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High School Assistant Principals' Perceptions of Factors Influencing Attrition and Retention in a Georgia School District

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Shannon Buff

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2017

Abstract

High School Assistant Principals' Perceptions of Factors Influencing Attrition and
Retention in a Georgia School District

by

Shannon Buff

MA, Georgia College and State University, 2008

BS, University of Georgia, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Abstract

Retention of quality high school assistant principals is a problem in a suburban Georgia school district, where 35% of administrators left their schools in a 3-year period.

Researchers indicated that high turnover rates in school leadership influence student achievement and school climate. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of high school assistant principals concerning factors that influence them to stay in their current roles. Herzberg's 2-factor framework was used to explore the perceptions of 10 high school assistant principals regarding their decisions to remain in their administrative positions. The research questions examined how high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgian school district perceived motivating and hygiene factors that influenced them to remain at the school district or leave their job roles. Open coding was used to identify patterns and themes. Findings from the data collected with semi structured interviews revealed (a) 3 themes related to motivating factors that included relationships with students, teachers and leaders, and (b) 2 themes related to hygiene factors regarding external issues outside assistant principals' control but may influence job retention. The resulting project consisted of a white paper that recommended the school district institute the initiation of an assistant principal leadership academy as well as an assistant principal open forum to minimize the negative influence of the 2 identified hygiene factors on assistant principals' job retention. The project contributes to positive social change by providing insights to potentially stabilize the attrition of high school assistant principals and improve student and academic achievement.

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Dedication

Proverbs 31:25 says “She is clothed with strength and dignity and she laughs without fear for the future.” To God be the Glory. As a little girl I knew that God had plans for me. I did not know that my ministry would be through education, but I am eternally blessed and humbled that He has chosen to place me in a field where I can serve students and teachers each and every day.

I also dedicate this doctoral study to my family. First to my husband Bart. We have grown up together. We have been through thick and thin together and as I complete this journey I am so thankful for your love and support. To Braxton—your entire life I have been in school. I have kept going, partly to show you that it can be done. Thank you for understanding when I was writing, or studying, for all those years. Thank you for your patience—even when I did not deserve it. To Libby—my strong independent girl—you can do anything you set your mind on—never give up on a dream. To my Mom and Dad: you both taught me long ago to run towards my education and never stop until I reached my goal. Thank you for your prayers, love, and encouragement. To my brother—thank you for listening to me when I cried, for coming to me when I needed you, and for always answering my calls. To Anna and Darrell—thank you for stepping up and stepping in when I needed you. You both are a blessing and a piece of this project study is certainly credited to you. To my Grandmother who will forever be a source of strength for me.

To all of the students, teachers, and administrators I have served, thank you for pouring into me for all of these years.

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Section 1: The Problem

School leadership influences school culture (Newton & Wallin, 2013). School culture consists of a multitude of formal and informal structures within a school that are affected by teachers and by the philosophies that leaders develop on campus (Peterson & Deal, 2011). Culture influences students and teachers both inside and outside of the classroom (Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Schools with a positive school culture provide an environment conducive to student learning (Newton & Wallin, 2013), and school leadership plays an important role in developing school culture.

School leadership influences student achievement. In Leithwood and Sun's (2012) study on student achievement, the authors stated that administrative leadership within a school has the second highest influence on student achievement, behind the effects of teachers' influence on student achievement. The same study also found that high turnover among school leadership adversely affects student performance and long-term school improvement. In an earlier study, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) found that leaders could influence student achievement through their ability to ensure that each student has a quality teacher in every classroom. Student achievement is, therefore, affected by school leadership.

Administrator attrition can also influence the sustainability of district curriculum and instructional programs and initiatives (Clayton & Johnson, 2011). Without sustainable instructional programming, schools and school districts are limited in the consistency that they provide students (Clayton & Johnson, 2011). A positive school culture leads to increased student achievement by providing a learning environment

focused on high-quality instruction (DuFour & Marzano, 2015). School administrators play a vital role in maintaining a positive school culture and increasing student achievement.

Background to the Problem

The school district that I focused on in this study is located in a suburban area in Georgia with approximately 105,000 residents (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). According to the 2014 U.S. Census, 27% of all residents are younger than 18 years. Fifty-three percent of residents are Caucasian, 43% are African-American, and 2% identify themselves as multiracial. Seventeen percent of all citizens older than 25 years in the school district have a high school diploma. The median household income in 2014 (the most recent data available) was \$49,208, and nearly 20% of all residents live at or below the federal poverty line (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2016).

The school district, Matthews County School System (MCSS [pseudonym]), consists of 23 schools, including 13 elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools, one charter school, and one theme school (District Website, 2015). The MCSS theme school uses a charter model centered on the theme of parental involvement. The school district also houses an alternative education program for students removed from a regular school setting for disciplinary infractions. The alternative program uses a blended model of education where students take courses online with the assistance of certified teachers. The enrollment of the school district is 19,789 (District Website, 2015). Seventy percent of students are classified as economically disadvantaged and receive free or reduced-priced lunches from the federal school lunch program. Twenty-two of the 23

schools receive Federal Title I funding. The school district is the county's largest employer with nearly 3,000 employees (District Website, 2015). Nearly half of these employees are state-certified teachers and administrators. There are 32 elementary school administrators, 16 middle school administrators, and 20 high school administrators (District Website, 2015).

The district personnel reports indicated a retention rate of 75% in the 2015-2016 school year for teachers (MCSS, 2016). However, the same reports, for the same school year, indicated a retention rate of 65% for high school assistant principals. With 35% of administrators vacating their positions, understanding why 65% of administrators chose to remain may help to mediate the retention of high school administrators in the future.

Definition of the Problem

Leadership attrition is a challenging issue in a large suburban Georgia school district. School administrative staff members were allocated to each of the four high schools in the district based on student enrollment accounting for approximately five administrators on each campus. However, 35% of high school administrators left their schools for other positions in the past 3 years compared with an attrition rate of 17% for teachers in the same school district (MCSS, 2012-2015). The school system superintendent noted that attrition affects the instructional program in a multitude of ways including student achievement and school climate (F. Smith [pseudonym], personal communication, February 3, 2015).

Although scholarly sources address teacher attrition (Hodges, Tippins, & Oliver, 2013; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015), limited scholarly research specifically

addresses high school administrator attrition. Whereas 41% of MCSS high school administrators vacated their positions, 59% of high school administrators chose to stay. I conducted this study to increase the understanding of why some high school assistant principals in this urban Georgia public school district elected to remain in a district where attrition has remained above 25% for the past 3 years as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Three-Year High School Assistant Principal Attrition Rates

School Year	Number of high school assistant principals	Number of high school assistant principals leaving their positions	Attrition
2013-2014	14	7	50%
2014-2015	15	7	46.7%
2015-2016	15	4	26.7%
Average of all years	14.6	6	40.1%

Note. The number of assistant principals is inclusive of all high school assistant principals in the district.

Understanding the reasons for retention could help the district to stabilize attrition rates and promote student growth and achievement.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Instability in the administration of a school negatively influences school improvement and reform (Clayton & Johnson, 2011; Holme & Rangle, 2012). The district that was the focus of this study addressed teacher attrition in 2015 with a retention

plan for teachers in high need areas; however, no measures to address administrator retention were attempted. The district had a process for new teacher induction. The program included any teacher new to the school district regardless of the amount of experience in the field (F. Smith, personal communication, June 30, 2015). However, the school system did not offer any induction program for new administrators. According to the district deputy superintendent, all administrators (both new and veteran) attended a 2-day leadership meeting at the start of the school year (L. Camp [pseudonym], personal communication, June 15, 2015).

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the agency responsible for educator certification, issued a report that provided detailed statistics on teacher attrition, but no information about administrator attrition. This report, however, indicated that there were 7.2 administrators per 100 teachers in the state of Georgia, a 0.2% increase from the previous year (Henson, 2010). Based upon this report, the administrators-to-teacher ratio did not change and showed no decreases in the number of administrators.

Henson (2015) conducted research addressing attrition in the Georgia educator workforce. This report indicated that 1,412 school administrators were hired in 2015, which accounted for 15% of all the school administrators in the state. During the same period, 11,890 teachers were hired and accounted for 9% of the overall teaching population. Nearly 44% of teachers who leave their jobs do so within the first 5 years of teaching (Henson, 2015).

In the most recent study of administrator attrition in Georgia, researchers Nweke, Eads, Afolabi, and Stephens (2006) found that retirement accounted for almost 50% of

the principals leaving their educational roles. The highest attrition rate from personnel classified as support staff was among assistant principals. The attrition rate of assistant principals was 18.7%, a decrease from 3 years prior when the attrition rate was more than 20% (Nweke et al., 2006). Of the assistant principals who left their positions, the largest group came from the metropolitan Atlanta area, which accounted for 28.7% of the attrition rate (Nweke et al., 2006). Nearly 50% of the assistant principals who left their jobs did so to become principals (Nweke et al., 2006).

In the most recent school and staffing survey (SASS), 77.8% of public school administrators were classified as “stayers” (Goldring, Taie, & Owens, 2014, p. 201). Stayers are administrators who do not change positions from the previous school year. This report stated that 38% of the administrators who left did so to retire from the profession, and 54% moved to another public school (Goldring et al., 2014). Private school administrators boasted an 83% retention rate with approximately 80% leaving to become an administrator in another private school (Goldring et al., 2014).

Since 2013, only 59% of high school assistant principals in a metropolitan Georgia school district remained in their current role. At the state level, teacher attrition was studied and published through the year 2015, whereas assistant principal attrition data were not published after 2006. National data, although lagging, indicated that school administrator retention was nearly 18.8% higher than the retention in a metropolitan Georgia school district (Golding et al., 2014). Discovering why some chose to stay rather than becoming a part of the increasing attrition rate could provide valuable information in closing the gap between state and national attrition rates.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Research findings indicated that school leadership influences students. In a study of 97 secondary schools, Bruggencate, Lyuten, Scheerens, and Slegers (2012) found that school leadership affects student promotion and retention. The same study reported that administrators have a direct bearing on teacher's classroom practices. A similar study compared 12 high school administrators' effects on both graduation rate and an English competency exam (Coelli & Green, 2012). The study noted that administrators have a significant influence on student's achievement on the competency exam. The researchers observed that high turnovers of administrative staff result in the inability to determine the direct effect on graduation rates due to a lack of stability of administration for the duration of a students' high school career.

School administrators also influence teachers' behaviors and decisions related to retention. A 2014 study surveyed teachers to determine the effect that school leaders have on teachers' decisions to remain in schools that are difficult to staff (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reily, 2014). The research findings concluded that stable school leadership, which promotes collaboration and positive communication, encourages higher retention rates in difficult-to-staff schools compared with easier-to-staff schools. A similar study found that teachers who teach in schools with high poverty rates are retained more often where stable leadership exists (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Both studies indicated that teachers' decisions to remain in schools are influenced by leaders in their schools.

High attrition in school leadership causes instability in schools (Hardie, 2015). Ni, Sun, and Rorrer (2015) studied high principal turnover rates in charter schools. This

quantitative study using data from the schools and staffing survey of 2007-2008 study determined that various factors, including personal history and plans for career advancement, lead to attrition. The research findings also indicated a need for sustainability and succession. Research results concerning factors that influence principals to retire in the southern region of the United States reported that many factors influence leaders' choices about leaving the profession, including job satisfaction, compensation, and moral obligation (Reames, Kohcan, & Zhu, 2014). A study of four school systems in Georgia found that although attrition of school principals and assistant principals was identified as a concern, no real succession planning existed for administrators who left (Zepeda, Bengston, & Parylo, 2012). Although multiple factors lead to administrators' decisions to leave a job, the resulting effects of high attrition can negatively influence schools and school districts. The purpose of my qualitative study was to investigate high school assistant principals' perceptions of administrator retention and attrition in a suburban Georgia school district.

Definitions

In this section, I explain terms unique to this study.

High levels of attrition: The rate of employees leaving their place of employment that is above the state average are considered high attrition levels (Henson, 2015).

Hygiene factors: Hygiene factors are influences, such as salary, work conditions, rules, and policy that are needed to prevent dissatisfaction with one's job. Hygiene factors do not cause satisfaction with a job (Herzberg, 1987).

Motivating factors: Reasons for satisfaction with one's job such as achievement, recognition, and opportunity for growth are motivating factors (Herzberg, 1987).

Significance

In this study, I addressed the high levels of attrition among high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district. School leaders have a significant influence on school climate (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgens-Delassandro, 2013) and, in turn, school leaders influence teacher job satisfaction (Tickle, Chang, & Kim, 2011). School leadership can also affect student achievement (Duhey & Smith, 2014). High attrition rates among school leadership influence school stability and school improvement efforts (Fuller, Hollingworth, & Young, 2015). My study was unique because I focused on the retention of assistant principals in high school settings by examining why administrators who are retained stayed in their leadership position.

Insight into administrators' perceptions on the retention of those in similar leadership positions can help future district leaders make positive human resources decisions regarding school administration. My study could inform future wide-scale studies to address high attrition rates among school administrators. School leadership plays a paramount role in student achievement and growth (Hassan, 2014). By investigating high school assistant principals' reasons for continuing their roles in a metropolitan Georgia school system, my study may fill a gap in the local practice of the district and provide social change by identifying insights to decrease administrator attrition, increase administrative leadership retention, and potentially improve student academic achievement. These research findings could influence the retention rates of

high school assistant principals at a local level, thus providing stability for increasing school improvement and achievement. Decreased attrition among high school assistant principals will also provide a financial benefit to districts because less money will be spent on inducting new administrators and veteran administrators who may be new to the district.

Guiding/Research Question

At the local level, high school assistant principal attrition affects a suburban Georgia school districts' ability to provide consistent, stable administrative staffs. I aimed to determine high school assistant principals' beliefs about assistant principal attrition and reasons that 65% of high school assistant principals chose to stay in the district in their current administrative roles. Past researchers' findings indicated job satisfaction, compensation, and moral obligation as reasons that individuals opted to stay in their jobs (Herzberg, 1987). Herzberg (1966) postulated that two independent yet contributing factors influence one's level of employment satisfaction. Motivating factors provide job satisfaction through recognition and intrinsic means. Hygiene, or maintenance factors, do not necessarily create job satisfaction but may cause dissatisfaction when not present. Herzberg's theory of motivating and hygiene factors provided the framework for my research questions. Interviewing current high school assistant principals using Herzberg's framework provided relevant, timely information for the district to adjust programs and processes to increase the retention rate among high school assistant principals. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions?

2. How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors as affecting their decisions to leave their administrative positions?

Review of the Literature

I conducted a review of the literature to find relevant resources related to administrator attrition. The review includes the conceptual theory based on human resources motivation, the effect of school administrators in schools, and the various roles that administrators play. I searched EBSCO, ProQuest, Sage, Education Research Complete, ERIC, Google Scholar, and Worldcat with Full Text using the key terms *administrator*, *attrition*, *retention*, *turnover*, *assistant principal*, *motivation*, *job satisfaction*, *administrator impact*, and *school leadership*. The sources cited in this study culminated in a thorough investigation of this topic that included 33 both current and seminal literature.

Conceptual Framework

Attrition and retention of employees are influenced by both internal and external factors. In 1957, Herzberg researched factors affecting job satisfaction. Based on collected data, Herzberg developed a theory of motivation. This theory addresses job satisfaction and dissatisfaction as two independent contributing factors. Herzberg proposed motivating factors to include increase job satisfaction, provide a challenge,

allow recognition through shared decision-making, and opportunity for advancement.

Hygiene factors, or maintenance factors, such as salary and position in an organization, do not positively influence satisfaction levels but may cause dissatisfaction if they are not present (Herzberg, 1966).

Intrinsic factors, described by Herzberg (1957) as motivating factors, are satisfying factors. These satisfying factors intrinsically motivate one based on the need for personal growth (Herzberg, 1959). These motivating factors described as intrinsic motivators include recognition and reward for doing one's job well (Herzberg, 1966). Motivators increase one's job satisfaction and the desire to continue in the current role or perhaps be promoted (Paul, Robertson, & Herzberg, 1966).

Balancing the other side of the scale are dissatisfying factors. Herzberg (1957) described these factors as hygiene factors. Dissatisfying hygiene factors are extrinsic, and although present in every job, they do not motivate one to continue in their current job or position (Herzberg, 1959). These factors include salary, rules, policies, and management. Decreasing negative hygiene factors, alone, will not create total job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966).

The motivation-hygiene theory argues that for an employee to be truly satisfied, both internal and external needs must be satisfied (Herzberg, 1966). Although both factors are independent of one another, they balance a person's job satisfaction level and one's decision to stay or leave a job (Robbins, 1993). An assistant principal who is unhappy with district policy (extrinsic) may choose to stay if he or she is motivated by the growth experienced in the school (intrinsic). Eliminating hygiene factors will not

cause an unmotivated person to become motivated (Herzberg, 1959). Motivating factors alone may not be enough for some. If the weight of external factors keeps one from being able to complete their job to their satisfaction, job dissatisfaction can occur.

Herzberg's (1957) motivational hygiene paradigm provides a foundation to investigate the perceptions of high school assistant principals regarding high school administrator attrition and retention. Understanding factors that may cause current assistant principals to stay in their current roles requires a conceptual understanding of both motivational and hygiene factors in the workplace. Likewise, understanding assistant principals' rationale for staying in their present roles may help to understand why these administrators perceive others' reasons for leaving their administrative positions. The balancing act, according to Herzberg (1957), may be different for each individual. However, some level of motivation must be present for one to be enriched by his or her job.

School Administrator Influence on Schools and Districts

School leadership plays various roles in influencing student learning, curriculum implementation, teacher morale, teacher retention, school culture and climate, and beyond (Coelli & Green, 2012; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahstrom, 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). When administrators continually revolve in and out of a school, they do not simply vacate a position. Leadership transitions leave knowledge gaps in curriculum implementations, teacher evaluation, and the learning environment that make it difficult for schools to improve student growth and

achievement (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012; Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin 2013; Habegger, 2008).

High rates of administrator turnover can affect students, teachers, and districts. (Boyce & Bowers, 2015; Farley-Ripple, Raffel, & Welch, 2012; Gawlik, 2015). Farley-Ripple, Salano, and McDuffie (2012) defined *turnover* as how often administrators vacated a position and retention as how long a person stayed in a position. When turnover rates were high, Heck and Hallinger (2014) noted that it was difficult to maintain consistent levels of student achievement, retain quality teachers, and implement curricula programming with fidelity. In a case study on succession planning, Gawlik (2015) found that when turnover is high in principal positions, the growth of new leaders is stagnated, causing a shortage in leadership.

Assistant principals are an integral part of schools. Although the principal is the main leader on campus, assistant principals, by extension, play a crucial role in student achievement, school climate, teacher retention, and the daily operations of the school (Militello, Fusarelli, Mattingly, & Warren, 2015). Although some researchers classified this important job as middle management, others have seen assistant principals as a preparation stage for principalships (Johnson, 2014; Militello et al., 2015). The findings from a qualitative study using interviews with 12 middle-career educators indicated that the role of assistant principal is no longer as appealing as it once was (Johnson, 2014). Although assistant principals may resign their jobs to become principals, others simply leave in search employment where they feel valued and influential (Boyce & Bowers, 2015). The duties and responsibilities that these administrators assume keep schools

moving forward. When turnover is constant, the principal's mission and vision for the campus are not consistently reinforced and may negatively affect the school district's ability to implement them with fidelity (Sun & Ni, 2016).

Instability of school administrators can influence student growth and achievement. Boyce and Bowers (2015) used a large data set from the 2007-2007 school staffing survey (SASS) and the principal follow-up survey (PFS) to analyze administrator turnover in schools at a national scale. The study noted that in schools and systems where administrator turnover was frequent, student achievement and growth was lower (Boyce & Bowers, 2015). Constant turnover of assistant principals creates deficiencies that affect school improvement efforts that when left can eventually erode the entire process.

Factors such as poverty rates, minority rates, and grade level influence assistant principals' decisions to stay or leave a position (Beteille et al., 2012; Boyce & Bowers, 2015; Farley-Ripple et al., 2012). Because the frequent change of teachers and administrators affect student achievement, some have argued that policymakers should consider greater efforts to retain administrators and teachers in schools that are more difficult to staff consistently (Boyce & Bowers, 2015). The need to retain high quality administrators affects students, especially students who are underprivileged and minority.

Past findings suggested that a successful assistant principal was one who became a principal (Johnson, 2014; Militello et al., 2015). However, not every administrator wishes to become a principal. Some administrators wish to remain assistant principals rather than to take an administrative leadership role as the principal (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). For some, the accountability of principalships may prove too daunting,

whereas for others, the ability to influence teachers and schools from the assistant principal position may be more appealing (Militello et al., 2015).

Influence on student learning, growth, and achievement. School leadership plays an important part in the level of student achievement within a school (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005). School administrators have primary and secondary influences on student achievement in a campus setting. Heck and Hallinger (2014) conducted a quantitative, cross-functional study of 60 schools with longitudinal data to determine ways that school administrators affected student learning. The researchers used a multifaceted approach to examine the influence of leaders directly on student achievement and indirectly through the teacher. The results of the study indicated that the most significant influence of school leaders was indirectly through teacher development, distribution of leadership, professional learning, and building the capacity for teachers to impact instructional practices. The findings from this study indicated that school administration had the greatest bearing on student learning through climate, consistency, and retaining high quality teachers (Heck & Hallinger, 2014).

In a similar study, Coelli and Green (2012) conducted research that focused on administrator influence on graduation rates and English exam scores. This quantitative study used data sets from students in the 12th grade. Coelli and Green noted that the increase in graduation rates and English scores were related to both indirect and direct administrator influence. The study determined that administrators indirectly through teacher allocation, teacher quality, and school environment influenced student achievement on English scores (Coelli & Green, 2012). In a similar manner, Finnigan

(2012), in a qualitative study of teachers in low-performing schools, found that student growth rates were affected indirectly by high teacher motivation rates. The researcher also noted that interviews revealed that when leaders had high instructional expectations for teachers, the motivations and expectations spilled over to the students and growth rates increased on standardized tests. Graduation rates, however, were influenced more directly through the stability of administrators and the learning expectations that were set by the leaders for the students (Coelli & Green, 2012). School leadership influences student learning, growth, and achievement.

The effect of school leadership on student learning and achievement was second only to that of classroom teachers (Leithwood et al., 2004; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Research findings showed that in schools where leaders were focused on high-quality classroom instruction, student achievement on state assessment improved (Coelli & Green, 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004). Student achievement indicated that continuous changes in school administrators can negatively influence school climate, school discipline, and teacher retention (Coelli & Green, 2012). When school leaders are focused on quality teaching and learning, students experience greater rates of growth and achievement.

Influence of administrator on curriculum implementation. Administrators guide how curricula are implemented within schools (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Militello et al., 2015). In a mixed-methods study, researchers found that teachers took their cues on acceptance of district programs from the administration in their respective schools

(Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). The study indicated that when administrators nurture curricular program implementation and react positively, teachers respond in a similar manner; conversely, in schools where administrators are less involved and supportive of curricular programs, teachers react negatively to the curricular program implementation (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). Schools, located in districts with mandated professional learning communities, are supported and encouraged by school administrations, and they have higher instances of implementation with fidelity and higher rates of student growth (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). Heck and Hallinger (2014) concurred and pointed out that consistency of school administration is vital for school improvement, curriculum implementation, and instructional practices. The study noted that the effect of school improvement develops through time; thus, constant turnover creates a barrier to curricula implementation with fidelity (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). Administrators can affect how well curricular programming is implemented in schools through their consistent involvement in implementation and support.

Although principals are ultimately responsible for curriculum implementation in their schools, assistant principals play an active role in this process. Assistant principals are curriculum leaders by carrying out the principals' vision for curriculum implementation the school (Sun & Ni, 2016). Teachers rate school leadership higher when leaders are active participants in the implementation of the curriculum (Sun & Ni, 2016). When the principal allows assistant principals to play an active part in the schools' curricula implementation, assistant principal satisfaction levels are higher (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012). A curriculum that is developed and implemented with the support of the

entire school community results in greater fidelity of its implementation (Thapa et al., 2013). Assistant principals can support the positive implementation of curriculum in schools.

School administrators may view their roles in curriculum implementation and development differently if they are in elementary, middle, or high schools. Elementary and middle school assistant principals see themselves in more organizational and relationship roles, whereas high school assistant principals view their tasks to be the management of personnel, curriculum and instruction, and other specialized tasks (Militello et al., 2015). In a study researching the perceptions that assistant principals have about their roles, researchers found that those who have an active role in helping teachers to implement quality curriculum exhibit a higher satisfaction rate than those who do not have the same opportunity (Militello et al., 2015). O'Malley, Long, and King (2015) studied secondary school administrators in Texas and found that the 5-year attrition rate was approximately 50%. These administrators described their roles as a constant struggle between managing crises and leading teachers for the benefit of student learning. The complex role of secondary school administrators may make it difficult for assistant principals to be involved in curriculum implementation. However, findings from studies show that when administrators can take a more active role schools, teachers and students are more successful, and administrators have higher job satisfaction rates (Marzano et al., 2005; Militello et al., 2015; O'Malley et al., 2015).

Influence on the learning environment, climate, and culture. Creating a culture and climate focused on student learning begins with building effective leadership

(Miller, 2013). Increased public focus on instructional leadership began when there was a greater focus on accountability throughout the United States (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). When the leadership of a school constantly changes, stability is lost (Coelli & Green, 2012; Gawlik, 2015; Heck & Hallinger, 2014). Campus leaders can develop a climate and culture focused on student learning and achievement.

Administrators play an important role in providing a positive school climate focused on teaching and learning. A study reviewing school climate research noted that schools with positive school climates had similar characteristics (Thapa et al., 2013). First, there is a basic need for safety within schools (Thapa et al., 2013). If students do not feel safe, it is difficult for them to focus on learning (Edmondson, Higgins, Singer, & Weiner, 2016). Students in urban areas, where there are higher rates of minority and economically disadvantaged populations, are more likely to experience physical, social, and emotional violence (Thapa et al., 2013). In turn, these schools also experience less stability in their campus leadership that in turn causes additional turmoil within the school (Béteille et al., 2012; Farley-Ripple et al., 2012).

Béteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2012) found that administrator and teacher turnover disrupts the learning environment for students. Thapa et al. (2013) reported that consistency is an important part of the positive school environment. A quantitative study using data from the schools and staffing survey noted that teacher and leader attitudes influence the learning atmosphere (Price, 2012). The research findings stated that interpersonal relationships between students, teachers, and principals influence the broader school climate. When administrative leadership staff is consistent, more

opportunity for rules and norms to be consistent exists (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Thapa et al., 2013). Findings from Heck and Hallinger's (2014) study indicated that when schools have constant attrition of administrative leadership, time is lacking to develop a stable plan for the structure and support system of a school. Creating a positive learning environment takes time and consistency to develop; without it, students can feel instability in the culture and climate of a school.

A positive learning environment focuses on teaching and learning (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Marzano et al., 2005; Thapa et al., 2013). Day, Gu, and Sammons's (2016) mixed-method study analyzed the work of school leaders and their relationship with student growth and learning. The researchers found that when school leaders understand the need for high expectations for teaching and learning that student outcomes are positive (Day et al., 2016). Thapa et al. (2013) concurred noting that students' academic learning was influenced by the expectations established for the learning environment. Assistant principals provide additional support to the teaching and learning environment through their support of teachers and students (Militello et al., 2015). When these positions are vacated at high rates, there ceases to be consistency in the learning environment and expectations.

A positive learning environment is essential to student learning, growth, and achievement (Edmondson et al., 2016; Miller, 2013; Thapa et al., 2013) and school administrators can foster this atmosphere by providing a safe, consistent school focused on good teaching and student learning (Day et al., 2016; Thapa et al., 2013). High attrition of school administrative leadership, including principals and assistant principals,

reflects an inconsistency in the school environment (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). The lack of stable school leadership may make it difficult to implement a system of support for a positive learning environment (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012).

Influence of administrators on teachers. School leadership influences students indirectly through teachers because teachers have a direct relationship to student growth and achievement (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016; Clayton & Johnson, 2011; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Hodges et al., 2013). Teachers' instructional abilities are affected when administrative leadership is not stable (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). Of all factors influencing student growth achievement, teachers have the greatest effect (Marzano et al., 2005). However, consistency in school leadership plays a role in teacher effectiveness, morale, and retention (Béteille et al., 2012; Davis & Darling-Hammond; Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Loeb, Kalogrides, & Béteille, 2012).

School administrators also play a role in how teachers influence student growth and achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). The relationships that school leaders develop with teachers are vital to fostering teacher effectiveness (Finnigan, 2012). In studies where administrators provided quality feedback to teachers and worked to help teachers improve instruction, student achievement, and growth on standardized tests was higher than that of schools where administrators provided little to no feedback (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012). One essential part of relationships is trust. When teachers trust administrators, they are more willing to accept feedback aimed at helping them hone their craft and grow as a leader (Finnigan, 2012). School administrators influence teachers through quality feedback to help teachers improve instruction for student growth and achievement.

Through their role in teacher evaluation and feedback, administrators can develop trusting relationships with teachers (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Feedback is valuable to teachers' growth in the profession (Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, & Labat, 2015). When school administration is unstable, its ability to know and understand the level of teacher effectiveness on their campus is hampered (Coelli & Green, 2012). Heck and Hallinger (2014) noted that it takes time for new administrators to build relationships with teachers and students; the same is true for analyzing and determining the effectiveness of teachers. Marzano et al. (2005) noted that when a student had 2 years with ineffective teachers, they were more likely to be unsuccessful as they matriculated. Without consistent school leadership, ineffective teachers may be allowed to continue negatively impacting students without the feedback and support that they need to improve their craft.

Teacher satisfaction and motivation are influenced by school leadership (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004). Motivating employees can be a difficult task for leaders (Herzberg, 1987). In a mixed-methods study using Herzberg's two-factor theory, it was determined that teachers' satisfaction levels affect student achievement, school climate, and student achievement (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). The study supported the concept that principal leadership is essential to job satisfaction. However, the research findings also showed that some teachers' answers in the qualitative portion of open-ended interviews did not relate to the quantitative survey results. When administrative leaders provide a positive working environment that affords recognition and the opportunity for growth and stability teachers are more likely to be satisfied and thus retained (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Finnigan (2012) found

that when school leadership had high expectations for student learning, teachers exhibited higher motivation levels and that the motivation spilled over to the students and levels of student growth increased.

Guramatunhu-Mudiwa and Scherz (2013) researched the influence of administrators on teachers' satisfaction with salaries. The study focused on ways that administrators influenced teacher retention rates in hard to staff schools and reported that teachers were motivated by excellent leaders and high expectations (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa & Schertz, 2013). The study found that when administrators position teachers to feel valued and express a strong sense of worth for these instructors, teachers have a higher level of satisfaction with their salary.

Although new leadership can bring about positive change, Farley-Ripple et al. (2012) found that continuous administrator turnover damaged teacher morale. Mascall and Leithwood (2010) contended that teachers were positively influenced when administrators were flexible change agents. When these leaders leave and are replaced with new administrators, time is needed to build relationships (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). The same study noted that in schools where administrator turnover occurred often, teachers were more resistant to change than teachers in schools where the administration was more stable.

The need to retain highly qualified and effective teachers has received national attention in recent years (Clement, 2015). Researchers studied the effect of teacher attrition on students in a long-term study of fourth- and fifth-grade students in New York (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2012). The study found that when students matriculated

through grade levels with higher rates of teacher turnover, their levels of achievement were lower on both English and mathematics (Ronfeldt et al., 2012). The same research results indicated that these effects were compounded in schools with high minority populations (Ronfeldt et al., 2012). Just as administrators' retention is more difficult in schools with high populations of economically disadvantaged and minority populations, teachers are hard to retain in the same schools (Béteille et al., 2012; Boyce & Bowers, 2015; Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Ronfeldt et al., 2012). Béteille et al. (2012) found that high turnover rates among school administrators were often followed by high teacher turnover rates. In some cases, teachers' decisions to stay or leave a position or the profession are influenced by the administrators they encounter (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Teachers new to the profession are most influenced as they seek guidance and mentorship in curriculum, instruction, and through professional learning (Béteille et al.; Loeb et al., 2012). Administrator attrition influences teacher retention.

Lack of stability in school administrative leadership can affect teachers (Hughes et al., 2014). When high expectations are placed on teaching staff, the researchers' findings showed that students reap the benefits through higher levels of learning, growth, and achievement (Day et al., 2016; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Ronfeldt et al., 2012).

Administrators can affect teacher morale (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Although motivation can be difficult, Herzberg's two-factor theory supports claims that teachers are more motivated and successful when they feel supported and valued (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). With ever-increasing teacher shortages, filling vacated teaching positions is a problem for schools and school districts (Clement, 2015). Administrators play a major

role in supporting and retaining quality teachers (Ronfeldt et al., 2016). When attrition is constant for assistant principals and principals, teachers do not always have the stable support needed to make gains in student growth and achievement (Boyce & Bowers, 2015; Heck & Hallinger, 2012). Stability of administrator leadership can influence teacher relationships and retention.

Influence of administrators on leadership development. An important aspect of school administration involves the creation of new leadership within the school environment. Leithwood et al. (2004) noted that school administrators felt that developing leadership within the school was part of their leadership role on the school campus. In schools where teachers were provided opportunities for leadership and growth, teacher attrition rates were lower than those who had opportunity for new roles in leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). An administrator's influence extended beyond the classroom through the development of new leaders to fill vacated leadership positions.

The development of teachers to become school leaders is critical for the sustainability of administrative leadership in schools and districts (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Hardie, 2015; Johnson, 2014). Creating a succession plan for leadership in school districts is a worldwide concern because there is a need for the development of teachers to move into roles with administrative responsibilities (McCulla & Degenhardt, 2015). With the increased need for qualified administrators, teacher leadership development is essential to sustaining schools and school districts.

In districts across the nation, assistant principalships are prerequisite roles to becoming principals (Spillan & Lee, 2014). In a mixed-method research examining

novice principals, the need for principals continued to rise as more and more principals become eligible to retire (Johnson, 2014). When principalships are vacated, often, in turn, assistant principals' positions become vacated. However, in a qualitative study of teacher career paths, no teacher interviewed planned to pursue administration as part of their career goals (Johnson, 2014). Those who do choose to pursue leadership do so based upon motivating factors related to helping students rather than hygiene factors such as salary (Herzberg, 1987; Johnson, 2014).

Studies of assistant principals' various roles revealed that while this administrative position is highly valued among both district and school level leadership, little to no preparation is provided to teachers transitioning into the assistant principalships (Bastin & Henry, 2014; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Likewise, the findings from a quantitative study of students in 981 schools of first-time school administrators in North Carolina, using a covariate adjustment, suggested that one of the leading causes of principal turnover was a lack of preparation for the job (Bastin & Henry, 2014). Principals have a unique opportunity develop new leaders and create contingencies for their schools should various leadership opportunities present themselves (Loeb et al., 2012). In the hierarchy of school administration, there is a need for leadership development that influences retention at each level.

Assistant principals' effectiveness and job satisfaction are linked to the principal for whom they work (O'Malley et al., 2015). Principals who value and develop their assistant principals have higher satisfaction rates in the same way that teachers who feel valued have higher satisfaction rates (Militello et al., 2015; Simon & Johnson, 2014).

When assistant principals believe that they are receiving quality opportunities to grow and feel valued, they are likely to have greater job satisfaction.

Influence of Administrative Attrition on School Districts

High administrator turnover can also negatively influence school districts. School districts invest time and money training administrators to carry out various programs and projects. When turnover rates are high, administrators are forced to re-invest in initial professional learning and training (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012). School administrators have an influence on how well professional learning and training is implemented (Militello et al., 2015). Research findings indicated that constant turnover in administration resulted in programs and curricula never being fully implemented thus hindering the fidelity and effectiveness of the program (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012). School districts depend on school leaders to execute district initiatives. In a similar manner, school principals depend on assistant principals to carry out school and district initiatives (Militello et al., 2015).

Because administrator turnover can have adverse effects on teacher retention, districts are indirectly affected by administrators' attrition when teachers choose to leave the district (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Schools with high minority and economically disadvantaged students have higher attrition of teachers and administrators and thus have higher percentages of teachers with less than 3 years of experience teaching (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Additionally, when teacher turnover is high, administrators frequently are required to re-configure teaching assignments that may result with teachers who have less experience with the grade or subject they are teaching (Simon & Johnson, 2014).

Constant re-configuration can cause instability that result in school districts needing to incur additional costs to train teachers and divert funds from classroom learning experiences (Ronfeldt et al., 2012; Simon & Johnson, 2015). This cost could be compounded in schools and districts with high poverty and minority populations.

Districts are also affected by administrator attrition through the absence of leadership development. When principals' retention is low, there are limited opportunities to develop assistant principals to be prepared to take principal positions (Bastin & Henry, 2014). Likewise, when attrition is high among assistant principals, capable teachers who desire to move into assistant principal positions are unable to do so because they lack preparatory skills to enter into leadership (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015).

Administrator and teacher relationships deteriorate with high administrative turnover (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). These relationships are important for developing teacher leaders through mentorships (McCulla & Degenhardt, 2015). Without a proper succession plan, districts may find that they must fill positions with outside applicants rather than developing leaders from within the district.

Satisfied school administrators feel they are valued by district officials and perceive that they have opportunities because of the work that they do (Boyce & Bowers, 2015). Herzberg (1957) noted that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are most often motivated by internal factors such as their perception of value. Farley-Ripple et al. (2012) classified administrator turnover into those who were "pulled [to leave and those who were] pushed" to leave (p. 225). Similar to Herzberg's two-factor theory, this classification noted that those who were pulled to leave had a higher satisfaction than

those who were pushed to leave. Dissatisfied administrators who were pushed to leave believed that they had little influence on the schools they lead and felt that the compensation they received was not adequate for the position they filled (Boyce & Bowers, 2015). Districts that balanced accountability with an administrator's need for autonomy had the most success with retaining administrators (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Certain school factors also correlate with higher attrition rates. Researcher's findings showed that schools in urban areas, high minority populations, high poverty rates, and low parental support had higher administration turnover (Boyce & Bowers, 2015).

The cost of losing quality administrators in school districts can be high (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012). When districts have constant attrition of school administrators, they are directly influenced by the cost of hiring and training replacements. Districts are indirectly affected by administrator attrition through the attrition of high-quality teachers. These consequences were particularly high in districts with high minority and economically disadvantaged students (Boyce & Bowers, 2015; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Districts play a role in motivating school administrators (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012). Some turnover may be necessary for progress, however, assistant principals are often influenced by factors that motivate them to feel more worth and value whether through a promotion or lateral move (Boyce & Bowers, 2015). Districts have a vested interest in retaining quality administrators.

Synthesis of Findings from the Reviewed Literature

Leadership in schools plays various roles in influencing student learning, curriculum implementation, teacher morale, teacher retention, school culture and climate. School leadership also affects schools and school districts. Administrative school leadership is instrumental in ensuring that meaningful student learning occurs (Marzano et al., 2005). Administrators also implement how well the curriculum and other district initiatives are implemented with fidelity (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016; Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Militello et al., 2015). The learning environment is also a factor over which administrators exert much influence (Miller, 2013). Teachers, the most important factor associated with student success, find that their satisfaction levels are connected to the leadership of their school (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). Likewise, the sustainability of school leadership and the impact to districts are connected to the effectiveness and stability of school administrators (McCulla & Degenhardt, 2015; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Without consistent, stable school leadership, schools do not have an underpinning to support teachers and students.

Whereas principals are at the top of the hierarchy of school leadership, assistant principals, as mid-level leadership, create a support system to foster student learning, curriculum implementation, positive school environment, and teacher leadership development. The importance of assistant principals is well documented (Bukoski, Lewis, Carpenter, Berry & Sanders, 2015; Ellis & Brown, 2015; Oleszewski, Shoho & Barnett, 2012). The career paths of these individuals may include sustaining districts by preparing to take principalships, or by providing continuous support to the teacher to

increase their effectiveness and student learning (Militello et al., 2015). These individuals work to carry out the vision of the district and school principal while supporting teachers and students (Militello et al., 2015).

High school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district were the focus of this study. With the increase in accountability, the need to retain leaders for school improvement efforts has become of great importance. Herzberg's (1987) two-factor theory provides a conceptual framework by which one can view assistant principals' attrition through bifurcating satisfaction and dissatisfaction based upon motivation and hygiene factors. Studying attrition from the perspective of those who are retained allows for a unique view of retention through the eyes of those who were successfully retained.

Implications

Assistant principals provide a middle level of support for students and teachers (Militello et al., 2015). However, gaps in support for schools and districts exist when high rates of assistant principal attrition are present (Coelli & Green, 2012). This study revealed the need for additional support for assistant principals at the school and district level. As a result, a white paper detailing the results of this study will be presented to the district and school leadership.

Summary

In this section, I introduced assistant principal attrition as a problem in a suburban Georgia school district. The problem of administrator attrition is documented at the local, state, and national level. Assistant principal attrition is significant because it affects

student growth and achievement, teacher morale and retention, the overall learning environment of schools, curriculum implementation, leadership development, and district program implementation. Herzberg's (1957) two-factor theory, the conceptual framework for the study, followed a saturated literature review of the various influences of school administrator attrition. Implications of this project study include the possibility of a white paper or program development to address any potential findings. In Section 2, I will address the methodology of the study.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate high school assistant principals' perceptions of administrator retention and attrition in a suburban Georgia school district. I wanted to discover how those who remained in their positions as administrators perceived factors that may influence their peers to stay or leave their current administrative role. Findings from this study may help to increase the retention rate of assistant principals in the district and, in turn, influence school climate and student academic achievement.

Research Design

An exploratory qualitative case study answers the research questions for this study. This design helped me study a local phenomenon from the point of view of specific participants—in this case, assistant principals (Yin, 2011). I interviewed 10 high school assistant principals who were currently employed in the MCSS.

Description of the Qualitative Tradition

Researchers using a qualitative method attempt to observe and interpret phenomena in a natural setting rather than in a setting constructed to conduct an experiment (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research is a way to gather data and interpret trends within the data (Bogdin & Bilken, 2007). Creswell (2009) noted that unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on the development of themes and patterns to better understand phenomena.

A case study allowed me to answer my research questions by providing the opportunity to listen to participants, collect data, identify and decode themes, and attempt

to categorize common factors that may lead to administrator attrition and/or retention (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2011). I conducted interviews using open-ended questions and organized data into themes (Yin, 2011). Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) noted that open-ended questions allow one to interact with study participants to gain a better understanding of their perspective. A case study allowed me as the researcher to conduct research in a natural setting where the participant felt comfortable (Yin, 2011).

Justification for the Choice of Research Design

The use of a case study as the research design to address the local problem for this study allowed me to gather information about high school assistant principals' perceptions surrounding factors that influenced attrition and retention. This choice of research design aligned with the problem being investigated by allowing me to explore administrators' perceptions of motivating and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1959; Merriam, 2009). Yin (2008) noted that the choice of a case study may be best to answer *how* or *why* questions. Merriam (2009) also noted that case studies are most appropriate when a bounded system exists, which allows for the study of a single phenomenon. A case study design allowed for the in-depth exploration of high school assistant principal perceptions of motivating and hygiene factors through interviews and data analysis and allow me to answer the research questions of this study (Creswell, 2012). This research helped to explain ways to decrease attrition in a Georgia school district (Yin, 2011).

Reasons for Not Selecting Other Research Designs

For this study, I chose a qualitative design over a quantitative design because the research questions required responses to open-ended questions (Yin, 2011). In contrast,

quantitative methodology uses closed-ended questions to test hypotheses (Creswell, 2012), so I rejected this research methodology for my study. In addition, the boundaries of my study were more fluid than those of a quantitative study. Lodico et al. (2010) indicated that the boundaries of qualitative research are more open-ended and fluid than those of quantitative research, which is more rigidly defined. I took an interactive role as the researcher, and the data provided a broader understanding of the issue of assistant principal attrition and retention. I gathered information about high school assistant principals' perceptions and how those influence attrition and retention rather than quantitative expressions.

For this study, I also considered using grounded theory or a phenomenological design. According to Lin (2011), grounded theorists gather data from a naturalistic setting using an open-ended sampling strategy. For my research, participants were purposefully sampled based upon meeting specific criteria. In grounded theory research, the researcher's role is to collect the data and then identify themes from the ground up to develop a theory that offers to explain the phenomena (Lin, 2011). I rejected grounded theory as a research design because I did not plan to develop a theory, but to find answers to the research questions of this study that explore the perceptions of high school assistant principals about motivating and hygiene factors that influence them to stay in their current school leadership roles.

Phenomenological research design was also considered for this study. Phenomenology concerns how meaning is constructed and understood by individuals (Merriam, 2002). Though interviewing was the primary method of data collection,

researchers' main task is to "depict the essence or basic structure of experience" (Merriam, 2002, p. 25) while this study seeks to determine the perceptions of high school assistant principals about motivating and hygiene factors. I rejected a phenomenological design as a research design.

Participants

Population and Sampling Criteria

The potential participants in this study represented each of the four high schools in the target school district. Each of the four high schools qualifies for Federal Title I status. According to the October 2016 district enrollment report, School A had approximately 1900 students; School B had approximately 1400 students, School C had approximately 2500. School D, a special school program, had approximately 900 students who attend from the other three schools for specialized college and career programs. Based on district administrative allocations, each campus received two assistant principal positions with an additional administrator assigned when enrollment increases by 450 students.

In this exploratory case study, participants were chosen purposefully based on specific selection criteria in order to address specific research questions (Yin, 2011). The goal of the sampling process was to gain the most relevant and rich information associated with factors surrounding high school assistant principal retention and/or attrition (Yin, 2011). Criteria for choosing participants were as follows:

- Assistant principals currently working in the MCSS.

- Assistant principals who had completed at least one contract cycle with the MCSS.
- Assistant principals working in one of the four MCSS High Schools.

The sample for this study was 10 high school assistant principals who met sampling criteria above described. Because these participants currently worked as assistant principals, they were able to provide their perceptions about both motivating and hygiene factors (Hertzberg, 1959). Including these participants allowed for the opportunity for a greater understanding of the high school principals' perceptions of both attrition and retention. Current employees gave insight into current culture and climate factors. Additionally, these current administrators were aware of policies, procedures, and practices in the district. Administrators new to the district were excluded because they did not have the same level of background knowledge as those who have completed at least once contract cycle in the district.

Justification for the Sample Size

In order to obtain information related to the research and to develop good working relationships with the participants, I purposefully sampled participants who met the criteria for selection (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Patton (2015) suggested that one reason for purposefully sampling participants was not associated with a set number but rather with the intent of gaining "information rich cases [from which one can learn a] great deal" (p. 264). I chose the number of participants that I needed in order to provide rich answers to the research questions. Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated that individuals alone could generate a multitude of ideas and words thus large amounts of data may be

produced without large sample sizes. They noted that the usual sample size qualitative research is between 1 to 10 persons. To represent all of the high schools, a target number of 10 assistant principals met the criteria for this study and were invited to be participants in the study.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

I obtained permission to contact the high school assistant principals through the local school district. The Deputy Superintendent of Schools signed a letter of cooperation. After the approval of this study with Walden's Institutional Review Board (Number 02-09-17-0425095) and with the district's permission previously granted, I made appointments to meet with each high school's principal to obtain a list of names of the high school assistant principals. During this meeting, I asked the principal to assist me in identifying which high school assistant principals at that campus are eligible for this study based on the selection criteria of being a current assistant principal working in one of four high schools in the MCSS with at least 1 year of experience. All assistant principals who were eligible received an invitation to participate. There were 11 participants eligible to participate in this study. Of those, 10 chose to participate. Once this campus-level access was granted, I made appointments with each school's principal to hand deliver a letter of consent (Appendix C) to each high school assistant principal explaining the purpose of the study, my role as a researcher, their role as a participant if they so choose, and the reason for the research. I asked these assistant principals to consider participation. I requested them to return the signed consent form within 1 week, after which I arranged times to meet at their convenience for interviews. Because the

study was voluntary, one participant chose not to participate. All of the high schools had participants in the study.

Methods for Establishing a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

Establishing a cordial working relationship with participants in a qualitative study is essential on the part of the researcher (Lodico et al. 2010). The first contact I had with the potential participants is was when I hand delivered the consent letters. It was important at that initial meeting to establish a rapport with these assistant principals. At that time, I gave them an overview of the study, their role as potential participants, and the benefits I hoped to gain from conducting the study. Patton (2014) noted that creating an understanding of what happens during the research project is imperative to maintaining a good working relationship with the participants. I was attentive to any concerns or challenges the participants expressed during the conversation (Patton, 2014). One participant wanted to make certain that the interviews would be conducted at a time that was convenient to her schedule. I was able to reassure her that I would work with her schedule and valued her time. Communication during this first meeting helped to foster a culture of openness between the participants and me. In order to attain quality information, the researcher-participant relationship must be a priority throughout the research process.

Protection of Participants

I applied and obtained permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study. Prior to completing the application, I completed the National Institute of Health's course: Protecting Human Research

Participants (Number 2134663). I obtained the informed consent of the participants prior to conducting interviews. Additionally, I ensured that participant's identity was kept confidential (Lodico et al., 2010). Recorded interviews were kept in a locked file cabinet at my home and will be maintained for a period of 5 years after the completion of this project study. Each participant was assigned a code that was used for recording and transcripts. I was the only person who had access to the list that linked the names and the codes. Each of the 10 administrators that participated in this study was referred to as Assistant Principal A through K (excluding I) to maintain confidentiality. Transcripts were also stored in a locked cabinet in my home. I redacted the mention of any participant names from the transcripts of the recorded interviews. Participants received background information about the study, including all procedures and any risk associated with the study. I provided the participants the opportunity to ask any questions that they may have about the procedures, background, or risks related to the study. Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcript of their interview before its use for analysis. I considered my position in the district as a Curriculum and Instructor Director. I did not have supervisory responsibilities of any of the high school assistant principals. I ensured that each participant was aware that there were no repercussions based upon their participation in this study by establishing procedures and protocols.

To further protect the participants of this study, each person received information relevant to the study including procedures, backgrounds, and risks associated with voluntary participation. The participants were assured that any identifying factors would remain confidential. In addition to giving the participants the information in writing, all

information was verbally reviewed prior to beginning the interviews. Appropriate procedures and protocols were developed to keep information confidential and to ensure that participants did not experience any psychological stress, privacy violations, coercion, health effects, deception, or social or economic loss.

Data Collection

I collected data through interviews related to the problem of administrator attrition and retention. Data collected through the interviews addressed perceptions of high school assistant principals. I also created field notes immediately following each interview process (Lodico et al., 2010). Doing so allowed me to fully focus on the interview and allowed for greater reflection post-interview. Field notes from the interview process permitted a richer data set to address both research questions helped to ensure the credibility of the study and ensure trustworthiness (Creswell, 2012).

Data Collection Instruments and Methods

The primary data source for this study was interviews. Yin (2011) noted that interviews provide insight into participants' thoughts and feelings on a particular subject or interest. The interviews for this study were formal in nature. I structured each of the interviews using an interview protocol with a set of questions as well as a set of potential follow-up questions (Appendix D). In order to receive feedback on the interview protocol and increase the validity of the interview questions, I requested the assistance of two high veteran high school administrators to give feedback on the interview protocol and questions. The first administrator was at the time of this study a high school principal who has over 20 years of experience in education with 6 of those years being a high

school assistant principal: I received feedback and made changes to clarify the interview questions. The second administrator was an 18-year veteran educator who currently serves as an assistant principal in a neighboring district and has been in this position for 8 years. No suggestions for changes to the protocol format or questions were provided because they were perceived to be appropriate for the problem being researched. Refining the interview questions allowed me to reflect on personal bias and adjustments that needed to be made to increase the reliability and validity of the instrument. I also practiced interviewing skills by rehearsing these questions with the same administrators.

The interviews took place in the assistant principals' school. Maxwell (2012) found that interviewing in a natural setting allowed participants a greater level of comfort with expressing their point of view. One's comfort level can affect the level of openness during interpersonal communication (Yin, 2011). The administrators' specific schools allowed my participants to be comfortable in an environment in which they are at ease.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher serves as the primary data collector in studies using a qualitative design (Patton, 2014). The first meetings with high school administrators occurred when I initially hand delivered the consent form. Delivering the consent forms in person allowed me to begin the relationship for the campus process. The second meeting occurred when I collected the consent forms. At that time, I set up the interview times with the participants. I explained that the interview would last approximately 1 hour and that it would be recorded using a digital voice recording system. It was at that time that I also gave the participants the chance to ask any questions that they may have.

At the time of the interview, I reiterated the purpose of the study as well as any potential risks associated with the study. I discussed my role as the researcher and shared the potential benefits for the school district that may occur from the findings of this research. I explained that the interviews questions were open-ended and that they should feel free to be open and honest with their responses. The interviews were conducted in a “conversational mode” (Yin, 2011, p. 134) to create a comfortable and social relationship with the participant.

My research required me to communicate with participants in a manner that would not permit the participants to be anonymous. However, confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. There are no direct identifiers in the study. I initially approached the individuals, and at that time, they were informed of risks and confidentiality procedures. No other individuals had access to identifying information for the participants.

Role of the Researcher

Yin (2011) described the role of the researcher as the “primary research instrument” (p. 25). In that vein, my role was to conduct and record audio interviews, record field notes, transcribe the interviews, and collect, organize and analyze data from the interviews. My first step was to develop a positive relationship with the participants to allow them to be more comfortable throughout the research process. During the interview, I listened, responded, and asked follow-up questions.

It is important for researchers to identify and set aside prior bias and knowledge prior and during the research process (Merriam, 2009). To do this, I used a three-step

bracketing process before, during, and after my research. Prior to the research, I consulted with administrators in a neighboring district to help identify any biases that I may have exhibited related to the research (Creswell, 2012). I shared any biases with the participants. Because I am a former assistant principal, I had preconceived feelings regarding retention and attrition of high school assistant principals. Identifying bias was important because if not identified bias could influence the validity of one's study (Patton, 2015). As a former high school assistant principal, I had opinions that I recorded prior to the interviews. During the research, I attempted to be cognizant whenever a prior experience came to mind that may have biased my research and made a quick note of such occurrences. When I did have opinions or beliefs that I believed may have interfered with my analysis of the data collected, I recorded these thoughts immediately after the interviews to make certain that I did not allow them to influence the research analysis. As a researcher, I naturally brought my own thoughts, beliefs, and ideas into the research situation. The bracketing process allows one to be accountable for their own bias as the research takes place through a reflective journaling process (Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, & Poole, 2004). This part of the bracketing process allowed me to set aside my personal beliefs and prior knowledge during the research process that may have affected the outcomes of this study. The final stage of bracketing occurred when I produce my results. I included pertinent information that I bracketed so that the readers of my research have a complete understanding of what personal bias may have influenced the outcome of my research. This bracketing process gave credibility to my research and helped to ensure trustworthiness of the research process and results.

My current role as a secondary curriculum director did not include management of or hiring of high school assistant principals within the district. These duties are assigned to campus level principals. Previously, I served as a high school campus level assistant principal. The administrators may know me in my current curricular capacity. However, bias was minimized because I do not have a supervisory role perceived or otherwise.

Data Analysis

In order to find meaning from the data collected in a case study design, the data must be analyzed (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2011). After the interview, I transcribed verbatim the voice recordings. To provide confidentiality, I used alpha symbols A through K (excluding I) to identify the 10 administrators' responses in this study. I was the only person who had access to the key identifying the names of the participants. To increase the credibility of my findings, I used member checking and requested the participants to review and verify not only the interview responses but also the analysis of the interview (Glesne, 2014). I used the transcribed data that I collected in interviews using qualitative analytic techniques to obtain high school administrators' perception of high school administrator attrition and retention. I followed a five-phased process: (a) compiling and organizing the data, (b) disassembling the data based upon themes that emerge (c) reassembling the data organized around the themes that emerge, (d) interpreting the data (e) concluding with my results based on the data (Yin, 2011). Although Yin (2011) explained that data analysis is often non-linear, Yin concurred with Creswell (2012) in that a researcher must be organized with steps that guide the data analyzing process. This

five-phase process allowed me to analyze interview data collected to obtain high school assistant principals' perceptions of attrition and retention of high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district.

The first phase of data analysis was compiling and organizing the data collected during the interviews. This process began following each interview. First, I typed the notes into a Word processing document as I reviewed the voice recordings. This familiarization process helped me to gain a more thorough understanding of data collected in the interviews (Yin, 2011). Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the transcription process. No participants requested any changes or clarifications. I also compiled and organized my field notes after each interview. Field notes supplemented the trustworthiness of the transcribed interviews and provided further insights into my analysis from the interview (Creswell, 2009). Next, I combined the transcripts into the initial organization of field notes to get a holistic picture of the data.

After compiling the data, I began to break the data into themes through a disassembling process. I coded the data thematically, organizing based on what themes occurred throughout each interview set. To do this, I first used the Word electronic highlighting feature to draw my focus to common pieces of information in the field notes and on the transcripts. Then, I used an Excel spreadsheet to group common pieces of data together. Data were analyzed and reanalyzed multiple times to determine what themes existed and emerged (Yin, 2011). The initial organization was based on Herzberg's motivational and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1959). During this process, I decided which

themes were major components of the study and those themes that could be classified as minor categories within the major themes.

After themes were initially developed, I reorganized the data around the themes and summarized each theme and then reassembled the data. Yin (2011) noted that the second and third phase of analyzing might be repeated several times before the process is complete. To do this, I created a matrix that showed the data in a graphic form, which helped me to see broad patterns that developed throughout the analysis. The reorganization helped me to move in the fourth phase, interpreting the data.

Yin (2011) noted that the end of one's research occurs when data are interpreted, and conclusions are drawn based on one's findings. During the fourth phase, the interpreting phase, I sought to find meaning in the data that I disassembled and reassembled (Yin, 2011). To do this, I created a narrative based on the analysis of data. This narrative helped me to interpret the data that I collected in a descriptive form, explaining it in various ways based on themes, interpretation, and literature. After I interpreted the data, I drew conclusions constructed on the entirety of the study and based on the findings of the data collected.

After the analysis of the data, I again conducted member checking with the participants. Member checking meetings with each participant occurred in a face-to-face setting. Participants were asked to review my analysis of their interview (Glense, 2002). One participant provided feedback to clarify the wording of the analysis. This feedback provided greater transparency for this study. Each of the other participants stated they agreed with the analysis of the perceptions of their interview responses.

All collected data were kept confidential. To do so, I collected data and maintained spreadsheets, documents, and programs that were password protected on my computer. The computer was stored in a locked cabinet at my home when not in use. I was the only researcher conducting research who had access to the data. Any hard copies of documents relating to the study were scanned to my password-protected computer and then stored in a locked cabinet at my home.

Evidence of Quality and Procedures to Assure Trustworthiness

To ensure full trustworthiness of the research, data collection procedures must be in place to ensure that the data collected are accurate and the researcher is consistent (Creswell, 2009). Kornbluh (2015) noted that member checking is one way to establish the credibility of qualitative research. I used member checking to increase the credibility of the research (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). The member checking process occurred in person at the school office of each of the participants and at the convenience of their schedule. The member checking process occurred two times; the first during the transcript review and the second during a review of the thematic analysis of the study. Additionally, I reminded all participants that their interview would remain confidential and would be used for project development based upon the outcome of the study on high school administrator perceptions of high school administrator retention and attrition in a suburban Georgia school system.

Additional procedures for issues that influence the credibility of the study were put into place to ensure the accuracy of data collection and interpretation. Using the peer review process, these same peers, who originally reviewed and provided feedback on the

interview questions, also reviewed the data. I took my secured laptop to the office of each person. This allowed me to keep the data secure and still allowed the peers to review the data and ask questions and give me feedback. This took place at a time that was convenient for the peers who were volunteering to assist me. To ensure confidentiality no names or identifying factors were associated with the data at any time. The peer review process provided an additional layer of credibility to the research process (Ali & Yusof, 2011). For the research process and findings to be acceptable, both credibility and dependability must be ensured.

To ensure dependability, I followed all research protocols established by the IRB. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy. I scribed field notes directly after each interview. In addition to these notes, I endeavored to identify any bias that could influence my research through the reflective bracketing process (Creswell, 2012; Wall et al., 2004; Yin, 2011). As a former high school assistant principal, I had perceptions related to attrition and retention. I also worked in the district, which could cause me to think differently about the topic than those whom I interviewed. Tufford and Newman (2010) noted that it was natural for humans to have bias when researching. Bracketing helps one to explore how one's own history and challenges could influence the outcome of research if it is not properly checked (Tufford & Newman, 2010). As part of this process, I reflected throughout the research process keeping a journal in order to filter any bias that I may have to protect the integrity of the research process.

Quality of Data

I checked the quality of data using several procedures. I used member checking to ensure the validity of the process (Creswell, 2012). Participants were able to review their transcripts and my interpretations for accuracy. The participants did not indicate that any changes were needed in the findings or analysis. Participants indicated that the data and findings were valid.

I also clarified my own bias. As a former high school assistant principal, it was important for me to identify and clarify any bias that I had relating to the research (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). To do this, I kept a journal where I noted any bias that I had about the research questions before and after the research process. During the interviews, if I agreed or disagreed with the opinions of the participants, I noted my thoughts through the bracketing process so that I was aware of my feelings, thus keeping them from influencing the quality of the data (Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, & Poole, 2004). Had I not identified my own bias it could have prejudiced the outcome of my study (Patton, 2015).

An additional way that I ensured quality of the data was through rich, thick descriptions. Merriam (2009) noted that providing detailed descriptions allows readers to make connections and determinations about the research. The reader can visualize the research through the description and the details provided. A rich, thick description also shows transparency in the research.

I used member checking to check the validity of the data with the participants. I used bracketing to check my own bias throughout the data collection and analysis

process. I provided rich, thick descriptions of the participants and the setting to allow readers the opportunity to visualize the study. These processes strengthened the quality and validity of my data.

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

Searching for discrepant data establishes robustness to research and helps to increase the credibility of a study (Yin, 2011). I worked to identify any inconsistent data with the themes that I develop (Creswell & Miller, 2009). Discrepancies require a researcher to reevaluate the data and themes to further support the credibility of one's research (Creswell & Miller, 2009). I found no discrepant cases in the data of this study; however, should counter evidence have occurred, I would have sought to ensure that collected data were valid by following the procedures that I established for data collection and analysis (Hatch, 2002).

Data Analysis Results

The findings of this study included the use of coding to organize the data for analysis. The codes were organized in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and deconstructed based upon codes that emerged from the data. The deconstruction process initially occurred for each question. Then, codes and themes began to emerge appearing multiple times in multiple questions and strands. Next, the questions were again deconstructed and organized based upon the themes that occurred multiple times.

Table 2

Themes and Descriptions

Research question	Factor	Theme	Description
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions?	Motivating	Relationships with students	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with students over the course of their careers.
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions?	Motivating	Relationships with teachers	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with teachers over the course of their careers.
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions?	Motivating	Relationships with leaders	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with leaders over the course of their careers.
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors as affecting their decisions to leave their administrative positions?	Hygiene	External factors over which assistant principals have no control	Factors that influence the assistant principal's motivation or job satisfaction levels over which they feel that they have no control.
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors as affecting their decisions to leave their administrative positions?	Hygiene	Opportunities for advancement and development	Opportunities the assistant principals perceive for advancement and development.

Five resulting themes emerged during the analysis process. Three themes related to factors that motivated assistant high school principals to remain in their job roles: relationships with students, relationships with teachers, and relationships with leaders. Two hygiene factors revealed in this study that may exert a negative response to remaining in the role of a high school assistant principal were: external factors over which assistant principals have no control and opportunities for advancement and development (see Table 2). Each of these factors and themes are analyzed in the following section as they relate to the research questions of this study using Herzberg's (1987) paradigm.

Analysis

Herzberg's motivating and hygiene factors are independent contributors to one's job satisfaction levels (Herzberg, 1987). Herzberg's theory of motivation argues that one is motivated by factors that are intrinsic. These motivating factors provide job satisfaction by providing feelings of value and self-worth to the individual rather than a tangible or monetary gain (Herzberg, 1987).

The three motivation themes in Table 3 were connected to one another by the common thread of relationships. Assistant principals pointed to relationships and interactions as a primary source of satisfaction, motivation, and dissatisfaction throughout the interviews. Additionally, leadership was woven throughout each theme as a common thread among both motivating and hygiene factors. Assistant principals referred to campus-level leadership and system-level leadership for reasons they would stay in or leave their current role as a high school assistant principal.

Table 3

Motivating Factor Themes and Descriptions

Theme	Description
1. Relationships with students	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals developed with students over the course of their careers.
2. Relationships with teachers	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with teachers over the course of their careers.
3. Relationships with leaders	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with leaders over the course of their careers.

Research Question 1. The first question asked: How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions? Almost three quarters of the 10 participants of this study identified relationships as a motivating factor to remain in their administrative role. The overarching theme of relationships in addressing Research Question 1 was apparent in the cyclical nature of relationships with students (Theme 1), relationships with teachers (Theme 2), and relationships with leaders (Theme 3). Whereas these perceptions were seen as motivating factors, assistant principals also identified them as factors that caused them to have satisfaction with their jobs. These relationships

were strong indicators of the high school assistant principals' reasons for being motivated to remain in their current positions as high school assistant principals.

Theme 1: Relationships with students. The theme of relationship with students became evident within the first few interview questions. Assistant principals stated that working with students and cultivating relationships with young learners was a major factor that motivated them to remain in their job as a current high school assistant principal. Assistant principals perceived that the relationships they built with students allowed them to have a greater influence on student growth and achievement. High school assistant principals felt personal value when these students achieved academic success. This feeling of personal value confirms Herzberg's (1987) theory that motivation is derived from intrinsic factors such as feeling valued or feeling as if you are making a difference in the lives of others. Assistant Principal F stated that the motivation to remain in the job came from "the students...for me building relationships with kids is vitally important." Assistant Principal H noted, too, "I love what I do. I love working with the students."

I found that administrators were passionate when speaking about their relationship with students. Their voices became higher pitched and, in some cases, were even drawn to tears when speaking of how much they cared for the students they served. When asked about the factors that were most motivating in the role as an assistant principal, Assistant Principal H articulated the ardent drive of the student relationship as follows.

The kids. I love them as crazy as they are at times. I love them. I love feeling like I am a major positive factor in their lives. I was just talking

to a group while I was waiting to speak with you, and sometimes I feel like I am the only positive thing they have in their lives. I have several kids that I mentor outside of the school from other districts, and I just love the kids. I have been at the elementary, middle, and high school level and I can remember one time being at a job interview, and they said well you are attached to so and so's school and I said, "No I am attached to children." I just love what I do. It's rewarding doing what I do for the kids.

Assistant principals saw themselves as being motivated by their relationships with students. Herzberg's (1987) paradigm postulated that people were motivated intrinsically when they perceived themselves as part of a greater whole. This intrinsic motivation factor was validated in this study when the assistant principals noted the pride they felt, as they were able to observe students' progression into adulthood. Assistant Principal E said, "I get to see children that I taught in middle school. I get to see their progress. I get to see them as adults. I get to see how they turned out and most of the time it's very good." Many of the assistant principals saw the students as the only reason for them to be in their job. Assistant Principal F noted, "If kids were not here no one would have jobs; they are the most motivating to me."

Chiang, Clark, and McConnell (2017) noted that educators, no matter what their background, tend to enter and stay the field of teaching because they value the influence they feel they have or will have on students. This theme confirms that high school assistant principals perceive their relationships with students as a motivating factor in

their jobs as high school assistant principals. When asked about job motivating factors, 70% of the participants in this study indicated that relationships with students affected their motivation in some way.

Theme 2: Relationships with teachers. The role of high school assistant principals requires them to deal with a broad scope of responsibilities (Marshall & Davidson, 2016). A majority of their work centers on students, followed closely by interaction and supervision of teachers. In the campus hierarchy, teachers manage the students and teachers are supervised and led by campus administrative leaders that include assistant principals. Data from interviews revealed that assistant principals perceived their relationships with teachers to be a motivating factor for remaining in their jobs as high school assistant principals.

Assistant principals pointed to the cyclical nature of the administrative role in their administrative position. When assistant principals are able to support a teacher to improve instruction, the teacher, in turn, is able to assist students to improve, which results in students' growth and academic achievement that in turn increases school improvement efforts. Assistant Principal E noted that a factor that was motivating as a high school assistant principal was working with teachers—specifically those who are new to the field of teaching. This assistant principal felt that it was important to help new teachers understand the effect of their role as teachers noting that “they can positively impact someone’s life especially children’s lives.” The assistant principals perceived that they were able to influence students when they interact with teachers. Assistant Principal B felt that providing feedback to teachers, while difficult at times, was a motivating

responsibly and stated that “being able to critique them [teachers] and give feedback without being negative has been meaningful.” Giving valuable feedback also increased the assistant principals’ job satisfaction because the assistant principal could see the effect that the feedback had on the students in the classroom and felt that there was a direct difference made in the lives of the students because of the administrative duties to the teachers. This intrinsic motivation aligns to Herzberg’s two-factor theory (1987), which states that motivation is derived from feelings of self-worth and feeling as if one has made a difference in their work environment.

Some assistant principals enjoyed helping teachers in other aspects of the instructional process such as classroom discipline. Assistant Principal C felt that helping teachers to grow through assisting with classroom management would help teachers to create better relationships with their students. Assistant Principal D believed that that helping teachers with classroom management issues allowed for a better school climate for all teachers and students in the campus, thus allowing the assistant principal to feel a sense of accomplishment in helping the teachers.

Although students were the number one priority of the assistant principals, 60% of the assistant principals mentioned the relationships with the teachers they serve as a motivating factor for remaining in their job as high school assistant principals. Assistant principals found these relationships to be challenging, but also found that the reward from them could be large as they had an effect on children’s academic growth and achievement. Assistant principals felt enriched by their ability to help through the relationships they built with teachers (Herzberg (1957)).

Theme 3: Relationship with leaders. Data from this study indicated that relationships with principals and other district leaders influence high school assistant principals' perceptions of job satisfaction. These findings extend findings from previous research concerning school principals' influence on decisions teachers make to remain in their jobs (Hughes et al., 2014). Other leaders, such as the superintendent, are also factors that high school assistant principals perceive as motivating them to remain in their current jobs.

Principal leadership. Assistant principals believe that the principal is the driving force behind what happens on a campus. Assistant Principal D felt that the principal was the biggest motivating factor to help remain as a high school assistant principal and stated, "they [the principal] have a big influence on morale, your workload, and support; basically, they can drive the environment of the building." Assistant Principal E felt that lead principals were a motivating factor because it was "important to have the support of your principal and the resources that you need to get the job done."

Assistant principals perceived that principals affect their ability to be effective administrators. Assistant Principal A noted that "school level leadership and how effective they are" was the most motivating factor. Assistant Principal B stated that the "principal is the 'houser' of the whole building. They have to be the one to set the vision so that you can do your job".

Other assistant principals who were participants of this study remarked on the importance of a clear vision for the school. They felt that the vision for the school needed to be set by the campus principal. Assistant Principal A stated, "I think it is really

important that the school level principal has a strong vision and set of expectations for the building.” Assistant Principal G felt that it was important to have a principal who has a strong vision to help train young assistant principals from the beginning: “I cannot emphasize enough the importance of...for a new administrator [to] really have a strong principal that first year. It’s very critical.” These findings support the studies of Day et al. (2016) that found the campus principal’s vision and leadership were vital for staff development.

Assistant principals were able to articulate the power of lead principals as a motivating factor. They saw principal leadership as a motivator through vision setting, support, and climate. Relationships with leaders were perceived as a motivating factor for high school assistant principals to remain in their current positions.

Relationship with other leaders. Although many assistant principals believed that the campus principal was the driving force that motivated them, other participants pointed to leaders outside of the school campus as a motivating force. Assistant Principal A noted that the relationship that was created with the other assistant principals in the district was vital to how the campus functions, “The team is what makes my job worthwhile.” Assistant Principal K also felt that the administrative team was important, noting that it was motivating to go to work with people each day that he/she had “a good chemistry with and can depend on.”

In summary, while many factors could motivate assistant principals to remain in their current roles, the overarching theme of relationships was at the core of the participant’s motivation. Relationships with students were the biggest factor for a

majority of the high school assistant principals. This association was followed and linked closely to the relationship that the assistant principals developed with teachers. The assistant principals saw themselves as influencing students' outcomes when they were able to effect positive change and behaviors in teachers. High school assistant principals were also motivated to remain in their current positions by their relationship with the campus leadership team. At the forefront of these relationships was their relationship with their campus principal. High school assistant principals see the campus leader as one who sets the mission and vision of the school and for their role as high school assistant principals. The interaction that the assistant principals have with their teammates was also an important motivating factor to the high school assistant principals.

In addition to motivating factors, this study yielded themes that can be considered of a hygiene nature, according to Herzberg's paradigm (1957). Despite the fact that these perceptions aligned with the hygiene factor of Herzberg's hypothesis, the presence of this element, or in some cases the lack of this factor, could result in dissatisfaction for the assistant principals in their current jobs. Although these factors resulted in a degree of dissatisfaction, the assistant principals did not perceive these factors to be deciding influences to resign their current jobs.

Research Question 2. The second research question of this study asked: How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors affect their decision to leave their administrative positions? The responses from the 10 participants provided findings that emerged into two themes that related to hygiene factors that could influence their decision to leave their administrative position: external

factors over which assistant principals have no control (Theme 4), and opportunities for advancement and development (Theme 5). These themes relate to factors that are more extrinsic and of a hygiene nature (Herzberg, 1966).

Table 4

Hygiene Factor Themes and Descriptions

Theme	Description
4. External Factors over which assistant principals have no control	Factors that influence the assistant principal's motivation or job satisfaction levels over which they feel that they have no control.
5. Opportunities for advancement and development	Opportunities the assistant principals perceive for advancement and development.

Theme 4: External factors over which assistant principals have no control.

Assistant principals play crucial roles in school climate and student achievement (Militello et al., 2015). However, a predominant hygiene factor emerged from the data that revealed assistant principals have the perception of little to no control in the vital components of their job role. The assistant principals participated in this study enumerated five concerns: (a) rules, policy, and management; (b) parents of students; (c) difficult conversations with teachers; (d) salary and benefits; and (e) mandated testing as factors that can influence high school assistant principals to remain in or leave their current administrative positions. This overarching theme encompasses other hygiene factors that, if not balanced, could cause dissatisfaction with one's job (Herzberg, 1966).

Rules, policy, and management. In the school system hierarchy, assistant principals are a form of middle management. Although they have proven themselves as leaders in their campus, assistant principals are often deliverers of messages rather than makers of decisions. This feeling was apparent when assistant principals were asked about factors that caused them dissatisfaction in their current roles as high school assistant principals. Although these assistant principals realized they worked collaboratively as a team within the school campus, several participants expressed the lack of self-governance within the bounds of their roles. Assistant Principal K stated, “I don’t always have the ability to make the decision that I want to make.” I noted in my field notes that the assistant principal had a grimaced facial expression, appearing frustrated while making this statement. This assistant principal explained how decisions are often handed down and further commented, “It may be something above my pay grade or something as a county that we just aren’t able to do, but I would like to decide [on a few cases].” Assistant Principal D noted that the support level and how one is managed by their campus level principal could cause dissatisfaction and verbalized, “they make the decisions and we have to follow them.” Herzberg (1966) noted that this lack of autonomy within a job could often cause an imbalance in the level of one’s job satisfaction.

Some assistant principals also perceived that their voice was often not heard when it came to decisions made outside of the campus. Assistant Principal H noted, “It would be nice to get support -- not just when something goes wrong.” The assistant principal elaborated and explained that often central office seemed more reactive than proactive

and perhaps a more proactive approach with input would be better from the district, adding, and “We need to have support when it’s good and when it’s bad.” Being visited and supported in good and bad times was an important hygiene factors to the role as assistant principals.

Parents of students. One part of the job of assistant principals is working with parents. The associations that assistant principals develop with parents are essential to the success of students. Assistant principals see these interactions as challenging because they are often placed in situations where they have to explain rules to parents who may not agree with decisions that are made. Assistant Principal G stated that dealing with angry parents was a dissatisfying situation, especially when it became difficult to explain the campus procedures and policies to parents concerning school discipline that may pertain to their child. However, when asked if this caused the satisfaction level with the job to decrease the assistant principal stated, “A very small percent but not anything I could not handle.” Assistant Principal J also felt that dealing with parents was a challenge but noted that it is “difficult but it just kind of comes with the job.” Interactions with parents are essential to the success of students. Assistant principals saw these interactions as challenging, but essential to their jobs.

Difficult conversations. Assistant principals felt that conducting difficult conversations with teachers and other staff was a dissatisfying factor. Although most of the time they are enforcing a rule or policy, the assistant principals expressed that these types of conversations were problematic. Assistant Principal C felt that sometimes adults are unable to see multiple perspectives and perceive conversations that require redirection

of behavior as a reprimand and stated, “You tell them something, and they get upset, and of course you feel bad and feel dissatisfied.” Assistant Principal C also noted that it is demanding to redirect adults and that participating in confrontational situations with teachers had been one of the most difficult things to learn as an assistant principal. Assistant Principal B felt that “a faculty [member] can break you, with [Internet] tools they [teachers] have at their disposal, like social media.” The assistant principal noted that developing strong relationships was essential in these situations to build strong partnerships with the instructional staff of the campus.

Salary and benefits. Despite the fact that all assistant principals who were participants in this study indicated that pay was not a motivating factor, others stated that compensation could cause dissatisfaction. This factor is consistent with Herzberg’s (1987) paradigm that included pay as a hygiene factor. When asked about dissatisfying factors Assistant Principal H noted pay as an issue that caused dissatisfaction, but then followed by saying, “I know that this [salary] is a factor that cannot be controlled at the school level.” Other participants noted that while pay was a dissatisfying factor, they know that assistant principals are reimbursed at a higher pay level than teachers receive. Assistant Principal A said, “Pay is something that can cause dissatisfaction, but it is not at the top of my list; it is much worse for teachers.” Pay, while important, was not a factor over which assistant principals would leave their jobs.

Mandated testing. Another factor beyond the control of the assistant principals was mandated testing. Some of the assistant principals that participated in this study assumed a job role as a testing administrator meaning that this task is a high priority for

their administration at the school campus. Assistant Principal F felt strongly that testing was a source of dissatisfaction for the current job role. The assistant principal stated, “Testing puts children into a box and all children learn differently.” When asked if testing caused dissatisfaction, the assistant principal stated: “Yes, yes it does because I see the pressures associated with it.” Other assistant principals agreed, noting that the time that testing took away from classroom learning was excessive; in their opinion, and the pressure students feel was “heartbreaking,” according to Assistant Principal G.

Leadership. Only one theme appeared as a major factor in answering specific questions about why an assistant principal might choose to leave their current role as a high school assistant principal. Six of the 10 participants answered that the campus principal could influence their decision to remain or leave their current job. When asked what factors would cause him or her to leave the current role as a high school assistant principal Assistant Principal D answered “If I had a bad principal. They have so much control over what happens in a building.” Assistant principal E, when answering the same question, noted: “When you are not supported by the principal you cannot be successful.” Assistant Principal G simply stated, “Not being supported by my principal.”

Theme 5: Opportunities for advancement and development. One theme that emerged early in the coding as a hygiene factor was opportunities for career advancement and development. Assistant principals wished to see a path for opportunities that may exist beyond their current job roles. When an assistant principal wishes to seek opportunities for advancement through professional learning, the responsibility for the professional learning is self-driven or initiated by the campus principal. Assistant

Principal G noted that having worked with principals in previous positions, one specific principal that came to mind worked hard to cross train assistant principals for future leadership roles: “I learned so much about each job in the school. That didn’t happen with every principal, but it is so important to have those opportunities -- especially if you want to move forward in your career.” At the time of this study, there was no professional learning or leadership programs to promote advancement for assistant principals within the district. Assistant Principal K noted that “it can be scary [with] the vast amount of things that come across your desk that you are unsure of.” Assistant Principal K noted that there is not an assistant principals’ professional learning community, academy, or leadership group. The assistant principals spoke of how they would like to see opportunities for advancement and pathways for the future. These opportunities included the opportunities for professional learning and cross training.

The assistant principals also expressed a desire to be cross-trained to receive a wider variety of experiences to become marketable and to vary their skill sets. Assistant Principal B noted that having a “map or timeline for the future for an assistant principal, not just pay, but in terms of what are your next steps in your career” was important. Other assistant principals talked about their fear of being stagnated in their current job, especially if something were to happen to tarnish their relationship with their campus principal. Assistant principal E noted, “It is important to always keep an eye on your next steps [when dealing with leaders].” The same assistant principal noted that there was little support for assistant principals from the district level. “There are new teacher programs, and programs for principals, but there are no programs to support assistant principals.”

Assistant principals wish to know what opportunities exist for advancement and development.

Some assistant principals felt that having a wide range of experience would give them more opportunities for future jobs as a principal. Assistant principal F noted that having a wide range of job experience “helps me to see things differently and I am not sure all assistant principals get that same level of experience.” Assistant principal E felt that there might be a need to develop a mentorship program that could assist in helping aspiring principals to become better prepared. He stated, “I would love to see a program that could help aspiring principals.” Assistant principals wish to have a pathway to their next educational leadership role.

In summary, two themes emerged as hygiene factors that caused dissatisfaction for high school assistant principals. The first overarching theme was a factor over which high school assistant principals perceive to have no control within the parameters of their job description. This included subthemes of rules, policy, and management; difficult conversations; parents of students; mandated testing and pay. A fifth theme also developed from the findings. The theme of opportunities for advancement and development emerged as assistant principals shared their perceptions of how they actively seek ways to advance in their careers. The assistant principals perceived that hygiene factors influenced their satisfaction level. These hygiene factors instigated some levels of dissatisfaction, but hygiene factors alone would not be enough to cause an assistant principal to leave his or her current position. The lack of motivating factors

coupled with a high level of job dissatisfaction may influence an assistant principal to wish to leave the position

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate high school assistant principals' perceptions of assistant principal retention and attrition in a suburban Georgia school district. I wanted to discover how those who remained in their positions as assistant principals perceived the factors that may influence their peers to stay or leave their current administrative role. In Section 2 of the study, I described the exploratory qualitative case study design. Interviews were the main data source. I interviewed 10 high school assistant principals to determine their perceptions of assistant principal retention and attrition in a suburban Georgia school district. In reviewing the research, I deconstructed and coded the findings thematically. I then reorganized the findings and listed them under the research questions in a narrative form to provide a clear understanding of the data. I used a five-step analysis to analyze the data (Yin, 2011).

The results yielded five themes. The first theme highlighted the relationships that high school assistant principals had with the students they serve. This relationship revealed that the help that they are able to provide to the students motivates these assistant principals intrinsically. The themes, when organized fell under the two-factor theory umbrella of motivating and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1987)

Herzberg (1987) noted that motivation is derived from intrinsic means and when present may result in a high level of satisfaction with one's job. On a related note, the second theme found in this study was the relationship that the assistant principals develop

with the teachers they serve. Assistant principals also perceived that they were able to contribute to students' academic achievement by assisting the teachers who serve the students. Theme 3 was the factor that emerged concerning the relationship between assistant principals and their leaders. The relationship with the campus principal was perceived as a major motivating factor. Assistant principals also acknowledged the motivation they felt from their fellow high school assistant principals.

The final two themes were factors in Herzberg's (1987) theoretical framework were considered hygiene factors that could result in dissatisfaction if motivation is not present to counteract the disruption of hygiene factors. The fourth theme involved factors that are beyond the control of high school assistant principals and ranged from concerns about policy to salaries, and opportunities to grow in their administrative role. These factors were frustrating to the assistant principals but did not necessarily influence them to want to leave their current roles as high school assistant principals. The opportunity for advancement and development emerged as the second important hygiene factor. Assistant principals sometimes felt as if they were uncertain of their next career move. Some felt that having a clear pathway for advancement and needed more opportunities for leadership development.

Findings from this case study are similar to the conclusions drawn from the review of literature in several areas: (a) assistant principals are motivated intrinsically by helping students and teachers; (b) the influence of the principal on the campus is important, (c) hygiene factors alone will not cause assistant principals to leave their current jobs. Herzberg (1987) noted that motivation comes from within and when

fostered can lead to high levels of job satisfaction. When high school assistant principals are able to help students and teachers, they feel motivated to stay in their current roles. This factor has the added benefit of positively influencing student outcomes, student achievement, and school climate (Coelli & Green, 2012; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Herzberg also noted that the presence or lack of hygiene factors alone does not cause job satisfaction to lessen. However, when these factors are or are not present, coupled with the lack of or increase in motivation, one's level of job satisfaction may change. In this study, findings indicated that leadership, affected motivation factors directly and could affect the hygiene factors through various rules, policies, and management and thus can be considered important in this study to high school assistant principals' decisions to remain in their current roles.

Section 3 includes a description of the project that I developed as a result of this study. The project is a white paper to be presented to the superintendent and executive team. The white paper includes a summary of the qualitative data that resulted from the research conducted in this study.

Section 3: The Project

In this section, I describe the white paper project that I developed to address the findings of a study conducted in a suburban Georgia school district. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate high school assistant principals' perceptions of assistant principal retention and attrition in a suburban Georgia school district. This qualitative study obtains high school assistant principals' perceptions of both motivating and hygiene factors that could influence their decision to remain in their current position as high school assistant principals. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions?
2. How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors as affecting their decision to leave their administrative positions?

The results of this study yielded five themes, three related to motivating factors and two related to hygiene factors. The three themes related to factors that motivated assistant high school principals to remain in their job roles were (a) relationships with students, (b) relationships with teachers, and (c) relationships with leaders. The two hygiene factors revealed in this study that may exert a negative response to remaining in the role of a high school assistant principal were external factors over which assistant principals have no control and opportunities for advancement and development.

A white paper (Appendix A) was the most appropriate for sharing the findings of the study with the superintendent of the Matthews County School District. In this section, I discuss the goals of the project and the rationale for choosing the project, and I review literature. Finally, I conclude with an implementation timeline along with implications for social change.

Description and Goals

The goal of the white paper was to share the results and offer recommendations based on this research with the superintendent and the executive district leadership team to increase the retention of high-quality high school assistant principals. The results of this study indicated that high school assistant principals are motivated by the students and teachers they serve. The results also indicated that the principal, under which the high school assistant principal serves, plays a key role in assistant principals motivation to remain in their jobs. Hygiene factors also influence high school assistant principals. The study revealed that assistant principals found dissatisfaction in external factors that influenced their jobs. Assistant principals also communicated that they wished to have a clear career pathway for moving beyond the assistant principalship. The white paper also highlights the issue of high school assistant principal retention and attrition at the state and national level through a review of literature. I chose a white paper because it is the most effective way to share this information in a well-defined and succinct way.

Rationale

By presenting data from this qualitative study to the superintendent and executive leadership team from the school district, my project will inform leaders concerning high

school assistant principals' perceptions about factors that influence them to remain in the school district (Clay, 2012; Ocque, 2016; Webster, 2016). This insight could assist district leaders to make better decisions about retention of high school assistant principals. Because of the nature of the research, I wanted to present the data in a clear and concise manner. As a district, 65% of high school assistant principals chose to remain in their current position as high school assistant principals. Gaining a better understanding of what influences those assistant principals to remain in their jobs could help determine why 35% of high school assistant principals choose to leave their current roles as high school assistant principals. A white paper allows me to provide district leaders with the pertinent information that they need to make decisions about ways to retain high school assistant principals in the future.

Review of the Literature

This literature review for this project focuses on a white paper, and the results yielded in the five themes from the data collection. I conducted the literature search using Walden University's online databases ERIC, Education Research Complete, SAGE full text database and Google Scholar. The terms that I used were *white paper*, *executive summary*, *motivating factors*, *hygiene factors*, *high school assistant principal*, *attrition*, *turnover*, *student growth*, *student achievement*, and *school leadership*.

Literature Supporting White Papers

The use of white papers takes information that is detailed and lengthy and summarizes it into a document that is well written to meet the need of specific audiences (Sakamuro & Stolley, 2010). The use of white papers originated for government use in

the United Kingdom in the early 20th century (Graham, 2013; Steizner 2010). These documents helped legislators decide their positions on particular issues (Kantor, 2010).

In time, the use of white papers spread beyond government agencies. Kantor (2009) found that a vital function of white papers was to “educate” the reader (p. 11). Although the use of white papers can be found across many professions their use in academic papers has increased (Gordon & Gordon, 2003). Graham (2013) found that one function of white papers is to inform readers of a problem backed by research and data and to provide recommendations for the solution of the problem. Hoffman (2013) established that a main function of white papers is to inform readers and provide steps or recommendations for future action. My project follows the recommendation of this literature review by presenting the problem, research, and recommendations to the reader in a clear, concise format.

Writing the White Paper

The white paper is an article written to disseminate information and to present a position on a specific topic or situation. Researchers frequently use this distribution process to present findings in a concise manner to an intended audience (Powell, 2012). The white paper presented in this study shares the results of the qualitative study, which yielded five themes organized using Herzberg’s (1987) motivating and hygiene theory as the conceptual framework. Kemp (2005) noted that a clear explanation of topics is vital for a white paper to communicate to the targeted audience. To create the white paper for this study, I used Kemp’s (2005) process for writing a white paper that includes the following:

- Identifying the audience.
- Determining how to share the report.
- Organizing the data and information for recipients for the paper.
- Writing and reviewing the document.
- Publishing the report for distribution.

The audience for this paper is the superintendent and the district executive leadership team. Before beginning the writing process, I wanted to address how to share the white paper. I decided that it would be advantageous to distribute the document in print form and include a power point during the presentation of this study. Each recipient will receive a copy of the white paper. The power point to be shared with stakeholders summarizes the study. The white paper was peer reviewed by the assistant principals from other districts who assisted me in the earlier stages of this research (Kemp, 2005).

Next, I reviewed the data from Sections 1 and 2 of this qualitative study and organized the data in a way that the intended audience will understand and internalize the data (Kemp, 2005). The narrative of the document was specifically targeted for the intended audience using language that is easily understood with tables to summarize information (Kemp, 2005; Powell, 2013). After final reviews of the white paper, I plan to publish it for distribution to the superintendent and the executive leadership team (Kemp, 2005). Following these steps allows me to share the results of this study with the superintendent and executive leadership team in a clear, concise manner.

Literature Findings Related to the Findings of the Study

This review of literature is a result of the findings that emerged from the analysis of this study. The purpose of the white paper was to inform a particular group of people about a specific research problem, the results of the research, and recommendations to improve the problem. The problem that existed was a local educational problem concerning the issue of high school assistant principals' retention and attrition in the school district. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate high school assistant principals' perceptions of assistant principal retention and attrition. I wanted to ascertain how those who remained in their positions as high school assistant principals perceived factors that could have influenced a decision stay or leave their current role.

Motivating and Hygiene Factors

Herzberg's (1957) two-factor theory addressed the theories of motivation and hygiene related to employee job satisfaction. Motivating factors can be intrinsic in nature and help one to feel as if they have had an influence in the lives of others (Hertzberg, 1987). Hygiene factors are often factors over which employees have little control and are often external (Hertzberg, 1987). Herzberg (1966) noted that while the two factors are independent of one another, both must be present and satisfied for someone to truly be content at their job.

This qualitative study yielded five themes associated with the job satisfaction of high school assistant principals. Three themes were factors that high school assistant principals found to be motivating and cause them great satisfaction in their job roles: relationships with students, relationships with teachers, and relationships with leaders.

Two of the factors were not motivating factors and were associated with hygiene factors: external factors over which assistant principals have no control, and opportunities for advancement and development.

Relationships with Students

One of the motivating factors for assistant principals was their relationships with students. Throughout the data collection process, high school assistant principals felt that the relationships they developed with students influenced them in a positive way and found these relationships motivating. Heck and Hallinger's research (2014) stated that school assistant principals exerted an influence on student learning. Although assistant principals are expected to meet the needs of their principal, subordinates, and other stakeholders research findings indicated that the stakeholder they feel the most important factor is the students that they serve (Mercer, 2016). Assistant principals find the relationships built with students and the influence that they have on the students' lives and academic learning to be meaningful (Mercer, 2016). Petrides, Jimes, and Karaglani (2014) found that despite challenges in the way they have to carry out their jobs, most assistant principals view themselves as focused on instruction to help students. Assistant principals influence student growth, and achievement and their relationships with students motivate them (DuFour & Marzano, 2015; Petrides et al., 2014).

Relationships with Teachers

A second theme, which was also a motivating factor, was the relationships that high school assistant principals developed with teachers. This study showed that assistant principals valued their affiliations with teachers and perceived that there was a direct link

between that relationship and the academic achievement of students. This finding substantiates the research of Lochmiller's (2015) study of instructional leadership of assistant principals that found school assistant principals could affect student's achievement and growth. In the study, Lochmiller noted that the feedback assistant principals gave instructors had a direct influence on how a teacher deliver instruction (2015). These instructional delivery strategies influence student growth and achievement.

Assistant principals play a role in school climate through teacher support and development. Ostabutey-Aguedje (2015) argued that the success of assistant principals was dependent on their ability to listen and help develop teachers. Assistant principals perceive that the environmental climate of the school may be improved by providing quality feedback and support to teachers (Simon & Johnson, 2015). In a study concerning teacher turnover in Los Angeles, researchers found that teachers correlated the climate and cohesion of the school staff with the strength of the school assistant principals (Fuller, Waite, & Torres, 2016). In the study, teachers' personal intrinsic motivation levels were studied alongside the strength of the school leadership. The results indicated that the teachers' views on school leadership and the climate of the school was a better predictor of teacher retention than the teachers own intrinsic motivation levels (Fuller et. al., 2016). Assistant principals are motivated by their relationships with teachers.

Relationships with Leaders

The third motivating factor yielded from this study was the relationship that the high school assistant principals experienced with other leaders. The focus of much of the interview discussion centered on the importance of the leader of the campus, the school

principal. However, these relationships were not limited to the principal but included the relationships that the assistant principal developed with his or her administrative colleagues. Relationships with leaders motivated assistant principals' job satisfaction in this study.

The principal is the leader of the school campus. Researchers found that the management of the campus principal influences student achievement, school climate, teacher retention, and assistant principal retention (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005). Because the principal influences all aspects of the campus, assistant principals perceive the relationship that they have with the principal to be important to student and teacher outcomes (Miller, Goddard, Kim, Jacob, Goddard & Schroeder, 2016). Assistant principals also see the need to have support from their principal to prepare them to become principals (Shore & Walshaw, 2016). Assistant principals see the relationship that they have with their principal as one of importance.

Assistant principals perceived the relationship they have with the other assistant principals was important and motivating. Binyamin, Carmeli, and Freidman (2016) found that the work environment and social relationships in that environment are crucial to organizations success. Researchers noted that cohesion of the school leadership team was an important part of school climate and could affect teacher retention (Fuller et al., 2016). Assistant principals were motivated by their relationships with their peers.

External Factors Over Which Assistant Principals Have No Control

The first of the themes was considered a hygiene factor, which was an external factor over which assistant principals have no control. This factor included elements like

pay, policies, and decisions made by others that directly affected the scope of the assistant principals' jobs. In a study of new administrators, researchers found that many assistant principals begin their careers wishing to increase student achievement and work towards school improvement (Armstrong, 2015). The study concluded, however, that assistant principals face many hindrances when trying to reach their goals that included external factors such as policies and procedures (Armstrong, 2015). Many assistant principals view their ability to help students and teachers important to their occupational role and perceive limited control of administrative duties a challenge to job satisfaction (Armstrong, 2015).

Additional external factors also influence the job satisfaction of assistant principal. Tran (2017) found that while pay satisfaction does not always indicate an administrator's intent to leave a job, it could influence their satisfaction levels. The study found that administrators often compare their pay to that of their peers and then add the additional step of comparing student achievement levels before determining how their job satisfaction is affected. When achievement levels are the same, yet the Assistant principals pay is lower, the administrator tended to have lower pay satisfaction levels (Tran, 2017).

Another external hygiene factor associated with assistant principals' perceptions of job satisfaction was that there was limited control of testing processes. Leaders and teachers felt that the external pressures of testing limited students' ability to learn valuable critical thinking skills (Smith, 2013). Assistant principals argued that time was wasted on constant test administration when they could be helping students and teachers

improve levels of instruction (Armstrong, 2015). External factors over which assistant principals have no control can cause job dissatisfaction for assistant principals.

Opportunities for Advancement and Development

A final theme that emerged from the research was the assistant principals desire to have advancement and development in their careers. Just as teachers wish to have ways to advance to leadership opportunities, many assistant principals desire opportunities to become principals (Armstrong, 2015). A 2014 study found that assistant principals lack the unique professional development that is needed to help prepare them to become principals (Allen, James & Weaver, 2014). The study indicated that a wide range of professional development was needed to help assistant principals grow and develop (Allen et al., 2014). Some assistant principals also felt that principals should play an active role in helping to prepare them for the next job opportunity that may exist within the district. Shore and Warshaw (2016) noted that assistant principals valued the support they received to help them grow was leaders from their principals. Assistant principals were dissatisfied when there was a perception that opportunities for advancement did not exist.

Recommendations

The results of this study yield two recommendations. First, the results of the data collected from this study suggest that the district consider a leadership academy for high school assistant principals. Throughout the course of the interviews, assistant principals mentioned needed a pathway forward towards professional learning and towards growth in their next position in leadership. Researchers noted that school assistant principals felt

strong sense of job security when there was a clear pathway for advancement (Armstrong, 2015). Assistant Principal F noted that “there is a real need for assistant principals to see beyond just their four walls; they are never able to see outside of their school. Having some sort of program or avenue for that would be nice.” Assistant Principal E noted that there were programs currently in place for teachers in the district but that “I would love to see more programs for administrators to help keep them motivated and help them advance and keep them in the field.” Some assistant principals felt like they often become mired in one role and no one sees them as anything except in an assistant principals’ position. Assistant Principal D noted “It would be good if there was a leadership program that taught us, but also got us in front of other leaders where we could showcase our talents. It may help us advance.” The need for direct opportunities for advancement and professional learning were a specific recommendation of the participants of the study.

A leadership academy for assistant principals could provide assistant principals the opportunity to collaborate and build capacity and leadership skills to become prepared for their next leadership roles. In a qualitative case study of a professional development academy for assistant principals, researchers found that participants reported an increase in leadership skills because they were able to gain knowledge through professional learning to fill specific, self-identified leadership deficits (Gurley, Anast-May & Lee, 2015). The program was developed when district leaders became alarmed because a number of principals planned to retire and there was a gap in the number of assistant principals who were ready and able to fill these leadership positions (Gurley et al., 2015).

The results of the study indicated that the district leaders found that the program was a success and as a result were able to fill a majority of the vacated principal positions from the participants in the academy. District and school leaders felt that all participants experienced professional growth (Gurley et al., 2015).

In order to grow as leaders, assistant principals require specific experiences and professional learning to develop their skills (Petrides, Jimes & Karaglani, 2014). In North Carolina, state leaders saw this a need when they chose to spend their federal Race to the Top dollars on increasing the number of qualified administrators to leader low-income schools through regional leadership academies (Brown, 2016). These academies focused on facilitating teachers to become administrators and assistant principals to develop the leadership skills for principalships through professional learning, which followed through with early career support (Brown, 2016). This academy model envisioned the need for succession planning from the ground up due to an impending shortage of assistant principals and principals within the state. Providing the educators with the tools that needed through leadership academies was a way to thwart the crisis before it began.

A leadership academy could also foster a sense of connectedness to the school and district for high school assistant principals. Participants in an Arkansas leadership academy felt that they had a stronger sense of leadership and connectedness to their school and district than the administrators who did not participant in the leadership academy (Airola, Bengston, Davis, & Peer, 2014). The sense of affiliation, as experienced in a leadership academy, could help to increase the retention levels of high school assistant principals.

A second recommendation gleaned from the analysis of the data from this research would be for the superintendent and the executive leadership team to consider a leadership forum for assistant principals. The assistant principals do not always feel that they have a voice in decisions that are being made. They see themselves as middle management and have a strong desire to have a voice in the decision making process of the school system. Creating a forum where they have an appropriate setting to voice their concerns and hear directly from the superintendent and district leaders would provide them a great opportunity to bridge a perceived communication gap.

Sometimes assistant principals perceive they do not have a voice in district decisions that are made. These factors over which they have no control seemed to frustrate the assistant principals. Assistant Principal J noted that “a lot of complaints are not addressed by supervisors, and you never know if it’s your supervisor not addressing them or if it’s the district office because you don’t have access to the district office because of the chain of command.” Other assistant principals made mention of wanting to feel supported by district officials all the time rather than in emergency situations or when situations failed to align with district expectations. Assistant Principal H noted, “If you could take one thing away I would say we can’t just be thrown out there [by ourselves]. We need to have support when it’s good or bad.” Assistant Principal K noted that “Sometimes we just want to hear from the district leaders at times when we aren’t doing things wrong.” Assistant principals perceive that their voices and opinions are not heard by district leaders.

Providing a forum for assistant principals to hear from district leadership and the superintendent could foster a strong sense of connectedness and help ease the frustrations that assistant principals feel with decisions that are made at the district level. In a study that investigated how principals and teachers perceived their superintendents, the researchers found that superintendents were perceived more positively when they used varied approaches to communicate decision-making processes within the district (Devono & Price 2012). Providing this additional avenue for communication could assist in increasing the job satisfaction of high school assistant principals by increasing their affiliation to district leadership and providing collaborative support for district policies and practices. Currently, district forums are held with parents, business owners, teachers, and principals. The virtue and benefit of such forums is presently experienced within the district. The addition of an assistant principals' forum may prove to strengthen the district by increasing the retention of high school assistant principals.

Implementation

Based upon the findings from the study, the resulting project is a white paper. The summary will be presented to the superintendent and the executive leadership team in the local district in the spring of 2018. The purpose is to present the results of the study in a clear and succinct manner and to present recommendations and strategies for reducing high school assistant principal attrition as a direct result of the findings from this study. Pre-planning for this presentation of the white paper includes attention to potential resources and existing supports, potential barriers, proposal implementation, and

timetable, as well as the roles and responsibilities that I and any other stakeholders may have to implement this project.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

I created a white paper to disseminate to the intended audience, the superintendent and the executive leadership team. The document contains the qualitative data highlighting the results of the study and recommendations for consideration by the district. I included both electronic and print versions of the document. The superintendent has provided support for this research. In addition to the superintendent's support, the deputy superintendent of schools reviewed the initial proposal and submitted the letter of cooperation.

Potential Barriers

Recommendations from this study include an assistant principals' academy and an assistant principals' forum. In both of these cases, there is a cost associated with these suggestions that may create a potential barrier to establishing these recommendations. Professional development of assistant principals could be an ongoing cost. Additionally, unless professional improvement of leadership training occurs when students are not in school, these assistant principals would be out of the school setting, which could create a hardship on their principal and other campus leaders.

Another suggestion is to systematically review procedures and policies that could negatively affect school level assistant principals. Additional barriers include motivating the various district departments to recognize the role that is played in the retention of high school assistant principals. Providing a systematic review of processes and

procedures could alleviate some of the external strain that high school assistant principals experience.

Finally, a review of hiring practices needs to ensure that all school leaders are highly qualified and prepared for their roles. A barrier to this recommendation could be the mindset of principals and district leaders about hiring. The decision to hire assistant principals must be based upon the best, most highly qualified person for the position regardless of seniority or other external factors.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Strategic planning to present this white paper to district officials is important in order to provide the results of this study and offer the recommendations for change based on the findings of the research. After presenting the white paper in the spring of 2018 to the superintendent's executive team, my plan for implementation is to work with the district level team to adopt a plan of action to help decrease the attrition of high school assistant principals. At the pleasure of the superintendent, I would like to share the findings with the high school leadership team in the spring of 2018 to work towards implementing potential solutions during the hiring season for the following school year.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

My role is that of a researcher. During the initial research, I conducted the research through gathering the data, analyzing the data, and then compiling the data. During this phase of the project study, I am responsible to create of the white paper and to continue the agenda of these recommendations after the initial presentation to the

school board and superintendent about the suggestions that were made to improve the local problem of attrition of high school assistant principals.

The MCSS is also an important stakeholder in this project. The deputy superintendent of schools provided me initial permission to conduct research in the school system. The high school principals granted me access to the schools. The superintendent allowed me to work in the district on a local problem. The high school assistant principals chose to participate in the study. This collaboration was essential to the completion of the research and implementation of the project.

Project Evaluation

A formative evaluation will be used for this project study. The goal of this white paper is to provide the readers with the information in a succinct manner that is easy to read and understand with recommendations regarding strategies to improve retention that are in addition to the findings of this study. Using a formative evaluation as a method to evaluate the project will help me to understand if this has occurred. Stull, Varnum, Ducette, and Schiller (2011) found that that formative evaluation allows one to immediately assess if the learning targets have been met.

The white paper will be presented to the district executive team and, as approved, to the members of the Board of Education. Throughout my white paper presentation, I will encourage the audience members to ask clarifying questions that they may have about the research or the study. This will also allow me to gain insight into their understanding of the project. I will provide the audience with a brief survey at the end of the presentation. The survey will probe the audience in an attempt to gain their feedback

and thoughts on the recommendations presented in the white paper, and how the recommendations could be implemented within the district.

After the meeting, the surveys will be collected. The data will be analyzed and placed into a spreadsheet for review and further discussion with the superintendent. This evaluation will help to improve the project by providing valuable formative feedback about the recommendations and how best to implement them within the district. The ultimate purpose of this project evaluation is to increase the retention of assistant principals within the district.

Implications Including Social Change

As a result of this study, the potential for positive social change may be realized on two levels; first at the local community level and second with broader social change implications beyond the district of study. The project addressed a local problem of high school assistant principal attrition and retention. The findings presented in the white paper reveal that the assistant principals who stay in their current roles as high school assistant principals do so for intrinsic reasons and are motivated by the students and teachers with whom they work. The research findings indicate that retaining high-quality high school assistant principals influences both students and teachers. Thus, positive social change could come at a local level from this project providing insight into high school assistant principals perceptions about retention and attrition. Additionally, the project could increase the retention of high school assistant principals.

Allowing high school assistant principals to have the opportunity to grow professionally through a leadership academy will allow them to influence the teachers

and students in their school. This cascading effect has a long-lasting, far-reaching effect that could potentially create social change in the local community for many years to come (Beatriz, Deborah, & Hunter 2008; Marzano et al., 2005). Additionally, by providing the assistant principals a voice through a forum of their peers, change may occur in schools that may not have occurred under prior circumstances. Assistant principals desire to be a part of the solution for the students they serve. These advocacy and problem-solving opportunities could take place at these forums and may bring about a new social change that has not existed within the district.

This study also has a far-reaching capacity. The study's findings expand limited research that exists concerning high school assistant principal attrition. The study's research placed the focus on the assistant principals who stay rather than those who leave. Thus, the gap in research is narrowed by the addition of this study. Furthermore, this research adds to the growing body of work that spotlights the need for more educators in the field of leadership, especially in schools and school systems where the majority of students live in poverty.

Conclusion

This section described the project, a white paper, to be shared with the superintendent and the executive leadership team. The best way to disseminate the results of the project study was through a white paper, which highlighted the results of the qualitative study designed to determine high school assistant principals' perceptions related to their decisions to remain in their current role as high school assistant principals. In Section 4, I will reflect on the project and discuss the potential influence the project

may have on social change. I will also suggest future research and address my own growth as a scholar.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate high school assistant principals' perceptions of attrition and retention in a suburban Georgia school district. I used Herzberg's (1957) two-factor theory as a framework for determining motivating and hygiene factors that influenced assistant principals' decisions to remain in their current positions as high school assistant principals. The results of the study culminated in a white paper to be delivered and presented to the superintendent with summary results and recommendations for improving the local problem. The purpose of Section 4 is to present my reflections about the study, the findings, and the project. I include a discussion of strengths, limitations, and recommendations.

Project Strengths and Limitations

School leadership influences student achievement, school culture, and teacher retention (Vartika & Sangeeta, 2016). MCSS had a high level of attrition among high school assistant principals. This continued turnover affected the fidelity of district program implementation and the stability of leadership staffs. The findings from this study showed that leaders were motivated to stay in their current roles by the students and teachers they served. They were also motivated by the leadership they served under. Their job satisfaction was influenced by external factors that were beyond their control such as policies and procedures that they had no input in deciding, testing, and the leadership that they served under. My project had three strengths: (a) I used data derived from the interviews about current assistant principals' perceptions of motivating and

hygiene factors related to their jobs, (b) I provided the culminating white paper, and (c) I will deliver the accompanying presentation of the white paper.

Assistant principals are vital to school (Leaf & Odhiambo 2017). The use of data derived from the interviews about current assistant principals' perceptions is a strength because it provides insight into why current leaders chose to stay in their current roles and what could make them chose to leave. Sharing this valuable information in the form of a white paper could help school and district leaders decrease the attrition rate of high school assistant principals by bringing an awareness to the problem of high school assistant principal attrition and to solutions for the problem.

The culminating project, the white paper, was the most significant strength of the project study. The white paper and presentation summarized the problem, study, results, and recommendations in a clear and concise manner. I created the document with the intended audience, the district leadership team, in mind (Kemp, 2005) and I shared information with the reader about the problem. The reader is able to ascertain background information to the problem in an appropriate readability presentation with tables to visually illustrate the issues. I disaggregated and summarized the data in chart form so that the reader could see the outcome of the research at a glance. Finally, I made recommendations based on the data gathered from the current high school assistant principals. The white paper may be relevant to other districts that are experiencing high levels of attrition among high school assistant principals.

The third strength of the project study was the accompanying slide presentation. This presentation, like the white paper, has an intended audience of external stakeholders,

boards of education, or other districts to be able to gain a synopsis of the research in presentation form. Having the summary in an additional format allows me to reach a wider audience and share the information with a varied audience of stakeholders who need to understand the problem of high school assistant principal attrition and who may have the ability to institute the recommendations. In addition, this format allows for dialog to be created between me and those to whom I am presenting.

A limitation of the project is the inability to predict whether or not the recommendations in the white paper will be implemented. While I will attempt to implement my plan to meet with the superintendent and the executive leadership team, as well as with the board of education, I am unable to predict if the outcome of those meetings will result in full implementation of these recommendations. Additionally, money and time will remain limitations of the project study implementation.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I designed a project that addressed a problem at a local level. The project must be presented to several groups of stakeholders. Once the presentations are complete, the next limitation is the scheduling of additional meetings of groups of gate-keepers to decide which of the recommendations would best address high school assistant principal attrition. These recommendations will require time and financial commitments from the district.

The project presented two recommendations for improving high school assistant principal attrition and retention. First a leadership academy for high school assistant principals and second a leadership forum for high school assistant principals. Based on

the findings of this study, alternative approaches to address this type of problem could be accomplished by three varying means.

1. Professional learning for assistant principals throughout the school year.
2. Hiring a leadership consultant to evaluate school and district leaders to provide specialized feedback and professional learning aimed at increasing retention of high school assistant principals.
3. Creating a principal leadership program that is modeling effective principal leadership.

Providing additional professional learning for assistant principals throughout the school year could be an alternative recommendation for addressing high school assistant principal attrition. Data from the study indicated that some participants wished to have additional opportunities for professional learning. However, research findings indicate that professional learning alone will not fully support administrators in a way that will create positive outcomes which could possibly decrease attrition (Petrides, Jimes, & Karaglani, 2014). Professional learning programs, however, when paired with an internship or mentor model tend to be more effective (Leaf & Odhiambo 2017). Additionally, providing professional learning for assistant principals would incur financial outlay and if provided throughout the school year would necessitate assistant principals leaving their campus during the school day, which may cause a disruption for the school and system in their absence.

Hiring a leadership consultant to evaluate school and district leaders to provide specialized feedback and professional learning aimed at increasing retention of high

school assistant principals is also an alternative recommendation for addressing high school assistant principal attrition. Procuring an outside expert in the field of educational leadership could provide a fresh perspective on the management and governance of the schools and district as a whole. This approach would allow for the schools and the district to receive external feedback and suggestions from an additional source. This recommendation, too, would incur an expense on the part of the district. Additionally, an outside expert would provide perspective but may not solve the problem of attrition depending on the services the consultant provides.

Creation of a principal leadership program that models effective principal leadership is a final alternative approach for addressing high assistant principal attrition. The high school assistant principals in the study perceived that principals' leadership could be both a motivating and a hygiene factor. With the leadership of the campus principal in mind, addressing the needs of the principals and providing them additional training could influence their assistant principals. Similar to the other two alternative approaches, this recommendation would cost the district additional funds and take time away from the principals' schedules and most likely necessitate off-campus participation away from their schools.

The local problem of high school assistant principal attrition can be addressed in varied ways. Through the white paper in my project, I recommended a leadership academy and a leadership forum for high school assistant principals. Alternative approaches also exist for these options. Those alternatives may include financial

considerations and be time prohibitive, for which the white paper was designed to compensate.

Scholarship, Project Development, Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

The doctoral process to create this project study cultivated three areas of scholarly growth. I matured as a student of research, a scholar of peer-reviewed literature as well as development of my research abilities to analyze the findings of this research study, and as a developer of educational projects to benefit administrator leadership. Upon completion of this research, as I reflect on my growth, I see how each of these areas contribute to my role as a scholar practitioner.

Scholarship

My journey has been one of self-reflection and discovery. I have grown as a scholar, practitioner, and professional throughout the doctoral candidacy process. My goal was to gain an understanding of the process of conducting research and to complete a project study that would be meaningful and facilitate positive change at the local level. I have been able to achieve those goals with the help of the Walden University faculty and staff and through the efforts of my patient committee members.

When I began my doctoral journey, I would not have described myself as a researcher. I began with simple library searches and eventually learned to do very complex searches to narrow down very specific articles and topics. I learned to determine whether a literary source was scholarly and peer reviewed and to evaluate the validity of the source to determine if it would be of value for this research. Through the literature review process, I learned that organization was important and that my conceptual

framework was a vital part of my study. When I began my study, I did not understand the importance of the conceptual framework. As my literature review grew, I began to see the framework in literature, and I could relate it to articles I read even when it was not referenced. Through the editing process, I learned to weave my theoretical framework throughout all parts of the research and apply it in throughout all aspects of this research. It became an identifying factor of the project rather than s simply a section of the study I was writing.

As I collected data, I learned about self-reflection through the identification of my potential bias as a researcher in this study. I did this through the bracketing process (Wall et al., 2004). I kept a journal, and I wrote down my thoughts. At first, I felt that this tedious practice was overwhelming, but as I grew as a researcher, I found it liberating to know that the things I wrote were not influencing my research. I have begun to use that practice in my professional life as well. Writing and journaling have continued to keep me aware of my bias as a practicing educator.

I learned to fully analyze data. Prior to this project, my experience with data were quantitative in nature. The process of deconstructing and reconstructing the data associated with words that people said and identifying themes from them was challenging. I was challenged while organizing the themes of this study and as I attempted to produce scholarly writing to illuminate those themes and create a voice for the participants of this study. My chair and committee provided feedback to help me with that process. I felt that I grew significantly during that procedure more so than other area of this scholarly study.

I learned to accept questioning as a way to grow. My committee helped me to identify as a scholar through the rigorous questioning and revision process. During the data collection and analysis portion, I learned that the questioning I experienced was all worth it because I was prepared to take on the task of interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing the data. Through the peer review process with each participant of this study, I learned the value of scholarly dialogue and discourse. I discovered there are others who wished to help and who saw the value in the project that I was completing. My findings resulted in a white paper. The summary is accompanied by a slide presentation. Although I had seen these types of summaries in my current vocation, I was unfamiliar with the amount of time, work, and effort that it took to create a substantiated white paper. I have been able to utilize the knowledge that I gained in other aspects of my professional life as I prepare summaries for various groups and community organizations.

Project Development

The project was designed based upon the perceptions of high school assistant principals in a Georgia suburban school district. I felt an overwhelming need to get this information to the district leadership. These high school assistant principals were asked to share their beliefs about attrition and retention based upon Herzberg's (1957) two-factor theory. Herzberg's argues that there are two theory's that drive job satisfaction: motivation and hygiene factors (1957).

The findings from this study of high school assistant principal retention and attrition supported the development of a white paper. Before I could write a white paper, I had to know more about this type of report. I researched various white paper

submissions and found that the content of the white paper was arranged in a clear and well-defined manner. I read other project studies that used similar formats to see how they arranged their white papers. I determined that a white paper was not only the most appropriate project for this research, but also that this summary developed a skill that would help me as I progressed in my educational career. The white paper allowed me to provide the district administrators a sharp focus on the factors that motivate high school assistant principals to stay in their current roles and those factors that deter them from remaining in their current roles as high school assistant principals.

Providing this information in a succinct way can prompt a change. It allows the reader to see the problem, the data, and recommendations for solving the problem in a short amount of time and in one document. The development of the project portion of this study was different from the research I conducted in that it did not include all aspects of the research but rather a summary of the research for a broad audience.

Leadership and Change

Through the development of my research and project study, I have increased my capacity as a leader. First, I used my ability as a researcher to support my goals as a professional. I provided peer reviewed research to colleagues in meetings. I have also cited articles during dialog with co-workers and other associates to substantiate various points of view on topics that affect my job responsibilities. Finally, I find myself engaged in reading scholarly journals to stay abreast of trends in education.

Second, I modeled my support for learning through the pursuit of this doctorate. By continuing my education, I have shown that one can never gain enough knowledge

and one can always consider new aspects of any topic in the field of education. The skills I developed through research and project development helped me to become an effective leader. I use my research skills daily preparing for meetings, presentations, and professional learning. The skills I learned developing the white paper assist me to prepare and deliver messages to various groups and educational stakeholders. These skills also helped me learn to cull large amounts of information into a smaller clear and concise format for readers to understand to act on a problem issue. Ultimately, through my continued education, I have modeled life-long learning that will help sustain my growth as an educational and civic leader.

Reflections on the Importance of the Work

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

As a scholar, I learned the importance of peer reviewed literature in establishing a substantiated view point. Reading and summarizing literature allowed me to expand my content knowledge and study administrative leadership, attrition, retention, and culture. Performing the qualitative research in this study helped me to gain an understanding of how to choose a methodological design, conduct research, and analyze data. Combining those skills allowed me to analyze the data and support my findings. I gained valuable experience during the data coding process as I learned to deconstruct qualitative data. This process was something with which I was unfamiliar and had not performed in any prior learning experience. Finally, the creation of the white paper taught me about synthesizing and how to consider one's audience to present findings from a study to stakeholders in the local school district in order to effect positive social change. I

embraced my role as a scholar and found that I felt emboldened by the new role. I became empowered by the research findings and felt a sense of duty and responsibility to share what I knew may help bring about change through the project study that I was attempting to implement locally.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

The research process taught me about perseverance. I established the goal of getting my doctorate many years ago. Through the help of my committee, I was able to establish goals, collaborate with them and with others to meet those goals. I learned that one could not succeed without the help of others. My professors during my coursework helped prepare me for the research. My committee collaborated with me and provided feedback along the way. The participants in my study gave of their time. The peer reviewers chose to help me to make this project stronger by reviewing both the research and then reviewing the project itself prior to me releasing it to the public.

I learned that my thoughts and ideas must be backed by research. In my current role as an educational leader, I now look to researchers' findings when there is a problem to be reconciled. When in meetings, I often find myself pointing to research to clarify my point of view or to provide substance to a particular stance I am taking in a debate. I also now know how to clearly define and articulate problems. Defining the problem statement for this research was a daunting task, but what it taught me was to clearly define a problem based on substantiated evidence from scholarly literature rather than haphazardly calling something a problem, which may not truly be what one is trying to solve.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

The development of a white paper was a valuable skill that I will use in the future. What I most valued was the ability to cull the information into what the reader would most need to make an informed decision to solve the problem that exists. Getting the information into the hands of those who can make a change can sometimes start the catalyst for change. This was not something to which I was accustomed. However, this skill has already proved beneficial to be in my career as I have been able to share with other leaders how to adjust their presentations to the needs of different audiences using the process I used creating the white paper.

Analysis of the data showed that the high school assistant principals were most motivated by the students that they served. There was an overwhelming sense of devotion to the students and to helping them to succeed. This motivation followed closely by the second reason that motivated them which was working with teachers. Overall, the high school assistant principals were very motivated by helping the teachers that they served. This motivation was second only to helping students. These high school assistant principals were also motivated by their relationships with their colleagues and by the leadership for whom they worked.

Assistant principals also shared things that caused them dissatisfaction, and that could possibly make them wish to leave their current position as high school assistant principals. These administrators' perceptions comprised of factors over which they had no control such as rules and policies that they had no input in developing. Testing was also a factor over which they perceived to have little or no contribution. Assistant

principals also wished to have access to leadership development to gain insight into other roles and responsibilities in educational administrative leadership. The implication for social change could be the reduction of attrition rates should the recommendations that were developed from this research be implemented. The study expands the limited research that currently exists on high school assistant principal attrition and retention thus narrowing a gap in research which also promotes social change. The decrease in high school assistant principal attrition can positively affect students. One administrator has the ability to influence hundreds of students in a given year, decreasing the attrition rate of high school assistant principals could positively influence social change.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

This culminating project was the result of research of high school assistant principal attrition in a suburban Georgia school district. The project influenced the individuals studied, the organization, and has the potential to effect society as a whole. The individuals affected by the study were high school assistant principals. The organization affected was the school district. Finally, through sharing this project, this project could affect society as a whole.

Change for the Individual

The local problem of high school assistant principal attrition was researched during a qualitative study of 10 high school assistant principals. Findings from the data indicated that high school assistant principals were motivated to stay in their current roles as high school assistant principals by the students and teachers they served. They also enjoyed and were motivated by the relationships cultivated with their peers and the

leaders with whom they worked. These administrators felt a sense of pride when the students they served achieved at high levels or experienced academic growth. Those same high school assistant principals had lower job satisfaction levels when certain hygiene factors were present in their jobs. Among the hygiene factors that caused them dissatisfaction were factors that were beyond the control of the administrators such as policies, testing, and leadership decisions. The high school assistant principals also felt a strong desire to have a plan of action for growth beyond their current positions.

This project brings a new awareness to the problem of high school assistant principal attrition. Although the district currently has methods in place to determine why employees leave the district, the white paper sheds light on why current high school assistant principals remain in their job roles. Additionally, the recommendations were taken directly from the high school assistant principals suggestions for the future. The data indicated that the high school assistant principals desired to have a path towards their next step in their careers. A leadership program would give them the opportunity to experience professional learning and would give them the opportunity to see other leadership opportunities beyond the assistant principalship. The high school assistant principals who were interviewed also wished to be able to give input in decisions that affect their jobs. Having a leadership forum with the superintendent and other district leaders would allow all high school assistant principals the opportunity to give feedback to the district leadership. These forums exist for teachers and community members, allowing a similar outreach for assistant principals would bring about positive change for

high school assistant principals. Each of the recommendations was made based on the findings of the data. These individuals could be positively affected by this project study.

Change for the Organization

This project brings greater awareness to the local problem of high school assistant principal attrition. The district leadership, including the superintendent and deputy superintendent, were supportive throughout the study. The superintendent originally shared the insights about the local problem while the deputy superintendent provided support by providing permission for me to conduct the research in the district. A review of literature determined the ways administrators influence schools. This included student achievement, school culture and climate, and teacher retention.

Beyond awareness, the recommendations in within the project study also have potential to influence change within the district. Providing an avenue for high school assistant principals to see their career paths develop will assist the district to provide succession plans. It will also allow the district to see which high school assistant principals may fit into roles beyond that of the principalship and into other leadership roles. Should the district choose to institute a leadership forum, they would be able to be more inclusive of all stakeholders' feedback when making decisions that affect schools. Currently, there is no avenue by which all assistant principals can provide their feedback to district leadership. The project itself has the potential to change the organization through awareness. The recommendations within the project has the potential to bring about positive changes within the organization by providing a career pathway for high

school assistant principals and a forum for the high school assistant principals to offer input and feedback.

Change for Society and Beyond

Whereas this white paper was written for a problem at a local level, its potential is further reaching. The white paper could also be used to bring awareness to other districts when confronted with similar retention issues of high school administrative leadership. Additionally, the findings from this study and the resulting project could be presented at state and national conferences. Sharing this information with other educators is important to me and means that my work on this topic will not end at the conclusion of this paper.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The findings from this study indicated high school assistant principal attrition could be addressed at the local level in a Georgia school district. Recommendations to help solve the problem of high school assistant principal attrition at the local level are: (a) to create a leadership academy for training young administrators and (b) to develop a high school assistant principals' leadership forum. The leadership academy for training and development of high school assistant principals would provide assistant principals with professional learning opportunities and experiences that would prepare them for advancement beyond their current roles as high school assistant principals. The leadership forum for high school assistant principals would give high school assistant principals the opportunity to express their concerns and opinions to district leaders in a manner consistent with similar forums that are provided to other stakeholders in the

district. From the white paper, I would like to see the implementation of an Assistant Principal Leadership Academy and an Assistant Principal Forum as a way to increase retention of high school assistant principals.

I envision the outcome of one or both of the recommendations to build leadership skills for assistant principals and strengthen district administrative potential. Future research would determine the effectiveness of those recommendations in the white paper and could expand the scope of this research. Further research would be beneficial if it were to be conducted in a district that was larger or smaller than the district in which this study occurred. Conducting research in districts of different sizes and at different levels of administration would provide insight as to whether this study was both applicable and relevant to other groups of assistant principals. Further, this research could add to the literature and provide opportunity to affect positive social change beyond this study.

Conclusion

This qualitative study investigated high school assistant principals' perceptions of attrition and retention using the Herzberg's (1957) two-factor theory. The study and data analysis culminated in a white paper. The process of self-reflection allowed me to ponder the doctoral process and the growth I experienced throughout the project study. Ultimately, my growth as a leader, scholar, and practitioner has helped me to become a more informed educator. The project study I completed has potential to bring about positive social change through the reduction of high school assistant principal attrition and through the narrowing of the gap that currently exists in literature concerning

motivating and hygiene factor of retention and attrition of high school assistant principals.

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Appendix A: White Paper

High School Assistant Principals' Perceptions of Factors Influencing Attrition and Retention in a Georgia School District

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Introduction

School leadership plays a vital role in the day-to-day operations of schools. School leadership influences school culture (Newton & Wallin, 2013). School leadership also influences student achievement. Leithwood and Sun's (2012) study on student achievement stated that administrative leadership within a school has the second highest impact on student achievement, behind the effects of teachers' influence on student achievement. Administrator attrition can also influence the sustainability of district curriculum and instructional programs and initiatives (Clayton & Johnson, 2011). Without sustainable instructional programming schools and school districts are limited in the consistency that they provide students (Clayton & Johnson, 2011).

The Problem and Purpose of the Research

Retention of quality high school assistant principals is a problem in a suburban Georgia school district where 35% of administrators left their schools over a 3-year period. Researchers indicated that high turnover rates in school leadership influence student achievement and school climate. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of high school assistant principals concerning factors that influence them to stay in their current roles. Herzberg's two-factor framework was used to explore the perceptions of 10 high school assistant principals regarding their decision to remain in their administrative position. The research questions examined how high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgian school district perceived motivating and hygiene factors that influence them to remain at the school district or leave their job role.

Table 1

Three-Year High School Assistant Principal Attrition Rates

School Year	Number of high school assistant principals	Number of high school assistant principals leaving their positions	Attrition
2013-2014	14	7	50%
2014-2015	15	7	46.7%
2015-2016	15	4	26.7%
Average of all years	14.6	6	40.1%

Note. The number of assistant principals is inclusive of all high school assistant principals in the district.

Understanding the reasons for retention could help the district to stabilize attrition rates and raise student growth and achievement.

What Does Research Say?

School leadership plays various roles in influencing student learning, curriculum implementation, teacher morale, teacher retention, school culture and climate, and beyond (Coelli & Green, 2012; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). School leadership also plays an important part in the level of student achievement within a school (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005). School administrators have primary and secondary influences on student achievement in a campus setting. Administrators impact how curricula are implemented within schools (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Militello et al., 2015). Creating a culture and climate focused on

student learning begins with campus effective leadership (Miller, 2013). When the leadership of a school constantly changes, stability is lost (Coelli & Green; Gawlik, 2015; Heck & Hallinger, 2014). School leadership influences students indirectly through teachers because teachers have a direct relationship to student growth and achievement (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016; Clayton & Johnson, 2011; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Hodges et al., 2013). School districts depend on school leaders to execute district initiatives. In a similar manner, school principals depend on assistant principals to carry out school and district initiatives (Militello et al., 2015).

Research Design

I used an exploratory qualitative case study to answer the proposed research questions for this study. This design studied a local phenomenon from the point of view of specific participants, in this case, assistant principals (Yin, 2011). I interviewed 10 high school assistant principals who were currently employed in the Matthews County School System. The use of a case study as the research design addressed the local problem for this study because it allowed me to gather information about high school assistant principals' perceptions surrounding factors that influenced attrition and retention. This choice of research design aligned with the problem being investigated by allowing the exploration of administrators' perceptions of motivating and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1957; Merriam, 2009).

Data Collection

I collected data through interviews related to the problem of administrator attrition and retention. Data collected through the interviews addressed perceptions of

high school assistant principals. I also created field notes immediately following each interview process (Lodico et al., 2010). I used interviews as the primary data source for this study. Yin (2011) noted that interviews provide insight into participants' thoughts and feelings on a particular subject or interest. The interviews for this study were formal in nature. Each of the interviews was structured using an interview protocol with a set of questions as well as a set of potential follow-up questions

Data Analysis

In order to find meaning from the data collected in a case study design, the data must be analyzed (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2011). After the interview, I transcribed the voice recordings verbatim. I followed a five-phased process (a) compiling and organizing the data, (b) disassembling the data based upon themes that emerge (c) reassembling the data organized around the themes that emerge, (d) interpreting the data (e) concluding with my results based on the data (Yin, 2011). To ensure dependability, I followed all research protocols established by Walden's IRB. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy.

Summary of Findings

Five resulting themes emerged during the analysis process. Three themes related to factors that motivated assistant high school principals to remain in their job roles: relationships with students, relationships with teachers, and relationships with leaders.

Table 2

Themes and Descriptions

Research Question	Factor	Theme	Description
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions?	Motivating	Relationships with students	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with students over the course of their careers.
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions?	Motivating	Relationships with teachers	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with teachers over the course of their careers.
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions?	Motivating	Relationships with leaders	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with leaders over the course of their careers.
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors as affecting their decision to leave their administrative positions?	Hygiene	External Factors over which assistant principals have no control	Factors that influence the assistant principal's motivation or job satisfaction levels over which they feel that they have no control.
How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors as affecting their decision to leave their administrative positions?	Hygiene	Opportunities for advancement and development	Opportunities the assistant principals perceive for advancement and development.

Two hygiene factors revealed in this study that may exert a negative response to remaining in the role of a high school assistant principal were external factors over which assistant principals have no control, and opportunities for advancement and development (see Table 2). Each of these factors and themes are analyzed in the following section as they relate to the research questions of this study using Herzberg's (1987) paradigm.

Research Question 1

The first question asked: How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors as affecting their decisions to remain in their administrative positions? Almost three quarters of the 10 participants of this study identified relationships as a motivating factor to remain in their administrative role. Based on the findings, the answers to this research question that the assistant principals identified were developed into themes of relationships with students (Theme 1), relationships with teachers (Theme 2), and relationships with leaders (Theme 3).

Theme 1: Relationships with students. The theme of relationship with students became evident within the first few interview questions. Assistant principals stated that working with students and cultivating relationships with young learners was a major factor that motivated them to remain in their job as a current high school assistant principal. Assistant principals perceived that the relationships they built with students allowed them to have a greater influence on student growth and achievement. High school assistant principals felt personal value when these students achieved academic success. This feeling of personal value confirms Herzberg's (1987) theory that motivation

is derived from intrinsic factors such as feeling valued or feeling as if you are making a difference in the lives of others.

Theme 2: Relationships with teachers. The role of high school assistant principals requires administrators to deal with a broad scope of responsibilities (Marshall & Davidson, 2016). A majority of their work centers on students followed closely by interaction and supervision of teachers. In the campus hierarchy, teachers manage the students and teachers are supervised and led by campus leaders that include assistant principals. Data from interviews revealed that assistant principals perceived their relationships with teachers to be a motivating factor for remaining in their jobs as high school assistant principals.

Theme 3: Relationship with leaders. In a similar manner, as the manner in which assistant principals influence teachers, principals, and other leaders affect high school assistant principals. Researchers found that school principals influence teachers' decisions to remain in their jobs (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reily, 2014). Data indicate that principals influence high school assistant principals' perceptions surrounding motivation. Other school district leaders, such as the superintendent, are also factors that high school assistant principals perceive as motivating elements to help them remain in their current jobs.

Research Question 2

The second research question of this study asked: How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors as affecting their decision to leave their administrative positions? The responses from the 10 participants

provided findings that emerged into two themes that related to hygiene factors that could influence their decision to leave their administrative position: external factors over which assistant principals have no control (Theme 4), and opportunities for advancement and development (Theme 5). These themes relate to factors that are more extrinsic and of a hygiene nature (Herzberg, 1966).

Theme 4: External factors over which assistant principals have no control.

Assistant principals play crucial roles in school climate and student achievement (Militello et al., 2015). However, a predominant hygiene factor emerged from the data that revealed assistant principals have the perception of little to no control in their vital components of their job role. The assistant principals who were participants of this study enumerated five concerns that included (a) rules, policy, and management; (b) parents of students; (c) difficult conversations with teachers; (d) salary and benefits; and (e) mandated testing as factors that can influence high school assistant principals to remain in or leave their current administrative positions. This overarching theme encompasses other hygiene factors that if not balanced could cause dissatisfaction with one's job (Herzberg, 1966).

Theme 5: Opportunities for Advancement and Development. One theme that emerged early in the coding as a hygiene factor was opportunities for career advancement and development. Assistant principals wished to see a path for opportunities that may exist beyond their current job roles. They also expressed a desire to be cross-trained to receive a wider variety of experiences to become marketable and to vary their skill sets.

Recommendations Based on the Findings

The results of this study yield two recommendations: a district leadership academy and a district-level leadership forum. Each of these possible improvements for the district will be discussed. Peer-reviewed literature is also provided to illustrate the social change potential for this district for each of these recommendations.

Leadership Academy

First, the findings of the data collected from this study suggest that the district consider a leadership academy for high school assistant principals. Throughout the course of the interviews, assistant principals mentioned that they needed a pathway forward towards professional learning and growth for their next position in administrative leadership. Researchers noted that school assistant principals felt strong sense of job security when there was a clear pathway for advancement (Armstrong, 2015). Assistant Principal F noted that “there is a real need for assistant principals to see beyond just their four walls. They are never able to see outside of their school, having some sort of program or avenue for that would be nice.” Assistant Principal E noted that there were programs currently in place for teachers in the district but that “I would love to see more programs for administrators to help keep them motivated and help them advance and keep them in the field.” Some assistant principals felt like they often get stuck in one role and no one sees them as anything but an assistant principal. Assistant Principal D noted, “It would be good if there was a leadership program that taught us but also got us in front of other leaders where we could showcase our talents; it may help us advance.” The need

for direct opportunities for advancement and professional learning were a direct recommendation of the participants of the study.

A leadership academy for assistant principals could provide assistant principals the opportunity to collaborate and build capacity and leadership skills to become more prepared for their next leadership roles. In a qualitative case study of a professional development academy for assistant principals, researchers found that participants reported an increase in leadership skills because they were able to gain knowledge through professional learning to fill specific, self-identified leadership deficits (Gurley, Anast-May & Lee, 2015). The program developed when district leaders became alarmed because a number of principals planned to retire and there was a gap in the number of assistant principals who were ready and able to fill the position (Gurley et al., 2015). The results of the study indicated that the district leaders found that the program was a success as they were able to fill a majority of the vacated principal positions from the participants in the academy and felt that all participants experienced professional growth (Gurley et al., 2015).

In order to grow as leaders, assistant principals need specific experiences and professional learning to meet their needs (Petrides, Jimes & Karaglani, 2014). In North Carolina, state leaders saw this a need when they chose to spend their federal Race to the Top dollars on increasing the number of qualified administrators to leader low income schools through regional leadership academies (Brown, 2016). These academies focused on helping teachers to become assistant principals and assistant principals to become principals through professional learning and then followed through with early career

support (Brown, 2016). This academy model saw the need for succession planning from the ground up due to an impending shortage of assistant principals and principals within the state. Providing the educators with the tools that they needed was a way to stop the crisis before it began.

A leadership academy could also foster a sense of connectedness to the school and district for high school assistant principals. Participants in an Arkansas leadership academy felt that they had a stronger sense of leadership and connectedness to their school and district than the administrators who did not participate in the leadership academy (Airola, Bengston, Davis, & Peer, 2014). This sense of connectedness could help to increase the retention levels of high school assistant principals.

Suggestions for implementation of this type of program would be to determine the budget for the program during the spring of 2018. This budget would determine the number of applicants who could be accepted into the program. Researchers' findings indicated that programs are most successful when there is an application process (Gurley et al. 2015). I also propose that the district consider investigating other nearby districts to see if there were similar programs that could be visited before implementing a leadership academy. Once the district leadership has the plan in place, the program could be implemented as early as the fall of 2018.

Leadership Forum

A second recommendation gleaned from the analysis of the data from this research is for the superintendent and the executive leadership team to consider a leadership forum for assistant principals. The assistant principals do not always perceive

that they have a voice in decisions that are being made. They see themselves as middle management and have a strong desire to have a voice in the decision making process of the school system. Creating a forum where they have an appropriate setting to voice their concerns and hear directly from the superintendent and district leaders would provide them the opportunity to bridge a perceived communication gap.

Assistant principals feel as if they do not have a voice in the decisions that are being made. These factors over which they have no control seemed to frustrate the assistant principals. Assistant Principal J noted that “a lot of complaints are not addressed by supervisors, and you never know if it’s your supervisor not addressing them or if it’s the district office because you don’t have access to the district office because of the chain of command.” Other assistant principals made mention of wanting to feel supported by district officials all the time rather than in emergency situations or when situations failed to align with district expectations. Assistant Principal H noted, “If you could take one thing away I would say we can’t just be thrown out there we need to have support when it’s good and bad.” Assistant Principal K noted that “Sometimes we just want to hear from the district leaders at times when we aren’t doing things wrong.”

Providing a forum for assistant principals to hear from district leadership and the superintendent could foster a sense of connectedness and ease the frustrations that assistant principals feel with decisions that are handed down. In a 2012 study of how principals and teachers perceived their superintendents, researchers found that the more avenues that the superintendent use to communicate the better the superintendent was perceived (Devono & Price 2012). Providing this additional avenue for communication

could assist in increasing the job satisfaction of high school assistant principals by helping them to feel more connected to district leadership. Currently, district forums are held with parents, business owners, teachers, and principals. The virtue and benefit of such forums is already felt within the district. The addition of an assistant principal's forum will only prove to strengthen the district by increasing the retention of high school assistant principals.

Suggestions for implementing this recommendation would be to review the district calendar to determine dates that would conflict least with other district events. A mix of online and in-person forums would be preferable to allow maximum participation and allow for the district to integrate the use of technology with administrators. Additionally, a leadership forum could provide an opportunity for participants to submit questions or topics prior to the forum that are important for district offices to address. Hosting the assistant principals' forum once a semester in conjunction with presenting all other forums would be preferable.

Other Recommendations for Consideration

A further proposal is to systematically review procedures and policies that could negatively affect school level assistant principals. Currently, there is no process to include assistant principals in the process of reviewing policies and procedures at the district level. The process is completed at the principal level and above. Potential barriers to this recommendation may include coordinating the various district departments to acknowledge the role that is played in the retention of high school assistant principals.

Providing a systematic review of processes and procedures could alleviate some of the external strain that high school assistant principals experience.

Additionally, a review of hiring practices to ensure that all school leaders are highly qualified and prepared for their roles is recommended. Current hiring practices are not consistent across the district. The district must continue to hire assistant principals based upon the best, most highly qualified person for the position regardless of seniority.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study investigated high school assistant principals' perceptions of assistant principal retention and attrition in a suburban Georgia school district. I wanted to discover how those who remained in their positions as assistant principals perceived the factors that may influence their peers to stay or leave their current administrative role. The themes that emerged from this study revealed information that may help to ease the attrition gap that exists in a local suburban Georgia School System. The recommendations that were made are with the input of current high school assistant principals with the hope to bring about social change to help students and teacher who serve students, especially those students in impoverished conditions. The next section is an accompanying power point presentation to be used to present the white paper to stakeholders.

High School Assistant Principals' Perceptions of Factors Influencing Attrition and Retention in a Georgia School District

A WHITE PAPER

Introduction

School leadership influences school culture (Newton & Wallin, 2013).

School leadership influences student achievement. Leithwood and Sun's (2012) study on student achievement stated that administrative leadership within a school has the second highest impact on student achievement, behind the effects of teachers' influence on student achievement.

Administrator attrition can also influence the sustainability of district curriculum and instructional programs and initiatives (Clayton & Johnson, 2011).

A positive school culture leads to increased student achievement by providing a learning environment focused on high-quality instruction (DuFour & Marzano, 2015).

The Problem

Three-Year High School Assistant Principal Attrition Rates

School Year	Number of High School Assistant Principals	Number of High School Assistant Principals Leaving Their Position	Attrition %
2013-2014	14	7	50%
2014-2015	15	7	46.7%
2015-2016	15	4	26.7%
Average of All Years	14.6	6	40.1%

Note: The number of assistant principals is inclusive of all high school assistant principals in the district.

The Research Questions

1. How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive motivating factors impact their decision to remain in their administrative position?
2. How do high school assistant principals in a suburban Georgia school district perceive hygiene factors impact their decision to leave their administrative positions?

Conceptual Framework

In 1957, Herzberg researched factors impacting job satisfaction. Based on collected data, Herzberg developed a theory of motivation.

Intrinsic factors, described by Herzberg (1959) as **motivating factors**, were satisfying factors.

Balancing the other side of the scale are dissatisfying factors. These factors were described by Herzberg (1959) as **hygiene factors**.

How Did I Conduct the Research?

Qualitative Case Study

Interview Participants

- 10 High School Assistant Principals
 - assistant principals currently working in the Matthews County School System,
 - assistant principals who have completed at least one contract cycle with the Matthews County School System,
 - assistant principals working in one of the four Matthews County School System High Schools.

Compiled and Analyzed the Data

What Are The Findings?

Motivating Factor Themes and Descriptions

Theme	Description
Relationships with students	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals developed with students over the course of their careers.
Relationships with teachers	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with teachers over the course of their careers.
Relationships with leaders	The relationships (positive and/or negative) developed by high school assistant principals with leaders over the course of their careers.

What Are The Findings?

Hygiene Factor Themes and Descriptions

Theme	Description
External Factors over which assistant principals have no control	Factors that influence the assistant principal's motivation or job satisfaction levels over which they feel that they have no control.
Opportunities for advancement and development	Opportunities the assistant principals perceive for advancement and development.

What Are The Recommendations?

A Leadership Academy for Assistant Principals

An Assistant Principals Forum

Other Suggestions

Other Recommendations

- Systematically review procedures and policies that could negatively affect school level Assistant Principals
- Review hiring practices to ensure that all school leaders are highly qualified and prepared for their roles

Summary

- I wanted to discover how those who remained in their positions as Assistant Principals perceived the factors that may influence their peers to stay or leave their current administrative role.
- The themes that emerged from this study revealed information that may help to ease the attrition gap that exists in a local suburban Georgia School System.
- The recommendations that were made are with the input of current high school assistant principals with the hope to bring about social change to help students and teacher who serve students, especially those students in impoverished conditions.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

- I. Greeting
- II. Review of Consent Form
- III. Participant Questions
- IV. Icebreaker Question:
- V. Interview Questions
 1. Have you ever left a job as a high school assistant principal?
If yes, please explain why?
 2. What do you see as factors that would motivate you to remain in your current job as a high school assistant principal?
 3. Which of your roles and responsibilities, as an assistant principal, do you find most motivating?
Possible follow up question.
Do you feel that this increases your job satisfaction?
 - i. If yes, why?
 - ii. If no, why not?
 4. What do you see as factors that would cause you to leave your current job as a high school assistant principal?
 5. Which of your roles and responsibilities, as an assistant principal, do you find most dissatisfying?
Possible follow up question.
Do you feel that this decreases your job satisfaction?
 - i. If yes, why?
 - ii. If not, why not?
 6. Which factors are more important those that motivate you with your school assistant principal role?
Please explain why?
 7. Which factors are more important that can cause dissatisfaction with your school assistant principal role?
Please explain why?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about retention or attrition of high school assistant principals?

VI. Closing of Interview- Thank you- Do you have any questions?

VII. End of interview