflexivity required me to regularly self-reflect on the theoretical preference of this research study, participant bias, and personal relationship to the research topic. Aside from the aforementioned considerations, I also ensured that no other ethical issues were present and not addressed.

### **Methodology**

This section provides insight into the selection of participants for this research study, including recruitment strategies, the criteria for participation, and the exclusion criteria. I included information on selecting participants and the screening process they underwent before participation. Additionally, the steps used to develop the research instrument and the data analysis plan were outlined. I also addressed any issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The participants in this research study were required to be classroom teachers who had been employed by the coastal South Carolina school district prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The classroom teachers must also have school-aged children in grades K-8 who have participated in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program. The sampling plan for this generic qualitative research study employed purposeful sampling, which involves examining information-rich cases for in-depth understanding of the central issue of the research (Patton, 2015). This included the perceptions of those classroom teachers who have utilized the employer-provided afterschool childcare. The following specific criteria had to be met by participants in this research study:

1. Must be currently or previously employed in the school district that implemented employer-provided afterschool childcare as a retention strategy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Must have been employed as a classroom teacher in this school district prior to March 2020.
3. Must have registered one or more child(ren) in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program.
4. The participants must live in or around the identified coastal South Carolina School district.
5. Must have access to a telephone, mobile device, computer, or email.
6. Must be willing to have interviews recorded.

The following criteria excluded participants from this study:

1. A classroom teacher from any school district outside of the identified coastal South Carolina school district.
2. Did not have children who participated in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program.
3. Is employed in a different role within the identified coastal South Carolina school district.
4. Does not live in or around the identified coastal South Carolina school district.
5. Does not have access to a telephone, mobile device, computer, or email.
6. Refuses to have their interview recorded.

Ten classroom teachers participated in this research study to examine their perceptions of the efficacy of the employer-provided afterschool childcare as a teacher retention strategy. Mason (2010) stated that qualitative research studies can have a sample size from 1 to 95 participants. The intention of this research study was to use a sample size that employed a purposive selection method for participants who met the specific criteria. The data collection method for this research study consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted by me with each participant.

Flyers were distributed directly to employees at each school site to recruit participants. The recruitment flyer provided an overview of the study, contact information for me as the researcher, and the required criteria for participation. Any interested participants were then instructed to submit an email providing consent. Participants were screened prior to selection, and selected participants received an email invitation to coordinate their interview time. Once the interview time was coordinated,

the participants were provided with a Zoom link. Prior to the start of the interview, participants were provided with background information on the research study, and any potential issues or conflicts were addressed.

### **Instrumentation**

As the researcher, I was the data collection instrument for this study. My role was crucial in qualitative inquiry, serving as the primary data collection instrument and facilitating the interpretation of qualitative research (Ritchie et al., 2013). I gathered data through semi-structured interviews conducted with participants via Zoom, with each session recorded using the software, supplemented by a separate audio recorder to ensure backup.

I developed the interview protocol that was used throughout the interviews. I reviewed the interview recordings and transcripts, participant demographic information, program participation data, and any other observation notes to achieve triangulation. The semi-structured interviews provided sufficient data to develop the themes, categories, and codes associated with the participant responses. By developing an instrument that allows for flexibility with the guided questions, I was able to leave space for discovery within the open-ended questions and responses.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Various instruments were used for the data collection in this research study. The instruments will include the completed demographic form and semi-structured interviews. The demographic form will provide pertinent information regarding the teacher's age, race, age(s) of the child(ren), grade(s) of the child(ren), and tenure within

the school district. The demographic forms were sent via email to be filled out electronically. The semi-structured interview questions were a series of open-ended questions to answer the research questions for this study.

As the researcher, I was responsible for all data collection in this research study, including creating demographic forms, interview questions/ protocols, and any observation notes from the interviews. To prepare for the interviews, I scheduled and created individual Zoom meetings prior to the interviews and requested that each participant find a private location to minimize interruptions and background noise. Individual Zoom meetings provided each participant with a unique access code for the meeting. The interviews were scheduled to provide each participant with ample time to answer the interview questions and for me to review notes and transcribe the data between interviews.

I chose to conduct interviews virtually using the Zoom platform, along with a separate backup audio recording device, to ensure a second recording is available in case the Zoom platform experiences any issues. During and after the interviews, I took field notes to capture my observations of the participants, serving as an additional data set to complement the interview and provide a more comprehensive look at the data regarding the participants' body language, facial expressions, and any other pertinent information that may have affected the interview.

The interview protocol provided a detailed structure for the interview process, specifically including the introduction, interview, and debrief for participants. A sincere thank you was given to each participant for their willingness to participate in this research

study. As a final note, I informed each participant that I would email them a copy of the summary from the interview for their review to ensure that I had accurately summarized the interview. Participants were informed that they have the option to receive a copy of my final study findings upon request.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Ravitch & Carl (2019) defined qualitative data analysis as the intentional and systematic scrutiny of data at various stages and moments throughout the research process. Data analysis for a qualitative research study requires the researcher to conduct specific actions to interpret the data collected during the study. For this research study, I used interview questions to gather the specific data needed to accurately interpret the findings. Percy et al. (2015) stated that interview questions should be based on the researchers' prior knowledge of the topic. Therefore, I created interview questions for this research study based on my prior knowledge of the employer-provided afterschool program and teacher retention decisions.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected through the semi-structured interviews conducted in this research study. This step-by-step analysis, as outlined in Percy et al. (2015), enabled me to identify themes and codes necessary for the analysis. The interview transcripts were reviewed to identify codes from the data, which were then used to analyze the raw data and identify themes and concepts within it (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The themes will identify patterned responses within the data set in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These steps were conducted after each interview was transcribed. In addition to reviewing the transcripts, I listened to

the recordings of each interview to identify any audio issues that could impact the clarity of the transcript. The initial coding for this research study was conducted by hand. I used qualitative data analysis software as a follow-up to hand coding. The Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software used in this research study was ATLAS.ti.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

I addressed credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to ensure the validity of this qualitative research study. One of the aspects of trustworthiness is the extent to which one can have confidence in the research study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) listed the trustworthiness criteria as credibility—ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the reality as seen by the participants; transferability—ensuring the applicability of the findings based on similar conditions; dependability—ensuring there is accounting for instability and change within the natural context; and confirmability—having the capacity to document “the researcher as the instrument” and identifying any potential sources of bias. In the next section, I outline the strategies I employed to ensure trustworthiness in my study, including approaches to address credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is directly related to research design and the researcher's instrument and data (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In this research study, I addressed researcher reflexivity, implemented data validation strategies for triangulation, and used peer debriefers. As the researcher, I explored my positionality using reflexive strategies, including writing memos and taking notes throughout the process, provided opportunities to identify my

connectedness to the research study and gave space for consideration of any potential biases that may arise from my personal experiences related to the research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). One factor of potential bias that I recognized was my positionality in this research study, which included employment location, work experience, and my role. It was crucial to identify and mitigate bias within my research to address the barriers associated with being a school district administrator. I incorporated reflexive strategies to ensure that I was not biased or made assumptions about my data based on my perceptions. I incorporated bracketing of my own personal values related to the field of education and teacher retention and remained open to questions and debate around my research topic (Caelli et al., 2003). After conducting the semi-structured interviews, I provided each research study participant with a summary of the interview transcript for their review to ensure accuracy. I allowed each research study participant an opportunity to address or correct any errors that may be found in the transcript. I also incorporated the data validation strategies for triangulation by cross-referencing the interview transcript with the QDA coding software.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is described as the ability of qualitative studies to be applicable and transferable to broader contexts while maintaining context-specific richness (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). To ensure transferability, I incorporated detailed descriptions of the data and provided context, allowing the audience to apply aspects of my research study and findings by considering different factors. I ensured that I interpreted my data in a way that embeds the context and clearly provides enough analysis and context relevance in

my data analysis. I also ensured that I developed a thick description of my research study by producing a thorough and clear account of its procedures, contextual factors, participants, and experiences, which enabled the production of complex interpretations and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the stability of the data, encompassing the methods used to collect the data and their consistency with the research argument, as well as their alignment with the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). To ensure dependability, I utilized audit trails generated from memos, employed triangulation, and ensured that I had developed a robust research design.

### **Confirmability**

It was essential to acknowledge that my role as a researcher was not intended to be objective, but rather to focus on findings that are confirmable and verifiable. Ravitch and Carl (2019) noted that one goal of confirmability is to acknowledge and explore how biases and prejudices influence interpretations of data and mediate these through reflexivity. It was essential for me to monitor my internal beliefs, biases, and thought process regarding the research to maintain objectivity.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical research requires that researchers understand, consider, and approach their role with humility and understanding to carefully consider issues collaboratively and relationally (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). As a researcher, I recognized that the participants provide vital information for the data collection in this qualitative research study. It was

my responsibility to take all necessary precautions to ensure that they were treated ethically and protected from harm throughout the process.

Ethical regulations for this qualitative research study were reviewed and approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). I submitted a proposal to the Walden University IRB for approval to move forward with this proposed qualitative research study. Once IRB approval was received, I sought approval from the chief administrative & human resources officer, as well as the chief instructional services officer, of the coastal South Carolina school district to conduct research within their school district. Upon approval of my research, I distributed recruitment emails directly to recruit research participants. Upon receiving communication from potential participants, I emailed them a request for consent and demographic information. Within that email, I also provided information regarding the purpose of this research study, identified my role as the researcher, and outlined any potential risks associated with participation in this research study. I also informed participants that they have the right to withdraw from this research study at any time.

Although the demographic information form included the names of the participants, I removed their actual names from the research study to protect their identity. During the interviews, I referred to them by the preferred name that they identified on the demographic form. I ensured that the link and access code for the interview were sent via password-protected email only to the participant. The recordings for each interview and any other digital data related to this research study will be saved to a password-protected, encrypted external hard drive for 5 years.

## Summary

This chapter detailed the essential methodology elements for this research study, including the research design and rationale, the researcher's role, methodology, trustworthiness issues, and the ethical procedures. The aim of this research study was to gain insight into classroom teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of employer-provided childcare as an incentive to impact teacher retention following the COVID-19 pandemic. This research study employed a qualitative design. Participants in this research study had to meet specific criteria: currently or previously employed in the school district that implemented employer-provided afterschool childcare as a retention strategy during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, been employed as a classroom teacher in this school district prior to March 2020, have registered one or more child(ren) in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program, and must live in or around the identified coastal South Carolina School district. The data collection instruments included the Zoom platform, an external recording device, and notes taken during the interviews.

In the next chapter, I present the results of this research study on classroom teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of employer-provided childcare as an incentive to impact teacher retention, using a generic qualitative research design. In addition, I address the study setting, demographics of the participants, data collection strategies, and data analysis processes, provide evidence of trustworthiness, and discuss the research study's findings.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine classroom teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase employee retention following the COVID-19 pandemic. I designed this research study to address the principal research question: What are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of free afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase the retention of employees after the COVID-19 pandemic? No subquestions were included in this study.

This chapter begins with an introduction, followed by the setting and demographics of the participants, including their gender, years of experience, grade level served, and ethnicity. The participation criteria required all participants to be currently or previously employed as a classroom teacher in the district prior to March 2020, have registered one or more child(ren) in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program, and reside in or around the district.

In the next section, I outlined the data collection process, including the research instruments, recruitment methods, and adherence to ethical standards. The next section is dedicated to data analysis, which explains the process of analyzing the data, outlines the coding process, and identifies any thematic patterns that emerged during the analysis. Data analysis is followed by a section on evidence of trustworthiness, outlining the processes of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability as outlined in Chapter 3. In the final section of this chapter, I present the results, providing data to

support the findings of the research study. A summary of the answers to the research question is provided to complete the chapter.

### **Setting**

Each semi-structured interview was conducted virtually via Zoom. Each participant gave their consent to participate in the audio-recorded interview. A significant part of this research study was recruiting participants from the school district that implemented employer-provided afterschool childcare for employees after the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants all lived within or around the school district that provided the service.

### **Demographics**

For this study, I sought a specific set of participants: classroom teachers who had enrolled one or more children in the employer-provided afterschool childcare. Ten female classroom teachers participated in this study. The variation in years of experience, ethnicity, number of children enrolled in the program, and the number of years of participation in the program (see Tables 2 and 3 below). Participants were assigned a participant ID for this study.

Table 2 provides a visual representation of the demographics of the ten research participants. Each participant was a female classroom teacher with experience ranging from five years to 33 years. Three of the classroom teachers teach at the elementary level, two teach at the middle school level, and the remaining five teach at the high school level. There were seven African American women and three Caucasian women who participated in this research study.

**Table 2***Participant Demographics*

Participant ID	Gender	Years of Experience	Grade Level Served	Ethnicity
P1	Female	18	Elementary	Caucasian
P2	Female	16	Elementary	Caucasian
P3	Female	6	High School	African American
P4	Female	12	Middle School	African American
P5	Female	10	High School	African American
P6	Female	15	High School	African American
P7	Female	33	High School	African American
P8	Female	18	Elementary	Caucasian
P9	Female	8	Middle School	African American
P10	Female	5	High School	African American

Table 3 provides a visual representation of the number of children and years of participation in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program of the ten research participants. Each participant registered between one and three children in the program. The children were registered for a minimum of two years and up to five years since the program's inception.

**Table 3***Participant Registration for Employer-Provided Afterschool Childcare*

Participant ID	Number of Children in Childcare	Years of Participation
P1	2	3
P2	2	5
P3	1	2
P4	1	3
P5	1	4
P6	2	3
P7	2	5
P8	1	5
P9	3	5
P10	3	5

**Data Collection**

The recruitment period began at the start of July 2025 and concluded in mid-September of the same year. The recruitment efforts were made by sending direct email invitations to the roster of classroom teachers who have registered children to participate in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program (see Appendix A). Thirteen potential participants expressed interest in the study, with 10 providing consent and completing a semi-structured interview. Each of the 10 participants met the criteria. Participants had to self-identify as currently or previously employed in the district as a classroom teacher prior to March 2020, have registered one or more child(ren) in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program, and live in or around the district. The data collection process was conducted using open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 12 questions that I established as the researcher. The interviews were audio-recorded using the Zoom software. Participants stayed off camera to ensure confidentiality and

privacy. Each interview was scheduled for 60 minutes, with the actual interviews ranging from 15 to 35 minutes, based on the participant's responses to the interview questions. I collected data from the demographics provided by each participant via email (see Tables 2 and 3).

### **Data Analysis**

I employed thematic analysis, utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis. After the interviews were transcribed through Zoom, I organized the transcription into a format that aligned each response with the interview questions. Any corrections to the transcripts, including the insertion or deletion of words, were completed. After organizing the newly transcribed data, I read through each one several times to identify codes. Following Braun and Clarke's first step, I familiarized myself with the data by transcribing, reading, and annotating each document. I utilized the ATLAS.ti QDA to help organize the codes.

The next step was to generate the initial codes based on the meaningful phrases and patterns identified in each transcript (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process was carefully completed for each of the 10 interview transcriptions. The transcriptions were loaded into the ATLAS.ti QDA. Further review of the transcripts when each was loaded into ATLAS.ti QDA, which generated data in a format that helped me to become more familiar with the data. I utilized the QDA to analyze the codes for frequency and intensity, revealing how participants framed their experiences and whether they aligned more closely with hygiene or motivator factors in the context of teacher retention.

The third step was to identify themes related to Herzberg's two-factor theory within the two overarching categories: hygiene factors and motivators. I extracted the codes established in ATLAS.ti and created an Excel spreadsheet to organize the identified themes. Following this, I proceeded to the fourth step, reviewing the themes to ensure consistency and alignment with the research question. Once completed, I then moved those themes back into ATLAS.ti to align with the correct codes.

In the fifth step, I defined and named the themes identified using categories that were aligned with Herzberg's two-factor theory. In addition, themes and subthemes were created to associate with supporting quotes from the participants, ensuring a rich, contextual understanding was achieved. I paid special attention to the frequency of the codes and the depth and emotion in the participant's responses to provide for a comprehensive interpretation of whether this employer-provided afterschool childcare influenced the teachers' decision to remain in the district. These newly defined and named themes then facilitated the sixth step, which involved producing a report by interpreting the findings in relation to Herzberg's framework and the research question of this study.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

I used researcher reflexivity, data triangulation, and peer debriefers to establish credibility and increase the trustworthiness of my research study. I continually assessed my positionality throughout the process by employing reflexive strategies, including writing memos and taking notes, to identify my connection to this research study. I was

Careful to give space and consideration for any biases that might have arisen due to my connectedness to this research study. Early in this research process, I recognized the significance of my positionality to this study, particularly in relation to my work with the school district and my experiences with the employer-provided afterschool childcare program. By incorporating reflexive strategies, I ensured that I was not biased or making assumptions based on my own perceptions of the data. I utilized bracketing of my own personal values in the field of education and teacher retention to help me remain focused on the questions and debate about my research topic.

I provided each participant with a copy of their transcript to review, ensuring that I accurately reflected their responses. Each participant provided positive feedback on the accuracy of the transcripts. I utilized ATLAS.ti QDA coding software as a strategy for triangulation by cross-referencing the transcripts from the interviews.

### **Transferability**

To ensure transferability, I incorporated detailed descriptions of the data and provided rich and thick descriptions of this research study's design, procedures, participants, and my role as a researcher. I was intentional in ensuring that these results could be applied to broader contexts while still maintaining the context-specific richness. In addition, I ensured that I interpreted my data in a way that embedded the context and provided sufficient analysis and relevance to the context of my data collection.

### **Dependability**

Throughout the data collection and analysis phase of my study, I ensured dependability by creating memos for an audit trail, implementing triangulation, and

developing a strong research design. Other documents used in addition to the memos in the audit trail include the content in my reflective journal, interview transcripts, audio recordings, and an evaluation of the data analysis process.

### **Confirmability**

It was important to me to ensure that I recognized my role as a researcher was to focus on the confirmability of my findings and incorporate that into my research study. I was careful throughout the process to monitor bias through reflexive practices and monitor my internal beliefs, biases, and dialogue regarding this research to maintain objectivity.

### **Results**

I identified six key themes for the data collected in this study (see Appendix E). I worked to ensure that the themes identified from the large amount of data collected were aligned with the research question for this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of free afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase the retention of employees after the COVID-19 pandemic?

After multiple in-depth reviews of the data, I identified categories of codes that answered the research question. The six overarching themes that stood out from the data, were compiled into Table 4, that expressed the teachers perceptions of the efficacy of the employer-provided afterschool childcare on teacher retention: Theme 1. Employer-provided afterschool care as a motivator for teacher retention, Theme 2. Balancing the demands of work and family, Theme 3. Affordability and accessibility are critical

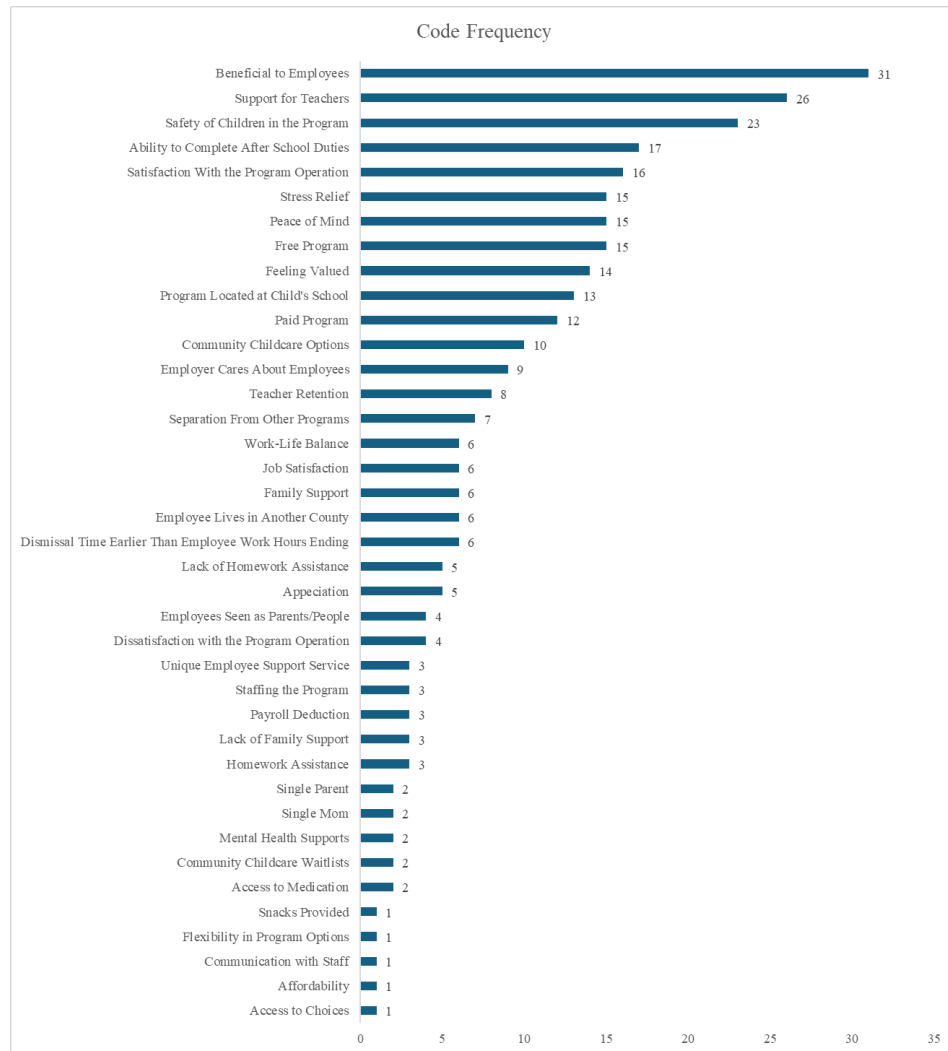
gatekeepers, Theme 4. Program quality shapes perceptions of value, Theme 5. Child safety and academic support are non-negotiables, and Theme 6. Family circumstances influence perceived efficacy of the program.

**Table 4***Thematic Analysis: Codes Organized by Themes*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Theme 1: Employer-Provided Afterschool Care as a Motivator for Teacher Retention</b>	<b>Theme 2: Balancing the Demands of Work and Family</b>	<b>Theme 3: Affordability and Accessibility are Critical Gatekeepers</b>
Subthemes	Recognition of the needs of employees	Work-life balance	Cost and access
Codes	Appreciation Employer cares about employees Beneficial to employees Positive impact on retention	Ability to complete afterschool duties Dismissal earlier than parents' workday	Free program Paid program Payroll deduction Community childcare options
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Theme 4: Program Quality Shapes Perceptions of Value</b>	<b>Theme 5: Child Safety and Academic Support as Non-Negotiables</b>	<b>Theme 6: Family Circumstances Influence Perceived Efficacy of the Program</b>
Subthemes	Satisfaction with the operation of the program Dissatisfaction with the operation of the program Academic support	Safety and trust	Family support Single-parent needs Logistical barriers
Codes	Communication with staff Flexibility in the program Satisfaction with program operation Dissatisfaction with program operation Lack of communication Separation from other programs Homework assistance Lack of homework assistance	Safety of the child Safe space Access to medication	Family support Lack of family support Single parent Single mom Employee lives in another county

The codes, subthemes, and themes identified in Table 4 were used to create the visual word cloud developed from the thematic analysis in Figure 1. The frequency of codes that emerged from the data numerically reflected the perspectives of the research participants, as shown in Figure 2. Figure 2 displays the frequency of codes developed from the thematic analysis derived from the research participants' perceived efficacy of the employer-provided afterschool childcare. Codes are displayed in a horizontal bar



**Figure 2***Frequency of Codes*

Herzberg's two-factor theory incorporates two factors: motivators and hygiene, which were applied in this research study to determine the efficacy of the employer-provided afterschool childcare service on teacher retention, as shown in Figure 3 below, identifying each theme as a motivator or hygiene factor. During the data collection for this research study, I sought to understand the perspectives of classroom teachers

regarding the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare to retain teachers. The interview questions were intentionally designed to answer the research question for this study. Individual participants provided their perspectives and helped to support the identification of codes, themes, and categories from their responses.

### Figure 3

#### *Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory Applied to Employer-Provided Afterschool Childcare*

Motivators (Increase Satisfaction & Retention)	Hygiene Factors (Prevent Dissatisfaction)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer-Provided Afterschool Care as a Retention Motivator               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recognition</li> <li>○ Appreciation</li> <li>○ Organizational Care</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Balancing Work and Family Demands               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ability to Complete Duties</li> <li>○ Reduced Stress</li> <li>○ Increased Work-Life Balance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability and Accessibility as Critical Gatekeepers               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Free vs Paid Program</li> <li>○ Payroll Deduction</li> <li>○ Community Childcare Options</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Program Quality Shapes the Perception of Value               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Communication</li> <li>○ Flexibility</li> <li>○ Satisfaction vs Dissatisfaction</li> <li>○ Homework Assistance vs Lack of Homework Assistance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Child Safety and Academic Support as Non-Negotiables               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Safety</li> <li>○ Medication Access</li> <li>○ Homework Assistance vs Lack of Homework Assistance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Family Circumstances Influence Perceived Efficacy of the Program               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Single-Parent Needs</li> <li>○ Lack of Family Support</li> <li>○ Logistical Barriers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>TEACHER RETENTION</b>	

### Theme 1: Employer-Provided Afterschool Care as a Motivator for Teacher

#### Retention

During my exploration, the goal was to determine whether participants believed that the employer-provided service had an impact on teacher retention. I found that while this service was beneficial to participants and their children as they transitioned back to face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, its perceived value differed

among participants based on various factors. While in the data collection phase, I asked questions about the teachers' perceptions of the services:

- Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional?
  - Why or why not?
- Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district?
  - And what your initial thoughts were?

Multiple participants shared their perceptions that the service was beneficial for employees, indicating that the employer cares about them. Participant P2 stated that “the district cares about its teachers, its employees, enough to say, hey, we hear this is a concern, here's what we can do.” Another participant (P5) shared that she believes “when the district does things like this, it makes us feel seen and heard as parents.” Other codes that emerged from the participant responses included 'peace of mind' and 'feeling valued as employees'.

Other sentiments shared by research participants included appreciation for the district's provision of the service and excitement upon hearing that it was being offered to employees. Participant P6 described their excitement upon hearing about the program, saying, “Actually, I felt appreciated, I was thankful, and I was grateful.” Participant P8 also stated, “I'm appreciative of any... of any effort to make teachers feel supported. So, no, I would say thank you, thank you for putting it together.”

This theme is most directly aligned with Herzberg's motivator factors, which include recognition, achievement, and work-life meaning. The teachers who perceived the employer-provided afterschool childcare program as evidence of organizational investment and care in employees viewed it as a motivational factor that strengthened their sense of belonging and organizational commitment. The availability of this benefit fostered feelings of appreciation, reduced stress related to family logistics, and enhanced the participating teachers' overall sense of satisfaction with their employer. The program served as a motivator by fulfilling higher-order psychological needs such as recognition, achievement, and alignment between personal and professional values.

## **Theme 2: Balancing the Demands of Work and Family**

The second theme identified in this research study was generated from codes that included the teacher's ability to complete afterschool duties. Participant P1 recounted, "There's just some days where I need to be after school longer and just get some things done." Participant P7 indicated that prior to the implementation of the employer-provided childcare, she would "...pick them up, bring them over, and they stayed in my classroom with me." Finally, Participant P10 revealed, "I had some time afterward to maybe wrap up my day to get things done."

Throughout multiple interviews, I heard participants discuss the issue created by their children having a dismissal time that was earlier than the end of the employee workday. Participant P5 stated that her sons "got out before my school got out, so it was quite challenging." One of the various circumstances that was sobering to hear as a researcher, occurred when Participant P4 shared,

my daughter gets out of school an hour prior to the time that my school dismisses, so it's roughly an hour to an hour and a half difference, and with me not having family here, and my in-laws being deceased, it's really hard. We don't have, like, the support of anyone to go pick her up when need be, or to keep her after school, so at least that's one thing that I don't have to worry about. I know exactly where she is.

This theme bridges both the hygiene and motivator factor domains in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. On one hand, the ability for the participants to balance work and family responsibilities reduced stress and prevented dissatisfaction, which is a hallmark of hygiene factors associated with this theory. On the other hand, the ability to achieve a sustainable work-life balance enhanced the teachers' intrinsic motivation and emotional well-being, signaling the presence of motivator qualities. The teachers described feelings of relief, gratitude, and improved focus on instructional duties, which suggests that the benefit facilitated both the absence of dissatisfaction (hygiene) and the presence of satisfaction (motivator). The duality of this function highlights Herzberg's assertion that the same factor can operate differently depending on individual perception and the employee's contextual needs.

### **Theme 3: Affordability and Accessibility Are Critical Gatekeepers**

Another theme that emerged while collecting and analyzing the data was that affordability and accessibility are critical gatekeepers to the perception of the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare. The questions that generated the data on this theme were as follows:

- Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?
- Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional?
  - Why or why not?
- Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?

Several of the research participants expressed a desire for the program to return to its original “no-cost” format for employees. Participants P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, and P10 each commented on the period when the program was free. Participant P6 noted, “My honest opinion, I and some of the other parents, we absolutely love it again, when it was free.”

Initially, the program was offered to employees as a free service, with only registration and parental acknowledgments required for participation. During the 2024-2025 school year, the program switched to a “low-cost” format with a weekly rate of \$25. In comparison to the cost of community childcare options, the cost was still minimal. The obstacles that were mentioned regarding community childcare options included long waitlists and affordability, as indicated by Participant P6, when she shared, “cost, and the waitlist, some places, you know, is just ridiculous.”

Affordability and accessibility align with Herzberg’s hygiene factors, specifically in relation to working conditions and organizational policies. Teachers in this study emphasized that if the program was cost-prohibitive or logistically inaccessible, it would produce dissatisfaction rather than motivation. The findings of this research study suggest

that while the existence of an employer-provided afterschool childcare program is valuable, its true impact depends on equitable access and affordability—conditions that are necessary to prevent dissatisfaction but insufficient on their own to enhance satisfaction. Affordability and accessibility serve as the foundation for motivational outcomes in this study.

#### **Theme 4: Program Quality Shapes Perceptions of Value**

Program quality, as it relates to the program's operation, clearly shaped the teachers' perceptions of the program's value for their children. The subthemes that emerged from the data for this theme were satisfaction with the operation of the program, dissatisfaction with the operation of the program, and the academic support provided to students participating in the program. Research participants provided insightful information regarding their perspectives on the operation of the program. The research questions that generated this data were as follows:

- Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has met or not met your expectations?
- Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?

The satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the program operation were based on several factors, as shared by research participants, including separation from other programs, homework assistance or the lack of homework assistance, and the convenience of the program location being held at their children's current school. Sentiments of

satisfaction with the program were shared by multiple participants, as they perceived the program as a space where their children were supported by staff who ensured their needs were met. Participant P2 shared her thoughts on the staff of the program, stating, “The staff that works with them, they adore,” and Participant P9 shared, “I’ve had 3 children, go through the service, and I think it has been really well in my experience.” Participant P8 provided more in-depth reasoning behind her perception of the program, indicating, “I have nothing but positive things to say about it. I mean, it... to know that my kid... my child has somewhere to be until I can get to her, you know, I never want to leave her longer than I have to, but I also know that she's taken care of and she's safe until I can get there, so that part makes me able to finish my day.”

On the other hand, not all sentiments were satisfied with the program. The varied operational styles of the program left room for research participants to feel some dissatisfaction with the program's operation. One of the codes that generated some dissatisfaction was the separation of the children of employees from other afterschool programs happening at the same time at the school. While some teachers indicated that they understood the separation, others felt that it detracted from the program's efficacy. Participant P8 said that the separation was “...challenging because I feel like my kids felt, if I'm being honest, my kids felt like the staff care was less than. The other kids did more they got to go on the playground, and they did fun things, and sometimes the staff kids were just checking a box, so it wasn't as it wasn't as thought out.” Participant P4 shared, “The only complaint is it the program at my daughter's school doesn't seem as structured in terms of what she's doing while she's there.”

Homework assistance and the lack of homework assistance also generated some thoughts on the efficacy of the program, as shared by research participants. Participant P7 shared her positive assessment of the program operation, stating, “I know where they are, I know that they are in capable hands, I know that their homework was what I really appreciate, the first thing, they have to do their homework.” Participant P3 also shared similar thoughts, stating, “The people that's placed in there, they do a really good job with my kids, as well as I can see. Other kids, they do, you know, they don't mind helping with the homework and making sure the kids get their homework done and, you know, some kind of snack before the parents come pick them up and ensure that the kids are definitely being taken care of.”

The lack of consistent homework assistance at all program sites provided interesting responses from research participants. The participants who had children enrolled in program sites that did not provide homework assistance were vocal about their dissatisfaction with that aspect of the program. Participant P4 shared that the only complaint that she has about the program was “the program at my daughter's school doesn't seem as structured in terms of what she's doing while she's there.” While Participant P5 stated that it would be “really nice if they did do homework, and I'm saying because, you know, the cost.”

The contrast of program quality perspectives provided by the research participants ranged. It was evident that one of the factors that impacted that perspective was the coordination of the program at each site. Those who attended programs with an emphasis on structure and scheduled activities had a more positive perspective on the value of the

program, while those schools that did not prioritize structure were perceived unfavorably in that area. These inconsistencies do tend to have an impact on perception of the program, and it begs to question whether the teacher retention rates within those school programs reflect similarly.

The perceived quality of the employer-provided afterschool childcare program reflects both hygiene and motivator dimensions of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. The teachers' satisfaction was influenced by various program features, including staffing, academic components, and student engagement. When the quality of the program was poor, dissatisfaction emerged; conversely, when quality was high, teachers expressed a deeper sense of pride in their organization and loyalty. When applying Herzberg's perspective, program quality initially functions as a hygiene factor but may evolve into a motivator when meaningful outcomes and a well-structured program are evident.

### **Theme 5: Child Safety and Academic Support as Non-Negotiables**

The safety of children enrolled in employer-provided afterschool childcare matters in relation to the perception of the program's efficacy. One of the most surprising responses from the research participants discussed the need for afterschool program staff to be able to access facilities where student medication is stored, after her grandson, who is in the program, had an asthma attack. Participant P7 emphasized in her interview that "Having the staff there having access to the office, or even if I just know the student can't have medication on them, but some way of getting it to him if he needed it." Access to medication when needed for the safety of the children when attending the program is a non-negotiable aspect of the program.

This theme is deeply rooted in hygiene factors. Teachers viewed safety and academic support as the baseline expectations rather than sources of motivation. The absence of one or both

elements created significant dissatisfaction and anxiety amongst research participants. This overshadowed some of the program's potential aspects. In terms of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, safety and academic reliability serve as essential conditions that are necessary for stability but are not sufficient to generate intrinsic satisfaction. Ensuring that both are present creates a satisfactory state, while the absence results in stronger negative reactions among participants.

Several research participants emphasized the importance of their children being in a safe environment and a location that is convenient for them to access. Participant P1 indicated during her interview that while she no longer uses the program, when she did use the program, she felt, "I really enjoyed, obviously, having her be in a place after school, so I could, you know, do my duties, if necessary" and "get things done after school, and do what they need to do, and know that their kids are in a safe place here." Research participants also noted that the program's safety provided them with a sense of peace of mind. Participant P3 shared, "Knowing that your child is safe, from that 4:00 to 5:30, you can kind of decompress, get your mind together to go, you know, grab them, because dealing with your kids at school all day, then you have to go home to your own kids all day. At least you get that hour, even if you want to run to the grocery store or anything. You get that sense of, whew, I can, you know, at least breathe for a second." Several other research participants shared similar sentiments regarding the peace of mind the program provided them for their children after the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Theme 6: Family Circumstances Influence Perceived Efficacy of the Program**

The last theme identified from the data is the influence that family circumstances of the research participants have on their perception of the efficacy of their program. Various research participants indicated different family circumstances, including being single parents/mothers, a lack of family support, and being employees who live outside of

the county where they are employed. These family circumstances had an influence on the perceived efficacy of the program. The research questions that generated these codes and themes were as follows:

- Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?
- Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?
  - Why or why not?

Research participants shared their own individual family circumstances and the circumstances of other employees that they are aware of and how having access to this program benefited them. Participant P5 shared that "...as a single parent, it was a little challenging to be able to afford said afterschool program." Similarly, Participant P1 shared her decision to remove her children from the program was a result of being a single mom. She stated in her interview,

I don't have funds, you know, to pay for it, and for them to go to another place. And I do have family that helps me out a lot, so I am very blessed to have that, but still, I... you know, if I do have things to do, I don't want them to come to get them just because of that. I need to kind of save them for bigger things that I need help with. So it's the money, you know, and just being a single mom and trying to get stuff done after work is stressful, knowing that I'm not gonna get this stuff done at home, you know (Participant P1).

Another circumstance that was shared during the research interviews was the impact of family support on their perceptions of the program's efficacy. Participant P2 shared that she had previously relied on family support to help with her children before this program became available. During the interview, she stated “I genuinely love my job, but I will say it was a huge contributor to my overall job quality, having that, because it's consistent every day, and I didn't have to worry about transportation, calling the mother-in-law, having the third and fourth and fifth emergency contacts, which, again, if we're all teachers, it gets really tricky having people on your emergency contact list to do a pickup if something goes wrong. So it's been really nice having that there, and knowing that it's consistent, and that the kids are happy and supported.” Sentiments of job satisfaction and ability to complete after school duties were shared regularly during the data collection process.

In applying Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, this theme's interpretation is consistent with the emphasis on the difference in needs for each individual's fulfillment. The perceptions of the program's motivational potential for the teachers in this research study varied based on their family composition, number of children, their ages, and childcare needs. Those teachers with elementary-aged children indicated that the program met their immediate and meaningful needs by functioning as a motivator to enhance job satisfaction and retention. It was determined that the program functioned as a neutral hygiene factor for teachers with older children enrolled in the program.

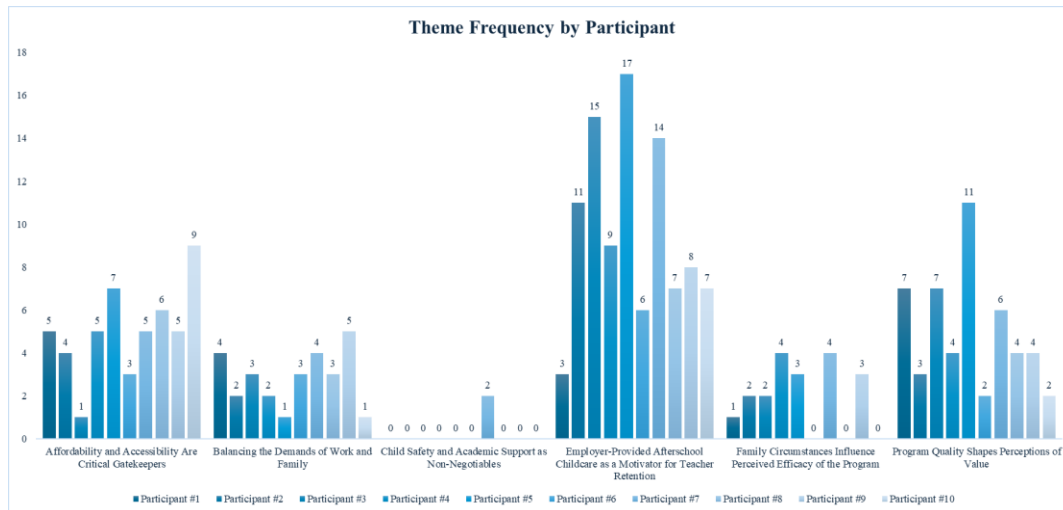
It was important to strengthen the findings in the analysis of themes identified in this research study to assess the frequency of themes utilizing participant data. Figure 4

reflects the frequency of themes by individual participant. Other participant demographics were used to understand the frequency of themes by the participants' years of experience (see Figure 5), the number of children enrolled in the program (see Figure 6), and the years of participation in the program (see Figure 7). Each set of demographic information from the research participants showcases the perspectives of the various themes identified. The frequency associated with the theme "Employer-Provided Afterschool Childcare as a Motivator for Teacher Retention" emerged as the most frequently recurring theme, underscoring its importance to the research participants.

To further illustrate the distribution and prominence of identified themes across participants and demographics, a series of visual analyses were developed. Figures 4 through 7 display the appearance frequency of each major theme relative to the key characteristics of participants. Figure 4 displays the perspectives of the 10 participants in relation to the identified themes. While the theme "Employer-Provided Afterschool Childcare as a Motivator for Teacher Retention" emerged more frequently, surprisingly, the theme "Child Safety and Academic Support as Non-Negotiables" emerged less frequently. Similarly, when examining the theme frequency by years of experience, number of children enrolled in the program, and the number of years of participation in the program, the same two themes occurred more and less frequently in Figures 5, 6, and 7. These figures provide a visual representation of how teachers' professional experience and personal circumstances influenced their perceptions of the program.

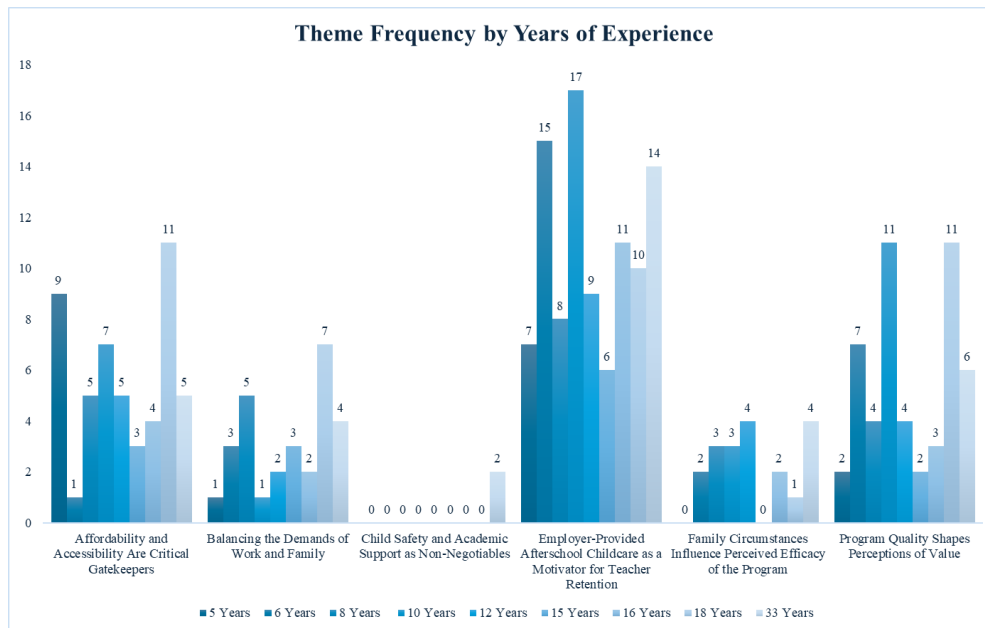
**Figure 4**

*Theme Frequency by Participant*



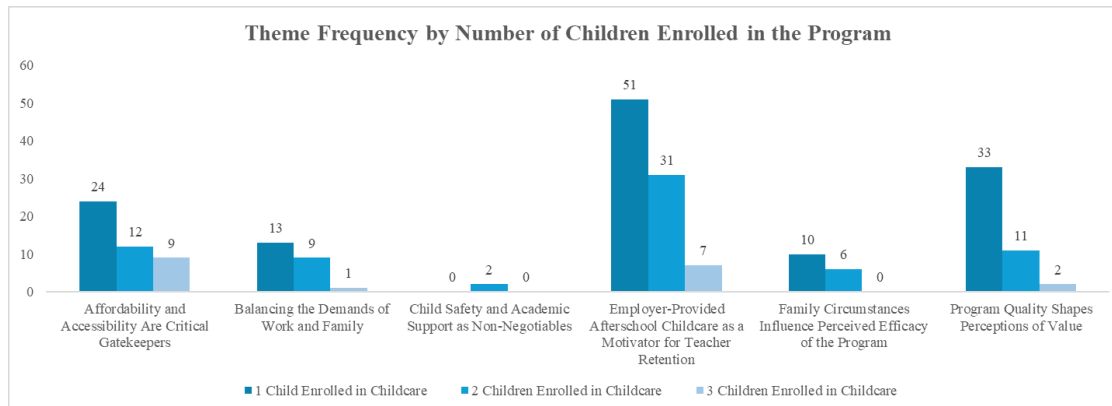
**Figure 5**

*Theme Frequency by Years of Experience*



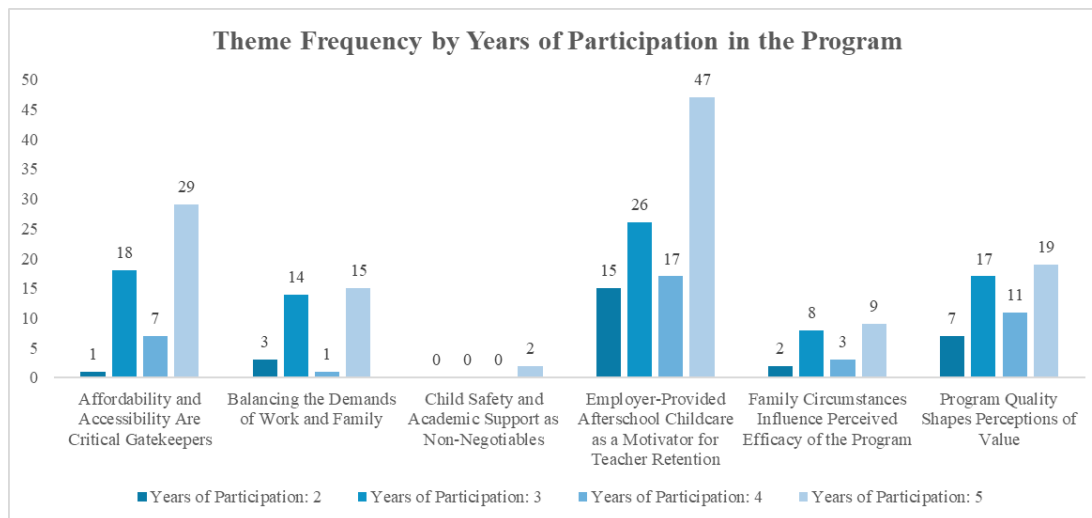
**Figure 6**

*Theme Frequency by Number of Children Enrolled in the Program*



**Figure 7**

*Theme Frequency by Years of Participation in the Program*



**Summary**

In this chapter, the results of this research study were presented, including the themes that emerged from the data collection and analysis process to answer the research question of this research study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the efficacy of free afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase the retention of employees after the COVID-19 pandemic?

The findings show that the research participants have had similar experiences leading to their perception of the efficacy of the employer-provided afterschool childcare program, as a strategy for teacher retention. For instance, multiple participants shared how their children's participation in this program has led to increased job satisfaction and their own individual peace of mind. The employer-provided afterschool childcare was not the deciding factor in retaining teachers, but it did influence these teachers' decision to remain in the district. Sentiments of appreciation for the school district recognizing the needs of its employees were shared throughout the data collection process. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, not all the research participants were still using the program, now that it is no longer a free program for employees. The transition from a free program to a paid program had an impact on employee participation rates and altered the expectations of the program's value. While some chose not to continue using the program, other respondents shared that they still perceive it as a more cost-effective and accessible option than other community programs. I found that cost was not the primary factor in determining program utilization and efficacy. Other factors, such as program operation, the convenience of the program location being at their children's school, and safety, were perceived to be impactful for the respondents.

There was an overwhelming indication from the research participants that the program was a definite benefit for employees, as it was a unique service not available in

other school districts that they were aware of. Participant P4 shared in her interview, “I haven't seen any other districts [offer this]. If they do offer this, I haven't seen it publicized.” While Participant P3 stated, “I think that is already a major plus, because some districts don't have that.” And most emphatically, when Participant P9 shared her perceptions of the efficacy of the program on retaining teachers, she had this to say, “we talk about it all the time. We're like, yes, because it's like, man, this is amazing, because I'll be honest, I've heard other staff members thinking about, you know, going to another district, and then when this program came, they were like, oh no, - we don't think any other school district is gonna do this. It has definitely changed minds, and it has retained, at least from the teachers that I've spoken to, it was a big factor that they have stayed.”

In applying Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory to these research findings, it suggests that the employer-provided afterschool childcare program operates along a continuum between hygiene maintenance and motivational enrichment. At its core, the program addresses hygiene needs by mitigating employee dissatisfaction related to childcare costs, safety concerns, and logistical challenges. Once the foundational needs are met, the program can evolve into a motivator that enhances teacher satisfaction by eliciting feelings of recognition, organizational trust, and a sense of harmony in work-life balance.

The findings of this research study have important implications for educational leadership and policy. Retention strategies that only address hygiene factors, such as compensation or workload, may fail to foster long-term commitment that schools and districts need. However, implementing benefits that address both hygiene and motivation, such as high-quality, well-structured, accessible childcare, may yield more sustainable

retention outcomes for schools and school districts. The alignment in this research study with Herzberg's framework reinforces the importance of employers addressing both extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of teacher satisfaction to retain a stable and motivated educational workforce.

In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings of this research study and explain its limitations. Recommendations and implications from the results of this research study are also presented. The chapter will conclude with my closing thoughts as a researcher and a summary.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

I provided an interpretation in Chapter 5 of the research study's findings within the context of Herzberg's two-factor theory, identified the study's limitations, and presented recommendations for future research and practice. The discussion concludes with implications for positive social change as educational systems continue to adapt to the post-pandemic environment.

In this research study, I sought to understand classroom teachers' perceptions regarding the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare as an employee support service intended to increase the retention of employees after the COVID-19 pandemic. Current research suggests that after the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher retention became an issue of global concern (Booth et al., 2021). Teacher retention is not a new issue. See et al. (2020) affirms that the task of retaining and attracting qualified teachers is a persistent problem that has plagued many countries for decades. During the post-pandemic years, teacher vacancies and their effects impacted the educational attainment of students. Issues of teacher shortages and introducing new efforts for teacher retention are not new strategies; research has previously proven that while effective, they have not been sufficient to sustain the necessary retention rates of teachers after the COVID-19 pandemic (Booth et al., 2021; Carver-Thomas, 2018; See et al., 2020; Shuls & Flores, 2020).

In Chapter 1, I identified a gap in the literature regarding the perception of classroom teachers in understanding the efficacy of employer-provided support services

on teacher retention in a coastal South Carolina school district. I employed a generic qualitative research methodology to address this gap, exploring teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare as a strategy to impact teacher retention, using Herzberg's two-factor theory as a theoretical lens. Six key themes emerged from the data collected: Theme 1. Employer-provided afterschool care as a motivator for teacher retention, Theme 2. Balancing the demands of work and family, Theme 3. Affordability and accessibility are critical gatekeepers, Theme 4. Program quality shapes perceptions of value, Theme 5. Child safety and academic support are non-negotiables, and Theme 6. Family circumstances influence perceived efficacy of the program.

An interpretation of the findings presented in Chapter 4 is included in Chapter 5 of this research study. Based on my interpretation of the findings, I discuss the study's limitations and provide recommendations for future research. Lastly, I share the implications of positive social change and the conclusion of my study.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of this research study confirm findings from the peer-reviewed literature presented in Chapter 2. To gain a deeper understanding of the research participants' perceptions of the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare on teacher retention, I applied Herzberg's two-factor theory as a lens to examine how hygiene and motivator factors influence teacher retention. Herzberg's two-factor theory distinguishes between motivators—factors that lead to job satisfaction—and hygiene

factors, which contribute to dissatisfaction if absent. Each of the six themes identified in this study reflects either motivator or hygiene constructs.

- Affordability and Accessibility are Critical Gatekeepers: Hygiene (access, equity, pay, policies)
- Balancing the Demands of Work and Family: Hygiene (work-life balance, organizational support)
- Child Safety and Academic Support as Non-Negotiables: Hygiene (safety conditions, work environment)
- Employer-Provided Afterschool Care as a Motivator for Teacher Retention: Motivator (achievement, appreciation, recognition)
- Family Circumstance Influence Perceived Efficacy: Extension of Herzberg's model (contextual moderator)
- Program Quality Shapes Perceptions of Value: Hygiene (conditions of service, supervision)

In this study, participants reported that accessing and affording childcare in the community was challenging. Additionally, participants shared their difficulties in finding time after the school day ends to complete any additional duties or attend required meetings without their children's supervision.

In this study, I presented findings that most teachers perceived the employer-provided afterschool childcare program as beneficial support to employees but not necessarily having a significant impact on teacher retention. Herzberg's two-factor theory underpins this study by providing the foundation for understanding the perceptions of

classroom teachers regarding the hygiene and motivator factors that enhance satisfaction and retention, as well as prevent dissatisfaction. The motivators included employer-provided afterschool programs as a motivator for teacher retention because they recognize the needs of employees, prompt feelings of appreciation, and help teachers complete their afterschool duties. Hygiene factors identified to prevent teacher dissatisfaction included the affordability and accessibility of the program, the quality of program operations, the safety of the children, and family circumstances. Taken together, these findings suggest that employer-provided childcare functions as both a hygiene factor—reducing dissatisfaction when access and quality are adequate—and as a motivator when teachers perceive the program as a recognition of their value to the organization.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. As a district employee, I recognized the potential for bias in data collection and interpretation. To strengthen credibility and confirmability, I employed reflexive journaling, member checking, and maintaining an audit trail. The limitation identified prior to this research study was that only one school district in South Carolina could be included, as no others offered employer-provided afterschool childcare for employees. The research study was conducted at a single site, the previously mentioned coastal South Carolina school district. The single-site study enabled an in-depth exploration aimed at comprehensively understanding the provision of employer-provided afterschool childcare for the purpose of retaining and supporting employees. I used purposeful sampling for this research study

to gather in-depth information from the information-rich responses on the perceptions of the research participants. The research participants were assured that their responses would not be shared with the school and district administration, which provided space for them to divulge their perceptions without fear of reprisal. None of the participants expressed concern about the confidentiality not being honored. Additionally, the participants' shared employment context may have shaped their responses due to social desirability.

The study's small sample of 10 female participants from a single school district limits transferability to other contexts. The lack of male research participants served as an additional limitation for this research study. This research study does not serve as a representative sample of the entire population of teachers in the coastal South Carolina school district. I addressed internal generalizability by understanding that the interview provided a valid account of each participant's perspective during the semi-structured interviews conducted. The previously identified challenge of time management proved not to be an issue, as research participants were able and willing to meet outside of the school day. While these limitations restrict generalization, they also provide depth and authenticity to understanding this school district's unique response to its post-pandemic needs.

### **Recommendations**

In this research study, I focused on understanding the perspectives of classroom teachers on the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare as a strategy for teacher retention. Since this study was conducted specifically in one coastal South

Carolina school district, further research can be expanded to other states and counties that may offer this service or a similar one. Another opportunity to develop this study is to specifically seek out the perspectives of male educators, as all the participants in this research study were female. In addition to the previous opportunities, another recommendation is to conduct research on more widely utilized and implemented support services, such as employee mental health support that is provided above and beyond the standard employer employee assistance program.

The implementation of employer-provided support services should be focused on meeting the needs of employees. Educational leaders should consider maintaining or expanding employer-provided childcare programs as a central retention strategy for classroom teachers and all employees. Ensuring the affordability, accessibility, and consistent quality of the program will address hygiene factors that prevent employee dissatisfaction, while recognizing the needs of teachers' families acts as a motivator that enhances satisfaction and loyalty. Employers should also consider implementing ongoing mechanisms for gathering feedback to monitor employee perceptions and improve the effectiveness of the services.

Future research should expand the pool of participants to include multiple school districts or other states to enhance the transferability of findings. The inclusion of male teachers and educators across varying career stages could uncover perception differences of the efficacy of the employer-provided childcare. Future research would benefit from understanding what services are currently unavailable. The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to poll employees and determine their needs, identifying funding

opportunities to address those needs as a teacher/ employee retention strategy. Applying quantitative or mixed-method designs could measure the statistical impact of the employer-provided childcare programs on teacher retention. Finally, comparative studies might explore the influence of other post-pandemic support services, such as mental health.

### **Implications**

In Chapter 1, I discussed the potential for positive social change and improving the experiences of classroom teachers and school districts, while raising awareness of the strategies available to meet the needs of classroom teachers and enhance teacher retention. Currently and historically, teacher retention issues have been present in public education, with traditional strategies being implemented to increase teacher retention, such as mentoring programs, professional development, school administrator support, teacher pay, and teacher induction programs (Luesse et al., 2022; Sabina et al., 2023; See et al., 2020). While teacher retention may remain an issue for schools and school districts to address, there is space to meet the needs of employees and impact teacher retention rates. This research study contributes to the literature on the need to exceed traditional methods in addressing teacher retention and implementing more comprehensive and sustainable employee support. This research study contributes to positive social change by shedding light on the role of employer-provided childcare in stabilizing the educational workforce following the COVID-19 pandemic. By helping to reduce the childcare burden, districts can help foster a better work-life balance for employees, promote teacher well-being, and enhance the continuity of student learning opportunities.

Such support enables teachers to remain in the profession. The implications of this research study provide insight for educators, school and district administrators, scholar-practitioners, researchers, and human service providers who support school employees, offering new perspectives on teachers' views of employer-provided support services. I hope this study prompts more schools and school districts to seek ways to meet the needs of their employees through methods beyond the traditionally provided supportive services. During data collection, some research participants expressed their appreciation for the coastal South Carolina school district's provision of innovative support services that positively impacted their responsibilities as parents.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, Chapter 5 integrates the findings of this research study through the lens of Herzberg's two-factor theory, expanding understanding of how employer-provided afterschool childcare can influence teacher satisfaction and retention. This generic qualitative research study addressed the gap in the literature that explores teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of employer-provided afterschool childcare as a strategy for teacher retention. In this study, my findings revealed that teachers found employer-provided afterschool childcare to be beneficial to employees when it provides a structured program that prioritizes student safety, offers homework assistance, and offers affordable and accessible options for employees. Providing a service that meets the needs of employees was appreciated and indicates that the employer values its employees.

Teacher retention has been a longstanding issue in the United States and internationally, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated it. Booth et al. (2021)

noted that teacher retention has been a global concern. By taking the steps to provide opportunities for employees to conduct afterschool duties, including providing extended learning opportunities for children with learning loss due to the school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research study affirmed the importance of teachers having peace of mind and the ability to focus more intently on their jobs when their children are safe and cared for. By addressing both hygiene and motivator factors, school districts can design comprehensive employee support strategies that contribute to maintaining workforce stability and promoting positive social change in the education field. I conclude, based on the data collected in this research study, that schools and school districts that prioritize the needs of their staff, including their children, will have and maintain increased teacher retention.

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## Appendix A: Recruitment Email

**Subject line:** Interviewing classroom teachers about employer-provided childcare and teacher retention in July - October

**Email message:**

There is a new study about the perceptions of classroom teachers in a coastal South Carolina School District regarding their experiences with employer-provided afterschool childcare to better understand the significance of this service on teacher retention. For this study, you are invited to share your experience and perceptions of this employer-provided service as a strategy for teacher retention.

**About the study:**

- One 30–60-minute Zoom interview that will be audio-recorded (no video recording)
- The interview will be scheduled outside of school hours
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- 18 years old or older
- are currently or previously employed in the coastal South Carolina School District during the implementation of employer-provided afterschool childcare as a retention strategy which took place during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- have been employed as a classroom teacher in this school district prior to March 2020.
- have registered one or more child(ren) in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program.
- live in or around the coastal South Carolina School District.

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Lakinsha Swinton, a Ph.D. student at Walden University. This study is part of her academic requirements and is not affiliated with her professional role as Director of Employee Services at the District Office.

Interviews will take place during July- October 2025.

Although the researcher is employed by the school district, this study is being conducted solely in her capacity as a student researcher. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and your decision to participate or not participate will have no effect on your

employment status, professional evaluations, or access to any district services or resources. The researcher does not supervise or evaluate teachers and will not inform your school administrators of your participation.

All data collected will be used strictly for academic research purposes and will not be shared with district personnel. Every effort will be made to protect your privacy and ensure your confidentiality throughout the research process.

Please email [XXXXXX](#) to let the researcher know of your interest.

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

### **Research Interview Protocol**

Thank you again for being willing to participate in my research study about the perceptions of classroom teachers in Coastal South Carolina School District regarding their experiences with the employer-provided afterschool childcare to better understand the significance of this service on teacher retention. For this study, you are asked to share your experience and perceptions of this employer-provided service as a strategy for teacher retention.

As a reminder, this study is a part of my doctoral studies as a PhD student at Walden University and is not affiliated with my professional role as the Director of Employee Services at Coastal South Carolina School District. I want to remind you that this study is being conducted solely in my capacity as a student researcher. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and your decision to participate or not participate will have no effect on your employment status, professional evaluations, or access to any district services or resources. As you recall, you provided consent via email, identifying that you have been informed about this study and any potential risks associated with the study. If, at any point, you no longer choose to participate in this research study, you can withdraw your consent.

This research interview should last approximately 30-60 minutes and is being audio recorded. To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you. All the data that is collected will be used strictly for academic research purposes and will not be shared with district personnel. I will make every effort to protect your privacy and ensure your confidentiality throughout the process. You may notice at some points during the interview that I am taking notes and may not be looking at the camera. This is my attempt to capture any pertinent information regarding this interview and the qualitative study that I am conducting.

Once we have completed this interview, I will have an opportunity to review and edit to ensure that the transcription occurred correctly. I will email you a copy of the summary of our interview for you to review, to ensure that I have summarized the interview accurately. If you would like, I can also provide you with a copy of my final study.

Before we proceed, do you have any questions for me? If not, I will jump right into the interview questions.

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

- Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?
- What level do you currently serve? Pre-K & Elementary School? Middle School? High School?
- How many children do you have enrolled in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program?
- What grades are those students enrolled in?
- How many years have they been enrolled in the employer-provided afterschool childcare program?
- What were your afterschool childcare needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?
- What kinds of stress or difficulties did this create in your work or personal life?
- How did you first hear about the free afterschool childcare service provided by the district?
- What were your initial thoughts?
- Can you describe your experience using the childcare service, or what you've observed if you haven't used it yourself?
- In what ways has it met or not met expectations?"
- In what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or ability to stay focused at work?
- How has the availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if at all?
- Would you consider it a reason to stay or just something you expect to be available?"
- Do you think this support service impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?
- Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues—either in terms of retention, morale, or daily work experience?
- Have others said they'd leave if the service ended?
- What suggestions would you offer for improving the childcare service, or for adding other supports that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with the afterschool childcare service or its role in supporting teacher retention?

## Appendix D: Interview Transcripts

**Participant #1 Transcript**

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** This is my 18th year at the district, and I am an art teacher at an elementary school. And I've been at this school for 16 years. And I was previously at another elementary school for two before that.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** I actually didn't have any childcare needs, because I didn't have any children at the time, so it was perfect. Actually, I think the first year that they provided childcare was the COVID year, right? And that was the first year that my daughter was in kindergarten. And I didn't need it before then. I mean, just because she wasn't in school. I went ahead... I did not need any, so I was good. I was perfect.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** Well, initially, the childcare at my school was actually in my classroom. So, they just used my space. I wasn't the person. I kind of ended up being the person, somehow. But I remember they just told us, you know, all kids come to the room at 2:45, and then as teachers were released from their duties, they needed to come get their kids as soon as possible.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** Well, that first year, just... I know it was crazy. It was... it was awesome, though, to be able... since my daughter was there, and ... it was nice just to not have them have to sit, you know, somewhere for a little bit, you know, on the floor with the bus riders or something, you know. And that there were eyes on them. And then the next year. Okay, so she would have been in first grade then, so it wasn't her... it wasn't kindergarten. So, yeah, so she went in first grade, and then she was in second. And, that was when it was free. I really enjoyed, obviously, having her be in a place after school, so I could, you know, do my duties, if necessary. And not have to rush from my duty, and it was... it's just really nice to be able to not have to rush and go grab her if I had things to do in my classroom. Especially the beginning of the year, when I'm... Really trying to get stuff done, and it's very difficult, obviously, with children in my room, to try to get things done, you know? Even though my children are pretty well-behaved, it's still a distraction, and so that was... that was nice, just to be able to go and do that. So she participated in... for 3 years, I guess it would have been. And then last year was the first year, I did not have her in it, because I also have a son that was here, and he started pre-K, so I would have had to pay for both of them. And I was not able to do that, so....

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work? And I think you kind of went into it a little bit.** Yeah, kind of all over the place. That's okay. I just think it's hard for me to do anything in my classroom or feel focused, after hours, when they're with me. I am a single mom, so I don't have funds, you know, to pay for it, and for them to go to another place. And I do have family that helps me out a lot, so I am very blessed to have that, but still, I... you know, if I do have things to do, I don't want them to come to get them just because of that. I need to kind of save them for bigger things that I need help with. So it's the money, you know, and just being a single mom and trying to get stuff done after work is stressful, knowing that I'm not gonna get this stuff done at home, you know, because, I mean, being the... I don't know if I can say that I'm the... what position I am, can I say that? Okay, being the

art teacher, a lot of my stuff, you know, prepping is... a lot of it... a lot of the material is here, you know, not stuff that I can take home, grade papers, things like that.

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** It hasn't... it hasn't made me want to leave, I definitely can say that. Now, my satisfaction with it, you know, is another story. I mean, I wish it was different options, at least, for it. I think it's wonderful that they even provided it before, and it's great that there is that, too, for, you know, the teachers that are able or needing to... to take advantage of the program.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** I wish it was available to teachers for free. I know money is a big thing, but also, like with our pay, it's hard to make those payments, you know. You know....

**Q7 Follow-up: Can I follow up on that? Are you saying that you wish it were still available at no cost?** Obviously, yes, I wish there was that. But, I wish there were some other options as far as, you know, like, I don't stay late. Often throughout the year, or even need to if it was just, like, and I don't even know how this would be logistically possible, but, like, you know have kind of a drop-in thing, hey, I need 2 days this week, or, you know, and I don't know how that work... would even work with, like, staffing. Or if, you know, you would lose people that are paying full, you know, for the full thing. And I... that would be something that probably isn't great either, but it would just be nice not having to pay for the whole week. Sure. You know, the whole time, when I'm not needing that. You know, if they were at another school, you know, obviously, I would need that, because I'm not, you know, like, the middle school and high school teachers. And I feel bad, you know, for them, because they have to pay for that, they don't have another option, but I also know that it's cheaper than afterschool programs elsewhere. I just wish there were other options, I suppose. Yeah, I mean, if I could afford it, I would definitely do it. I do also not keep them in there because it's not as... they don't enjoy it as much. I think that it's changed since it's become Epic, it's just a little different, you know, and I know that it has to be, it has to be handled a certain way. I think just the after school thing, at least from my daughter's perspective, because she had it before. She had the, you know, the other years of it more relaxed, kind of... just kind of play, I would say. You know, it's just, you know, and when they don't want to go, you know, then I feel bad. I don't want to pay for it, and, you know, so. Well, so they go, you know, like, they go to, like, where the staff kids go right now, and, like, it she kind of, like, sees where they go, you know, like, what those kids do after 3 o'clock or whatever time. And she doesn't really enjoy it, but she's also a 5th grader, and a lot of the kids are younger, so I mean, my son would love it. He would love anything.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** I think the fact that they provide it is... is wonderful in itself. I do wish that it was more affordable, and that just... that's coming from my standpoint. I know people can't afford it, but from my standing, I can't afford it. I wish I could, because I would definitely take advantage of it, I just wouldn't... I wouldn't every day, you know? So that's why, like, it's not worth it, because I don't need it that much. Like, here and there, I would love to use it. No, I mean, like, for me, like, the whole first week of school, I just need to, you know, not run out of here at 3 o'clock and, you know, grab my kids and have them in my room right away. And, you know, there's just some days where I need to be after school longer and just get some things done, and I don't know, like, my kids are in here right now, and I'm, you know, it's just I'm not in that headspace of getting things done and....

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** I've noticed my friends that work at the middle school and

high school, they were not happy with having to pay. You know, they have to, so they understood, but, I felt bad for them for that. I know I would feel the same way in a reverse position. I do know a couple teachers that take advantage of it here, and they love it. They're able to, you know, get things done after school, and do what they need to do, and know that their kids are in a safe place here. It's nice knowing that they're here, too, you know, not having to go somewhere. But I... and my friends that would... are kind of in the same boat as me, that would like to be able to kind of, like, do the drop-in thing. It has been frustrating. We've discussed our frustrations on how nice it would be just to, like get things done, like, for my professional, you know.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** No.

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** I do know that at my school, after the staff kids kind of leave, like, that aren't, you know, in the EPIC program, they kind of go in with the other students, I believe. And I do know that's beneficial. I don't know, because I don't know much about it now, since I haven't done it. Not that it needs to be fun, but, you know, and I know, like I said, it has to be a certain way because of the DSS and everything. It's just, I don't want it to be a place that my kids don't want to go, either, you know? Just because they have to go, because mom needs to get done. I mean, but that's you know, like, if I could do it, they're gonna go. But, you know, I also don't want them to be unhappy, so if, you know, I go and get them quickly, and... and whatnot.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** Yeah, so that's the thing, is I don't think anybody would actually leave if it wasn't provided. I mean, if the people that do need it, they're gonna find something. It's great that it is provided, but personally, I don't think that it would be a reason for a teacher to... to want to leave. I mean, I also can't speak from somebody who has to have it. So, you know, a middle school or high school teacher. Yeah, I can't speak for them, but I can imagine that would be stressful.

**Participant #2 Transcript**

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** Absolutely. So, my current role is as a lead district mentor teacher. What that means is that I still am technically a teacher on a teacher schedule, teacher salary, teacher contract hours, but I go into the classrooms and work with our first and second year teachers. We serve pre-K through high school, but I focus primarily on early childhood and elementary educators.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** So, prior to this being provided, I have a child in 5th grade and 3rd grade, so it was quite stressful. My spouse is a firefighter, so they work 24-hour shifts, which made it very tricky on days where they were on shift, and I had to pick my children up. They were in daycare, or afterschool care at the time, at a different facility than where I teach or taught, and so it would be a challenge trying to pick them up before the daycare closed, especially when I had, back-to-school night, meet the parents, field trips, things like that. You know, it definitely became trying to coordinate and rely on other people around me to help. So, the... yeah, that was tough. Definitely need strong community support.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** So I believe when I first heard about it, it came out as a district-wide email, and I was sitting in the office with my mentoring team, and I remember reading it and saying, is this true? Are we getting this? And another co-worker also has children, school-aged children, and she was like, I think so! And we were thrilled. At that time, it was completely paid for. And so I clicked the link and immediately signed up. I said yes. I think I even sent an email saying, thank you for working hard for this, because it was such a game changer not having to worry about that stress.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** Absolutely. So, in my experience, it's at the child's home school, so my children go to school and they stay there, which is, in my mind, fantastic. It's been a huge benefit in multiple ways. We sign up for them to go every day that's available. Not only is it more convenient for me, because I'm working, my husband's working, but it's also great for them. They've really loved going. It's a lot of the same kids, so they get a relationship with them. Not only that, but the staff that works with them, they adore. So, it's been great. One of the teachers that works with them even did, like, made picture frames for all the kids with pictures and snapshots throughout, so it does my heart good to know that they're happy, you know. As a matter of fact, they tell me, you can't pick me up until 4.30. We do... we do recess. You can't pick me up yet. So I have a timeline where I'm allowed to pick them up, because I just have so much fun there.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** Multiple ways. So, as far as my job satisfaction, it's helped me be able to do a little better with my time management. Because I'm not scrambling trying to get through the car line. I get to stay and actually help my teachers. And elementary planning time is staggered, and so I can stay until 3, 3.15. I can stay after school with my teachers. And I don't feel guilty helping them set up their classroom until 3.30, 3.45, because my kids, not only are they safe and taken care of, but they're happy, and they want to stay there. I don't know if this is a part of this question, but at the school they're at, they also offer clubs and activities. And it's great because it doesn't matter if one does a club and one doesn't, they both can stay. So, it's really made that much smoother as well. I now can build that time where, because my kids would get out the

same time my teachers did, now I can come home, I get home around 3, 3.15, and I can answer all my emails, send emails, you know, anything extra that I need to work on. I have until about 4 or 4.30 until I need to go get them, so that's really helpful.

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** Absolutely. So I genuinely love my job, but I will say it was a huge, contributor to my overall job quality, having that, because it's consistent every day, and I didn't have to worry about transportation, calling the mother-in-law, having the third and fourth and fifth emergency contacts, which, again, if we're all teachers, it gets really tricky having people on your emergency contact list to do a pickup if something goes wrong. So it's been really nice having that there, and knowing that it's consistent, and that the kids are happy and supported.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** Oh, that's tough. As much as I do think it's something that should be available, I think that child care should be readily available in this country. I absolutely think that it's realistic to understand that that's not the case everywhere, and it is a big contributor in why people should stay in this district.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** Absolutely. We're educators, and that is a majority of people who care about children. A lot of people in the field of education have children, in some capacity, and so I think hearing that and honoring that and hearing the struggles of people trying to find childcare, not only the time and the facilities, which in our area, we are very lacking in childcare facilities. But also the money that comes with it, because I think it's very affordable at \$25 a week now. It's manageable to do, especially compared to other child care facilities. So it does show, in my opinion, that the district cares about its teachers, its employees, enough to say, hey, we hear this is a concern, here's what we can do.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** Yeah, absolutely. Again, I do work with a lot of new teachers, but that means teachers new to the profession, not necessarily brand new, young. So a lot of teachers I work with have children, and I know that that's been a piece of why they stay. As a matter of fact, at new employee orientations, we talk about offering, childcare in some capacity, and that's definitely something that we get a lot of questions about. And it's nice to have that answer readily available that, yes, there is childcare, and it's at your child's school. I know that's been a big help for a lot of young teachers and new teachers to the profession.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** I don't know that I've heard people specifically say if this service ends, I'll leave in an angry way, but I do know I've heard people say that... that the financial aspect of it is... is part of what keeps them in, if that makes sense.

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** That's tough. I mean, I I think that it's already been improved. Streamlining with taking out of paychecks now has been really helpful. It already provides snacks. Maybe if I don't know if this is at every school, but I know our school, they have, like, a set schedule. Where they have their snack time, homework time, you know, extracurricular time. I don't know if the whole program has a set schedule, but that might be nice. And

then I don't know what it looks like in middle school. I think it's offered to 8th grade. Yeah, but I don't know if... if... is it the same price in 6th through 8th grade? Okay, so if, if it could be improved on, maybe it would not be as expensive for 6th to 8th grade because the time is shorter? They, they get out of school later? I do, I do, because they get out, you know, essentially an hour later, and then trying to get to wherever their child is, it's necessary. There's really not much else they can do.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** No

**Participant #3 Transcript**

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** I am a biology teacher, and I've worked in the district. This is going on my sixth year. I serve high school.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** Before the child care services, one of the schools set up where they had, where my kids were able to be watched by one of the employees who volunteer to watch the students, well, watch my kids along with some other kids, within the district to help us, you know, being that they got out before we did. In the beginning, when I first came, before the actual child care, I was a little nervous, because being that they were getting out an hour before, I was trying to, you know, with me having classes during that hour span of them being out, I was kind of worried about, will they always be constant, or, you know, who's going to watch them, how they're gonna get bussed over? But the school actually, you know, showed that also that, you know, we all work in the same district. They kind of started making me feel uncomfortable and actually having some consistency with, you know, that person who wanted to dedicate their time in working with the kids. And then later on, that's when the district, you know, did the, you know, came in with the aftercare. So it was kind of like the same thing that that particular school made available, which made me feel comfortable.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** Actually, it was from you all, from you all, when you sent the email. It really made me felt happy because, you know, it is good for people to volunteer their time, but you know, and even though that school gave, you know, as a volunteer, you wasn't sure when it would ever end, so that would have been, like, the major concern that I had, but knowing that now that it was now structured and actually being given, you know, throughout that made it a little bit, you know, solid, that definitely made me felt really good, that to know that there was definitely some, you know, assurance that my child will be you know, there, and taken care of.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** I love it. The talking part's the epic part, I love it. The people that's placed in there, they do a really good job with my kids, as well as I can see. Other kids, they do, you know, they don't mind helping with the homework and making sure the kids get their homework done and, you know, some kind of snack before the parents come pick them up and ensure that the kids are definitely being taken care of. And the definitely main thing is, like, they step in and help with the work. Being that the kids are out, they definitely help to make sure that all their work are complete before they leave to come, you know, before the parents pick them up.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** So far, they have exceeded my expectation, like I said, because, you know, when you say aftercare, a lot of kids just look at it as, or people look at it as, oh, you know, it's just babysitting. But they go up and beyond expectation and helping with, or, you know, and I love, like, definitely at a particular school that my kids... my kids go to, the person that works there, she not only helped feel safe, if they feel like they need to express something. It makes them feel like that's their little safe haven spot, that they have somebody else that they can go to besides a teacher, or if they need their person to come talk to me. Like, my daughter would have been

like, hey, can you help me explain this to my mom if this and that? So it kind of it makes you feel like family, because now you got that little intermediate, you know, that person that'll be like a go-to if your child feel like oh, I need this. So they find somebody, that person, who can help break it down to their parents of making them get that confidence to feel like, hey, I can tell them this or that.

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** No ma'am, it hasn't affected me at all. If anything, it makes me feel comfortable. Okay. And especially this year, with my daughter, you know, going to a different, you know, moving on up from graduating from elementary, they even got to the point where, they help out in areas like that, too, just in case in the beginning, so I definitely appreciate everything. Yes, ma'am, because it's nothing like having a job that supports you. You know, they're not saying you winging on it, or you know, get it done however you get it done. It's not our concern. It's good when you're working with an area or with a company or district that cares not only about you, but also, you know, your kids as well.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** Well, being that I do not live here, I commute from a different county, that definitely made a major difference. Being that now my kids go to two separate schools now, it definitely helped with that decision of knowing that at least I know that, you know, within this hour that my kid's still in school, I don't have to worry about, oh, are they okay? Are they taken care of? Are the homework done? So it definitely made a definitely impact on that about making the decision of staying also with the district, but I love the working, you know, I love what I do here regardless, but it has made it easier to say, I know this is where I want to come back to, along with the help with my children. I wouldn't say I would expect it to be available, because that's a courtesy, and that it shows that who you work for care about more than just you. And that is definitely a plus. But it definitely helps make the decision easier because, you know, most people stay here in the county. But as a parent and an employee for the district that live outside the county, it definitely is a major factor, and that.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** Yes, because you... this... this is like the Bloom Taxonomy when we teach the kids about priorities. You gotta have safety first. I can't do my job if I feel like I'm concerned about my kids, my own personal kids. I'm here with other people's kids, but as a mother, you know, if I'm concerned about my children, I don't think I can deliver a good job if I'm stressed about my own.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** So far, with my colleagues, a lot of them have positive, you know, same-as-I-do experience, even though they live here in the county, I have not heard, honestly, anything bad about the program. They enjoy the fact, too, because, you know, sometimes work run over, you may have to tutor, you may have to extra grade, and they feel that, you know, that gives them that. And some parents just need it, you know, just to... like, as me, sometimes even if I don't have paperwork or grades or tutoring. Knowing that your child is safe, from that 4 to 5.30, you can kind of decompress, get your mind together to go, you know, grab them, because dealing with your kids at school all day, then you have to go home to your own kids all day. At least you get that hour,

even if you want to run to the grocery store or anything. You get that sense of, whew, I can, you know, at least breathe for a second.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** No, no ma'am, I honestly did not.

**Q11: Do you think that there are any other supports that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** Well, right now, definitely for the childcare, it's awesome. You know, it's hard, you know, like I said, with kids constantly all day, and then worrying about your own, so honestly, I think that is already... that's a major plus, because some districts don't have that. And so, honestly, I think it's, you know, it's... I guess you can never get comfortable with just being satisfied, but to say that it decreased the worry, you know, if you worry it. And sometimes you gotta know when you do have it good. And so, you gotta respect the fact that anything you can always improve a lot of things, but that's one thing that really... it sits well. It works well. I think within the district being here, I think a lot of the stuff is already being offered, like, if you need therapy session, you got that to do. I love the fact that here at our school, you know, they always, even with the administration here, they always try to do, like, you know, like, self-care. They stress self-care. You know, that's the biggest thing that I, as far as teacher-wise goes self-care, how a lot of teachers, you know, biggest thing is balancing your personal life with professional life. And they always give me, you know, y'all provide where we do have personal days, if we need those 5 days to get that, so I think basically, the necessary needs to help us do our job is available.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** Please keep it, I love it.

**Participant #4 Transcript**

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** I am a middle school theme teacher, and I have been in the district for 12 years. Middle school.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** At the time, before it started, I had one child, and at the time, luckily, before it started, she was a toddler. By the time she started going to school, the program had already started.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** I believe I first heard about it via email. Actually, I think the first year, my daughter was 3, so she couldn't participate. So, I remember, like, being excited, waiting for her, so I... that would be, like, a burden lifted off of us once she started school.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** It makes the whole process easier, because now my daughter gets out of school an hour prior to the time that my school dismisses, so it's roughly an hour to an hour and a half difference, and with me not having family here, and my in-laws being deceased, it's really hard. We don't have, like, the support of anyone to go pick her up when need be, or to keep her after school, so at least that's one thing that I don't have to worry about. I know exactly where she is. The cost is very reasonable. So we don't have to worry about trying to figure out our schedules or me changing jobs in order to make sure I'm able to pick her up from school.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** My daughter was the only child for 5 years. I just recently had another daughter, and she's very attached to us. So, for me and my husband, it's extremely important that wherever she is, that she feels safe. Being able to allow her to stay at her school that she actually loves, even if it's only for an hour or two extra while I continue working, and I don't have to worry about how she feels emotionally, is a burden lifted off of me. I don't have to worry about rushing when I get off of work, or wondering if she's safe, because I know that she is.

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** I haven't seen any other districts [offer this]. If they do offer this, I haven't seen it publicized. So, for me, my children are my biggest priority, and I wouldn't want to move or go anywhere where that's going to affect them. So, as of right now, like, we're good here, we're good with the program, and it works for our family.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** I would definitely consider this as a reason to stay if you have kids. Younger kids, especially.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** Yes, because it pays attention to the fact that a lot of us are parents, and we can't do the job we need to do as teachers if we don't know that our children are safe outside of the building, or

have a safe place to go. And around here, childcare is limited. So, it's good to not have to be in that fight, or on that waitlist, and wondering how you're going to do both, be a parent and a teacher.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** Actually, this summer, while we were waiting to hear back, one of my colleagues is not from this area, but her daughter does go to school here, and she's a single parent. So, I just remember in our constant conversations. Her being worried about if the program did not continue what she would do, because her child comes first, and having to feel like if it doesn't continue, she may have to choose. Going somewhere else where her family is closer, so that she could have that support, as opposed to staying here and not knowing where her child was, or even being able to find anywhere for her child to go after school.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** No

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** I know it's, like, a case-by-case and school-by-school basis. The only complaint is it the program at my daughter's school doesn't seem as structured in terms of what she's doing while she's there. It had more structure, like. Some of the... well, not... not the school provided, but, like, daycare provided afterschool programs, where there was, like, a certain time frame that the kids read or played then I think that would be a little better, because it would kind of alleviate what's left to do once we get home, if I still have to do homework.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** No, the only thing else I would share is I do appreciate the fact that y'all have started the payroll deduction

### Participant #5 Transcript

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** I am a classroom teacher. This is my 10<sup>th</sup> year in the school district. And I work at a high school. I've spent all those 10 school years at a high school.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** Well, my son's school got out before my school got out, so it was quite challenging. Even though we were in close proximity, it was quite challenging to be able to secure him, and I'm still working. So, his school did have an afterschool program, but as a single parent, it was a little challenging to be able to afford said afterschool program. It was very stressful, especially when I first got to the district. My son was very young, so of course he definitely needed childcare. And the financial strain was a little difficult. I felt like I was, like, always rushing, you know, around to try to figure something out. And, you know, his school was great, you know, he had a great school, but, I mean, I had to make sure that he was secure after school, so it was very stressful to me.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** Well, the district sent out, notification to everyone, which I thought was fantastic, and just offered the services, and I was very elated because not only would it help financially, that was my biggest concern, the financial relief, but it would still be at his school, so I didn't have to worry about, like... because I was like, oh, is it going to have to be, like, special locations? The fact that they had it at every school, I thought was very fantastic, because I didn't have to worry about shifting him around someplace else, or anything like that. He could kind of still stay in the groove, but I didn't have to worry about him.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** It was very seamless. It was very, very seamless because, once I got the notification, the email, there was a very simple form that had to be filled out to, like, say, yes, I wanted to take part in this. And I thought that the district did a fantastic job of just kind of getting the information to the school. I didn't have to do a whole lot. Luckily for me, his school also, I think, is a good job of knowing their kids and parents and stuff like that. So, the transition was really easy for me, and then I didn't have to worry about paying the money, because that was an additional like, a couple hundred dollars, two, three hundred dollars a month that I could keep in my pocket. So the process was very easy. One of the concerns I did have, and it wasn't concerning enough for me to not have him go, but I do understand that to provide something like that for free is a lot. And so, the students that were in the free program, kind of were separated from the school's regular afterschool program. And initially, that wasn't a big deal to me, because I understand that, you know, there's a cost and effect to things, so that's a big thing that the district was offering for free, so they probably had to provide, you know, the supervision any way they can. And then I learned that the staff that was staffing the program, I think, was, like, subs, ESS, which was fine to me, because those are the same folks that provide supervision during the day in school, so that was fine to me. But it was different. As I talked to my son, and as he was going through it, you know, it's like they did different things than the other kids. They didn't always do some of the other things, like going outside or not, or... it was, like, little small things. We got through it, it wasn't as big of a deal to me because my main focus was his safety, and then I know he was well taken care of. So I never thought he wasn't

safe, and I didn't, you know, I knew he was protected. But that was probably one of the small things that I just wasn't expecting, the separation of the regular afterschool program. Yeah, I feel like it would have been really nice if they did do homework, and I'm saying because, you know, the cost, but it would have been nice if it was a way that the kids could have still stayed in the schools after school, because that was staffed by teachers and staff that work in the building, and they know and they see every day. So he went from being in a room with one of his previous teachers, someone he knew, to one he didn't know, and I do think it was a different component, because I think they did, like they were just outside the whole time, or they were just in the gym, or just in one spot or something, and not really working on homework and stuff like that. Now, me personally, I'm one of them parents that, even if you work at the homework at the after school, you're gonna pull it out at the house, too. So, it wasn't a huge problem for me, because I want to check the check anyway.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** I think for one, the ability to stay focused at work is the easiest thing to answer. You know, a lot of staff in the district have children that go to school in the district, and it can get a little challenging sometimes when you are not able to wear your parent hat at times when you want to, or where you feel like you need to. And it's mentally, sometimes, can be a lot when you have to put someone else's child above your own. But I think that when the district does things like this. It makes us feel seen and heard as parents. I think there are a couple, actually, different initiatives that the districts do that make me feel seen and heard as a parent. Like, I understand that you work as a professional in our school district, but we understand and appreciate, and we're going to respect the fact that you're a parent first. And I think when they push out initiatives like this, because when I first started, and my son was going and I had to pay for that childcare, it really was a strain for me, because when I first came to this school district, I took a pay cut, so I was very tight on my budget anyway. And I'm blessed and fortunate now, for, you know, the positions that I'm in right now, but in the earlier days, it was a little tight, and so it really made me feel like, hey, we understand, you know what I mean? Because his school was so close by, you know, some days, he was barely at the after school an hour, so to have to pay all that money, it was kind of a little bit of a strain to me, but when they rolled out this initiative, it was just like, we understand, and there was other staff in my building, other teachers, going through the same thing, you know. We are all rushing out the parking lot on two wheels, trying to get to our children. You know, I had family support, but some of them didn't.

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** I think on a grand scheme, yes, when the district does initiatives like this. I think it, like I said, it makes you feel seen and heard, and it makes you feel like, you know, this is a district that values your time and values you as a professional, and not just a professional, but as an individual, you know what I'm saying? And so, yes, it does make you want to stay, because it's just like, you know, I know that if there's some challenges or hardships. This is not a cutthroat district, you know what I mean? Like, I have resources, I have folks that I can go to, you know, things come up, you know, we have other supports. I know we have different mental health supports. That was huge, I thought, to me, because that just shows that we're not just a machine. They don't take us as just, you know, we're not just workers, I guess.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** Oh, yes, absolutely. It does, it does, make you feel valued, because, like I said, you don't feel like you're just a worker, or like you're just an output machine. You feel like the district is saying, like, hey, we understand.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** The challenge is we understand that we have a lot of parents that are working in our school buildings. We want to make sure we provide supports for our, you know, teacher parents, you know, our staff parents. So yes, I do think it makes you feel supported.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** I definitely think morale and daily work experience. I did a shout the other morning when I went in there to try to pay for the week, and a colleague of mine, he used to work at my school, he was like, oh no, district employees don't pay, and I shouted, because... and it's not a lot, it's not a lot. Right. It's very minimal. But any savings is important. And then it also makes me feel like, once again, like, we got you. We are in this thing together, we understand, we got you. And that is a message that is it is very important, I think, for staff, but it's also it's powerful, because it makes you want to go harder for a district that you feel is going hard for you.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** I haven't necessarily heard anyone say that they were going to leave if the program didn't exist. I have heard people express concern and worry and fear if they had to go back to paying. I have experienced that I don't know about the actual saying that they would leave us, but the morale, definitely, because it gives you a sense of a little bit of peace. And I don't even know if this is the same thing, but, I recently discovered, because I had to drop my son off before school, so I can get to school on time, but his before-school care, that's free to employees, too. Blew my mind. Didn't know that!

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** If it's possible to kind of keep... so it's not that separation. I think that if the kids are, you know, can stay in the schools, I don't want to say regular, but already streamlined after school. If there's a way to do that, then I think that would be more beneficial for the kids, so they don't feel so separated and nothing wrong with the ESS staff, because they do great throughout the day, but I think it'd be better for them to be with staff that they are already accustomed to, and some of the ESS staff they are accustomed to. But I think if that could just kind of be a together thing, then I think that would be better. I also think that and this is just something I'm experiencing recently with one of my coworkers. Maybe when new staff are coming, faculty are coming to the area, to be able to provide some type of support those who have to transition. And I'm gonna be honest, I don't know exactly what that would look like, but I have one of my colleagues now that is fantastic, 17 years of education. Her husband just moved down here on a whim from Vermont with two children, and that's a lot of transition in itself, right? The son is having some challenges, he's sixth grade, that's the start of middle school, all these different things, but that's just a hard transition for families and parents, and I see at times it's hard for her throughout the day to keep her staff hat on when she's trying to balance her mama hat. So, I don't know if that's like a welcome to the district, parents, I don't know what that is, but I feel like and the school's being supportive, and

she's leading into her resources. I told her I'm a local, so you could ask me anything. I try to put her all in the right direction. I think she's doing a fantastic job, but I do see that if someone comes here, because this is a different area, I think, you know, would be good to kind of get them plugged in early. Like, here are your resources for various things, you know what I'm saying? But, but yeah.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** No, I think we covered everything. I just wanted to make one comment about the teacher retention. I think that's a multi-level situation. I think that is a thing that probably takes a lot of moving parts, and it's a couple different things that have to come with that, but even though I can't definitively say, like, oh, this is definitely what keeps someone, I think it's definitely a part of the recipe. You see what I'm saying? Like, there's gonna be multiple things to keep someone retained, but programs like this is definitely a part of the recipe. So I think that's important to point out.

### Participant #6 Transcript

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** I've been with the district for over 15 years as a teacher.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** Before care and aftercare.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** Staff meetings, like, just trying to, you know, get to school and get the child on time. Elementary got out an hour earlier. **Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** I think it was an email. I was super excited, I loved it. Absolutely loved it. So that was a little difficult. Actually, I felt appreciated, I was thankful, and I was grateful.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** It met all of my expectations. The time until 5.30 was wonderful, and actually, you know, some days when I was able to get my child before that time, I did. So, you know, and I know, especially on Fridays, you know, everybody wanted to be off way before 5. And I know if I could help with the worker there, because she was a district employee also, so I would go and get my baby, and it was beneficial to everyone. I loved it, and so, again, I enjoyed it, and my child loved it also.

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** I felt that because I knew where my child was in the afternoon, and it gave me a sense that I could breathe a little, like, exhale. And it was easy, I could shoot an email to that person, and I... it was an easy contact for me. If I needed something, it made it very easy for me to get into contact with my child, so I was very comfortable, versus trying to go through hoops to get my child, like, if it was a different, you know, caregiver, a different establishment.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** I guess I never thought of it like that, but it could go together. I would consider a reason to stay.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** It actually does. It does. And I think because... You really don't... it actually you know, one doesn't look for... and I'm not saying anyone looks for handouts, I'm not saying that the district has to do things, but it actually makes you feel that I feel valued. I feel that, you know, my district really appreciates me, you know, even though I am working and they are paying me, they are, because my check is my reward. But they actually feel that I'm worth this extra little benefit. I'm valued. That's what I'm looking for.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** It has, because those of us, you know, with the younger children, we weren't going anywhere. We weren't going anywhere because the daycare cost now, in

2025, is ridiculous. Cost, and the waitlist some places, you know, is just ridiculous. So, cost is number one.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** No

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** My honest opinion, I and some of the other parents, we absolutely love it again, when it was free. Man, we didn't have to pay anything, if it could go back to that. I understand, you know, we don't know the back end and how it was ran, or grants, whatever, we don't know any of that stuff. We don't know how it was provided, or any of that stuff, but we just would love for it to go back to that, you know.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** I don't find any issues with how it's ran now with everything in place now, no faults. I've had an awesome time, with my services. My son, again, he enjoyed himself. I even had a grandson participate in the program, and they both enjoyed themselves.

### Participant #7 Transcript

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** I am a SPED teacher. I work with students with autism as well as intellectual disabilities, and I have been working in the classroom for a total of 33 years at the high school.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** Oh, it was inconsistent, I must say, because I live in another county, and I was extended employee courtesy for my grandkids to come to school here. And it was just all I can say is inconsistent. I was really worried all the time. When I had a faculty meeting, I had to pick them up, bring them over, and they stayed in my classroom with me. I did look into other places, but they were less affordable, for me. So I was kind of stressed out between me and my husband. He would leave work earlier to come over here and pick them up if I had, for example, like, open house or something. He would come get them, and then, you know, I was assured that they were okay because he was with them, but it was really stressful, you know, trying to find someplace that was affordable and that was, nearby.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** Well, that was one day I actually read an email, and this was just, like, a game changer for me, because when I read the email, I couldn't believe it. It said it provided services Monday through Friday from 2.45 to 4.45 p.m, and also it provided services on professional days, so this was just like an answer for me. An answer to my prayers, actually.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** Well, it has met all of my expect... well, it has met the majority of my expectations, and the reason I say that I don't have to worry about if, for example, I have a faculty meeting or a Zoom meeting. A lot of times I had, within my department, I may have had a meeting, and they were in here with me, and it was like, be quiet, sit down, do this, but I had to you know, provide snacks or something for them, and I really couldn't focus my attention on what I was doing. So, to have this program, it was an asset to me. One thing that I... and I don't know if I'm jumping ahead, but my grandson has asthma, and one day he was a little... he'd been outside playing, and because the office was closed. It's fortunate that I had one in my car. So, it was just making sure that someone there would have access to get into the nurses office. If he had had a serious attack, but the lady knew what was going on. Not the lady, the staff knew what was going on, so she was able to have him sit down and just, you know, relax for a while and call. And I was able to come over, no problem. But, just knowing, having that peace of mind that I could attend a meeting and not worry about what they were doing, where they were, if they were doing their homework. So that was a relief for me.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** I know where they are, I know that they are in capable hands, I know that their homework was what I really appreciate, the first thing, they have to do their homework. And so, this was an asset to me, because if I had to stay here to 4:45 or 4:30, then I know that the homework was done, and I didn't have to rush home and try to make sure that, I saw that they got their homework done

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** You know, knowing that I have a place for them. It's right across from where I work. It's really been a piece of mind to me. It's really made me feel like the district is concerned about me. Because taking on, you know, additional responsibility of your grandkids, that was an added responsibility I wasn't expecting, you know, to have to deal with. So knowing that they're right across the street from me, and my husband had to leave his job and come here. He knew where to go. I didn't have to go to two, three different places, so it just really made me appreciative, more appreciative of the district, because, you know, you have other businesses that provide child care. And to think that this school provided it, it made it seem to me that it provided it just for me, and I know that wasn't the case, but that's how I feel about it.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** Well, for me, personally, because of the distance that I drive, I'm very comfortable where I am, and so, it would be reason for me to stay. And actually, I was offered another job somewhere else, but once again... and actually, it was a little bit closer to home, but I thought about, you know, I've been here, my grandkids are comfortable, they like the school, so for me, it will be to stay here.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** Yes it does. I feel valued and supported. Before my grandkids were coming, going to school here, I literally had to go, and I don't know if I can say this right now, talk with the Superintendent about something, and the fact that he sat there and listened to me and heard me. And next thing I know, it was not a problem. It was okay for my grandkids to come here. I filled out the necessary paperwork, and that in itself gave me a peace of mind. And, not having to worry about, as I said earlier, where they were, who, you know, if they got home safely and I wasn't there, you know, could I depend on my next-door neighbor to, to, you know take care of them. It's okay every once in a while to have to ask someone to do that, but to have to do that on a daily basis, I didn't feel comfortable doing that.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** Well, there are several teachers at my school that participate in this, and I will say this has been a blessing to one of the international teachers, because his daughter, goes to the elementary school with my grandkids, and I can't imagine what it's like coming to another country to worry about childcare, picking them up and the expense. I see him in the mornings most days, we meet each other at the school. You know, he can park at the high school, then walk to the elementary school with his daughter, or he parks here and walk and gets to take her over there. So for him, just seeing that and having that peace of mind is very comforting to him.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** No, I haven't heard... That, but I know it's a comforting fact to me that it's here.

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** I know one thing is about the medication. Having the staff there having access to the office, or even if I just know the student can't have medication on them, but some way of getting it to him if he needed it. And, I like the homework idea, the staff that were there with my grandkids, it was like, your homework first before you can play,

so that was good. And I don't know, if maybe we could, but if there was some, like, snacks that may have been provided, those are the only two things.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** I would just like to say this, even the staff, even though they have different staff. All of the staff was very cordial, and kids will tell you if something went wrong, or something happened. And the entire time, I didn't have my grandkids say anything negative about anyone in that program, and kids, I love them, because they're going to be honest, whether you like it or not. And so, that was very comforting, and for me, like I said, that peace of mind, having... knowing that they were nearby and they were well taken care of was so awesome, and I can say this is something I think they need to continue at all schools. I don't know if all schools provide this, but it's been awesome for me.

### Participant #8 Transcript

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** I've been in the district for 19 years. I served as a classroom teacher for 17 and a half, and moved into a support role last school year.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** My needs have always been the same. I have commitments from... school-related commitments. I don't know if you want me to name those, but I've been at schools where I've had afterschool requirements, like running a club, so I was... I did a running club, I've done sports commitments, where I'm supporting... I'm the liaison between dismissal and the beginning of sports in middle school. So, pretty much my entire career in Beaufort County, I've had personal children who are also students. Sometimes they're with me in the building, sometimes they're not, but, I need to bridge the space between when their school day ends and my work commitments end, and need help with that. So before the district offered anything like that. At one point, I was paying for my children to be at a different, like, a third party, another school that offered, like basically aftercare for any students, and my personal students were taking their bus there and waiting on me until I was finished with my workday. It's always been a logistics issue for me. If my student went to school with me that had challenges with, just depends on who's in charge, how your admin feels about kids in your office, kids unsupervised. And I'm a rule follower, so that I never wanted my kids to be treated unlike any other kids. I didn't want them to be special in any way in that regard, so if the direction was to send them to the media center, you know, in the mornings before, you know, school started because I needed to be out of duty, then that's what we did, but the stress of that would definitely... I would definitely say that there was stress, because it was just always managing trying to jump into your job while you're still trying to corral your own kids and figure out if everyone's where they need to be.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** Email. Yeah, no, we've done it the... anytime it's offered, I've done it because when it was free, that was great.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** So there's different phases. I mean, I feel like I could probably speak when it was free, and all the kids were together, the staff kids and kids who were just staying after school, my kids loved it because it was homework assistance, it was playground time, it was fun, and then when the policy went to splitting staff kids away from kids whose parents were paying a higher amount. That... that was challenging because I feel like my kids felt, if I'm being honest, my kids felt like the staff care was a lesser than. The other kids did more they got to go on the playground, and they did fun things, and sometimes the staff kids were just checking a box, so it wasn't as it wasn't as thought out. And I know that that depends on the building they're in and the people that are in charge, so I've kind of seen all aspects of it, really.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** In that regard, I have nothing but positive things to say about it. I mean, it... to know that my kid... my child has somewhere to be until I can get to her, you know, I never want to leave her longer than I have to, but I also know that she's taken care of and she's safe until I can get there, so that part makes me able to finish my day and really, where

she is now, she's doing the before care and the aftercare. So, just me getting her there and me picking her up, that's all I have to mentally you know, and physically do to then start my day. That's a whole lot better than the worry of, how's she getting home every day it's just easier to let that go, you know, to have a plan and stick with it, and if we need it that day, we use it. If we don't, we don't

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** It has impacted me. It's probably a neutral at this point, because the service that I need, and it will phase out, but I will say, and I think I could speak for others, it does give you the flexibility to know that you can exercise your right to opt-in, because otherwise, if you didn't have I mean, that would be a deterrent for using... for opting into a school if you had to rely on yourself for the bridging, you know, the time between, or the care. So in that regard, it opens your students up to having choices, so that's a positive for sure.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** No, I mean at this point, as long as I've been here, nothing's really gonna make me feel. I mean, it would take something really strong to make me say you know, I'm leaving because of this. But I think it's an asset. I mean, I think it's an asset for because, let's be real, new teachers are gonna be the ones that have little people, you know, like younger teachers need help, so I do. I mean, if I was starting out, that would be an asset to me to hear that this was a choice.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** I just think it... I think it plays a role in the overall satisfaction. I would say yes, overall yes.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** I think that it depends on how it is run. When it was free, I think it was great. When there's a fee, maybe not so much, but if there's a need, you're gonna use it no matter. So, morale I mean, sure, this year, with the policy change, with the, like, having your check deducted and all the things, I mean, it probably is easier to to streamline it, and to keep up with it, and to just check it off your box, but if you were asking me as, like, a younger mom, I would probably try to avoid using it, just because it sounds to me... if you ask me, signing up now, it sounds like a big commitment, like, I'm either all in or I'm not, instead of, like, let me see if I need this or not, or so that would be a deterrent, but overall, I think it's a positive.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** I haven't... I have not

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** well, obviously, if the costs were free, but... and I will say this, I know that when it was free, it was abused in some ways, and used as, you know, go run my errands and come back to school. So, I do know that nothing... no good intention and no good, you know, opportunity is gonna go without someone you know, finding a way to use it to their advantage, maybe outside of what it's intended, but I think if it ever became at no cost, that would be a huge selling point. I can't really offer any, like, insightful things beyond maybe making it more, you know, equal in terms of the two groups, But no, I can't really think of anything that.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** No, I mean, I'm appreciative of any... of any effort to make teachers feel supported. So, no, I would say thank you, thank you for putting it together.

### Participant #9 Transcript

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** Yes, I am a certified career and technical education teacher. I am also the career specialist, and I've worked with the district for 8 years, I was about to say 7 as a middle school classroom teacher and 1 year as classified staff.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** Before the service, I needed afterschool care for 3 children. Yes. I need it for 3 children, and it was difficult finding, childcare because I live outside of the school, the school district, so it was hard to try to find somewhere, somewhere that was affordable, and that I felt, comfortable having my children at, that they didn't have to be, transported to, or finding a way to get them there. Very stressful because of the transportation issue. Because I lived outside of the district, they couldn't ride the bus anywhere. I had to figure out how they were gonna get to the afterschool program, and again, not living here, I really didn't know anyone or any program, that I felt comfortable with. So it was stressful. I would say, like, if I had to rate the stress of finding somewhere for them to go after school, because they ended an hour before me, it would probably be, like, at least an 8 out of 10 for the level.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** I heard about it through my email, and I was ecstatic. I was... oh, I was so relieved! Oh my goodness, not only just having the at-the-school program that the district, was like, hey, you know, this is the service that we're gonna provide. I was like, perfect! It was also just the fact that my kids would be at the school, somewhere that I was comfortable with. Someone that I knew was safe, that I knew staff, there. Even if the staff wasn't there at the school, I knew if I could reach out to them, I knew people there. So, yes, it was great when I heard about it.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** Yeah, so I've used it from day one. As soon as it was provided, my kids were there. I think as far as meeting my needs, I think it has been exceptional for me. And like I said, I've had 3 children, go through the service, and, I think it has been really well in my experience. There are issues sometimes, like, I know my kids, they like to play with their, electronics, and they'll bring them, but it was just a simple conversation of, hey, you know, this can be a distraction, or we don't want to have to monitor them on this, or something like that, but these are things that are easily resolved because. I'll either talk to the staff, there's a handbook there, so I'm like, I read through everything, I know everything up front, they feel comfortable talking to me if there's ever any issues, so, I think it has definitely met, if not exceeded, my needs.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** Oh my goodness, it has definitely helped me stay more focused, because, like I said, I was stressed out trying to figure out where the kids were gonna go after school, that part, but also the affordability portion. Like, it has been so much more affordable. I don't think people realize just the amount that it is, and for the level of care that my kids receive, like, I'm able to provide a better person for my children, because of the weight of the finances. Like, childcare before was costing, for my three kids, like, \$210 a week. So, it has definitely been so

much of an alleviation of that burden financially, just the stress of knowing where they are, the people that they're with, so it has definitely impacted all of those pockets.

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** It definitely has impacted my decision to remain employed.

Because I have, children that are in elementary and middle school, and just the convenience of it, the affordability of it, the safety, the care of it, I feel like it weighs, you know, in the work-life balance of things, so that's a big priority on me choosing employment, so it has definitely been one of the branches, I would say it would probably be, like, in that top little 35% of my, yeah, decision.

**Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** Absolutely. We would expect to be available.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** Yes, I definitely think it has supported me as a professional, because... well, I'm a certified mentor, and one of the big things that we try to alleviate for teachers, especially new teachers, are the burdens of outside life affecting your professionalism in the building. And as a teacher, like I said, my stress level thinking about caring for my kids after school, because I was fine with them in school, but after school was a big factor, was a big issue, especially as a single parent. So I think that thinking of teachers and profession, of them in the profession trying to alleviate those burdens really speaks to trying to help them as professionals, because it's like, hey, one more thing off your plate to worry about, we have this, we just need you to now, you know, focus on being the best teacher you can, because we have you covered on that end.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** Oh, absolutely, we talk about it all the time. We're like, yes, because it's like, man, this is amazing, because I'll be honest, I've heard other staff members thinking about, you know, going to another district, and then when this program came, they were like, oh no, - we don't think any other school district is gonna do this. It has definitely changed minds, and it has retained, at least from the teachers that I've spoken to, it was a big factor that they have stayed.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** I've not heard that. If that particular service ended, I haven't heard that they would leave.

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** Hmm...as far as childcare, I can't think of anything else. Like I said, it has been covered after school. One of the things was professional days, and that's already covered for professional days. So I can't think of anything else. I personally think that some supports that would help teachers stay are just like I said, the child care is great because it's taking care of that personal alleviation for stress, just a mental health day. Like, our professional days are, yes, centered around instructional service support and helping our students, in the classroom. However, teachers are human, and sometimes, or no, excuse me, all the time, they need a PD to learn relaxation techniques, to learn how to take care of themselves, instead of always focus

on everyone else, because if a teacher were to be out, we will find another teacher. So we have to learn that they are human first, and to give them some other supports for their actual needs. So maybe, like, a PD day, where it's just a relaxation day. Bring in a masseuse, do something else for them.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** I think that's all.

**Participant #10 Transcript**

**Q1: Can you describe your current role as a classroom teacher and how long you've worked in the district?** I'm currently a school counselor. I've been in the school district for, I believe, 5 years now.

**Q2: What were your afterschool child care needs before the district began offering this employer-provided service?** I have two other children, one in middle school and high school, so my elementary student didn't have anyone to watch them after school, so I would have to try to outsource to a daycare. For him to go there, I would have to pay out extra money after school.

**Q3: Can you tell me how you first heard about this free afterschool childcare that was offered by the district? And what your initial thoughts were?** The difficulty was me having to leave work and getting across town to go pick him up after school and also, paying that extra money for him to go to daycare and not being there for a long amount of time.

**Q4: Can you describe what your experience using the service has been like, and in what ways it either has or has not met your expectations?** I received an email stating that they were offering those services. My initial thought was that it would be a relief and a huge help for me, so I will have the convenience of my child staying after school, at their assigned school and having someone watch them, and it was free of cost for employees when it first started, so that was even better.

**Q5: Can you tell me in what ways, if any, has access to this childcare service affected your job satisfaction or your ability to stay focused at work?** Using a child care service, I think, for convenience, it was great, because I knew that my child was in a safe spot, and I didn't have to race to go and pick them up. I had some time afterwards to maybe wrap up my day to get things done, and then I was able to go pick up my child, one thing I would have liked more for them once I started paying for after school, because the first year was free, then second year there was a small fee, was because I started to pay, that there was more activities and more offer to the students than those that are watching him just to be sitting there, or they weren't that active with them.

**Q6: Can you tell me how has this availability of this service influenced your decision to remain employed in the district, if it has had any influence at all?** It hasn't affected my ability to stay focused at work. I think that it kind of helps, because I didn't have the stress of having to leave work and hurry up and pick up my child; it actually helps with being more relaxed with knowing that he's in a safe space. It hasn't influenced my decision to remain employed. I think I will do that in general, because I love my job. But it just helps. It provides support when it comes to my child, and that kind of helps. You want to keep your job also. **Q7: Would you consider this as a reason to stay, or just something that you think you would expect to be available to teachers?** I think, it should just be available To employees, because it kind of gives them an option, and also Because it costs so much for our kids to go to daycare, this is just a flexible option for us to know that our district knows what we have to go through, and also it's not a large cost for us, so it kind of a good option for employees.

**Q8: Do you think that this support impacts how valued or supported you feel as a professional? Why or why not?** I think it does add value, because even though we have to pay a small fee, it just lets us know that our district kind of supports us as employees, and they know the difficulties of

having young children and needing support after school. It provides us with the flexibility to get our jobs done in the comfort of our students.

**Q9: Have you noticed how this service has affected your colleagues, either in terms of retention, morale, or their daily work experience?** I think the only thing that I've heard that they had an issue with, I think, was the price. So, it went from free, then it was, like, \$25, I believe, and then now it's, like. They will take the fee from your personal paycheck. I think once the fee went up, the numbers may have dropped, I'm not sure, because now it's like, if I'm paying more for my child just to sit there and not have that many activities and stuff to do, I might as well pay for them to be at an afterschool club, or to a recreation center, or a daycare, because now that the price is going up, it's starting to equal out to the same thing.

**Q10: Have you ever heard of any other staff members that have said that they would leave if the service ended?** No.

**Q11: Do you think that there are any others that you can think of that might help teachers feel more satisfied and likely to stay in the district due to this program?** I think the more the interaction, for the most part, because once you start making someone pay a fee for something, they just want to make sure that they are getting their money's worth. They want to make sure their kids are getting some type of service, and if that is tutoring, or if that's being more active outside with activities, then I would say that will add to the cost. And maybe bringing the cost back down to where it was a little bit more of a convenience, and it's not directly being taken out of their paycheck, that may make people be more involved in the program.

**Q12: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experiences or its role in supporting teacher retention?** No, I would just encourage the program to continue. I think it's a great conveyance for our employees, and I'm just grateful for when I really, really needed it. My son's a little older, but it was extremely helpful for me, so I'm grateful for it.

## Appendix E: Themes, Subthemes, and Supporting Codes

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>	<b>Supporting Codes</b>
Affordability and Accessibility Are Critical Gatekeepers	Cost and access	Free Program Paid Program Payroll Deduction Community Childcare Options
Balancing the Demands of Work and Family	Work-life balance	Ability to Complete Afterschool Duties Dismissal Earlier Than Parents' Work Day
Child Safety and Academic Support as Non-Negotiables	Safety and Trust	Safety of the Child Safe Space Access to Medication
Employer-Provided Afterschool Care as a Motivator for Teacher Retention	Recognition of the needs of employees	Appreciation Employer Cares About Employees Beneficial to Employees Positive Impact on Retention
Family Circumstances Influence Perceived Efficacy of the Program	Family Support	Family Support Lack of Family Support
Program Quality Shapes Perceptions of Value	Single-parent Needs	Single Parent Single Mom
	Logistical Barriers	Employee Lives in Another County
	Satisfaction with the Operation of the Program	Communication with Staff Flexibility in Program Satisfaction with Program Operation
	Dissatisfaction with the Operation of the Program	Dissatisfaction with Program Operation Lack of Communication Separation From Other Programs
	Academic Support	Homework Assistance Lack of Homework Assistance