

2018

# Perceptions of New Teachers on the Professional and Instructional Support for New Teachers

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# Walden University

College of Education

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Lola Sawyerr

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Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Perceptions of New Teachers on the Professional and Instructional Support for New

Teachers

by

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MA, Clark-Atlanta University, 1988

BS, Clark-Atlanta University, 1986

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2018

## Abstract

The local problem addressed in the study was the lack of knowledge regarding the perceptions of new teachers as to whether the support they receive in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and other school-related duties was consistent and effective in helping them remain in classrooms. The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of new teachers regarding the effectiveness of professional and instructional support they receive from the district. The study was framed by the social cognitive theory of Lent, Brown and Hackett, which emphasized the perception of job satisfaction as well as outcome expectations and personal goals. The research questions were focused on the specific curricular and instructional supports the district offers to new teachers, whether new teachers perceived the current supports helped them develop instructional and other classroom competencies, and the type of teacher support they needed to remain in their instructional positions. A case study design with purposeful sampling was used to select 10 teachers who fit the new teacher criteria to participate in individual interviews. An analysis of documents was used for review of new teacher professional development and instructional support resources. Data were transcribed, verified using member checking, analyzed, and open-coded to identify themes. The findings indicated that teachers did not find the professional development and instructional support provided to new teachers to be consistent, relevant, or effective. The project, a white paper report, provides recommendations on support and training to enhance or improve new teacher pedagogical knowledge and skills. Social change may occur if the findings assist the district to support new teachers to increase their skills, which may lead to teacher retention and ultimately have a positive influence on student learning.

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## Dedication

This study is dedicated to all my family members and friends. Your support and belief in my ability enabled me to continue and see this to the end. I love you all.

## Acknowledgments

I cannot but give God the glory for seeing me through this past few years and allowing me to make it to point. There were times when I doubted that this day would come. To my husband Henry, my children Michael and Matthew, I could not have made it without your support, your patience, your love and belief in me. You were my inspiration all the way and whenever the thought of giving up crossed my mind, all I had to do was think of you. Through this entire process, you were my biggest cheerleaders. Thank you and I love you.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

Nationwide, new teachers entering the profession are leaving classrooms within the first 5 years of service (Lindqvist, Nordänger, & Carlsson, 2014; Marinell & Coca, 2013). The early years in the classroom can be demanding for new teachers. From the first day they arrive new to the schools, they may become overwhelmed, confused, and frustrated when faced with the requirements of the job, which could include classroom management, knowing the state standards, understanding the curriculum, and teaching the curriculum (Jimerson, Marnie, & Dietz, 2015; Lambert, 2013). Being new, some may not be able to apply what they learned in college or university to the classrooms and may not know how to reach out to other teachers for assistance (van Ginkel, et al., 2016). These experiences during their first few years could be a deciding factor on whether to the teacher stays in the profession (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014; Kloss, 2013). According to several studies, new teachers have been leaving the classrooms within 5 years of entering the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014; Glennie, Mason, & Edmunds, 2016; Jo, 2014; Kraft & Papay, 2014; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 2015). Other studies further suggested that this trend is more prevalent in schools and districts in low income areas in the Southern and Western regions of the United States (Ferlazzo, 2014; Marshall et al., 2013; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

All schools and districts aim at having highly qualified teachers in classrooms. However, keeping highly qualified teachers is becoming a challenge for schools across

the nation (Barth, Dillion, Hull & Higgins, 2016; Haynes, 2014a). The process of becoming highly qualified takes time and requires resources necessary to enhance teacher knowledge of the content and to develop pedagogical skills. Teachers become more effective because of the years they spend in classrooms and the level of support they receive (Allen et al., 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Winters & Cowen, 2013). Some researchers stated that the number of years that it takes a teacher to be competent is about 3 to 7 years in the classroom, and the teacher's experience and support during this time could influence their decision to return to the classroom (Aguilar, 2013; Gray & Taie, 2015; Watts, 2016). Because new teachers need time to become competent in the classroom, authors of some studies have suggested that professional and instructional support could help teachers develop necessary skills in the early years of their careers to help them become successful in classrooms as well as increase their sense of satisfaction (Harris, 2015; Pogodzinski, 2015).

Teachers are crucial to students' achievement; however, their increasing departure from classrooms has a negative effect on schools and students (Barth et al., 2016; Haynes, 2014a; Kutsyruba, Godden & Tregunna, 2014). When new teachers leave the classrooms in the early stages in their careers, they leave before acquiring the necessary skills and practices needed in the classrooms or, worse, leave with the professional and instructional skills provided to them by the school and district (Buchanan et al., 2013; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). The quality of education for students depends on the effectiveness of teachers, and teachers remaining in classrooms is key to this

effectiveness (Burton, Brown, & Johnson, 2013; Lattuca, Bergom & Knight, 2014; Owen, 2015).

Providing new teachers with ongoing professional development and instructional support in their content areas increases their effectiveness in the classrooms (Gerde, Pierce, Lee, & Van Egeren, 2018). Information on how new teachers perceive the professional development and instructional support opportunities is very important as it highlights their needs and what they consider helpful in classrooms as well as for their professional growth. There have been studies on professional support, but this specific information about new teacher perceptions is not available in the local school district (Burstow & Winch, 2014).

### **Definition of the Problem**

The problem in Merritt County School District (pseudonym) is a lack of information about whether new teachers perceive support in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and other school-related duties as consistent and effective. It is important to know what teachers need to be successful, as retaining highly qualified teachers is key to student achievement (Jones, Stall, & Yarbough, 2013; Onsrud, 2015; Qablan, Mansour, Alshamrani, Sabbah, & Aldahmash, 2015). The district's 5-year strategic improvement plan, found on the district's website, states that the district's focus is ensuring that assessment results would indicate students are showing an overall academic improvement. According to the district's strategic improvement plan, this could be possible when teachers are offered job-embedded professional development (JEPD), just-

in-time professional development (JIT), and continuous professional learning on how to effectively utilize the district's resources in classrooms.

According to the State Department of Education for the Merritt County School District, in 2015, 44% of newly hired teachers were leaving by year 5. Research suggested that nationwide, about 20% of teachers new to classrooms leave in the first 5 years of their careers (Glennie et al., 2016; Ingersoll & Preda, 2013; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013). New teachers need to be supported and remain stable in classrooms, but statistics have shown this is not happening. Knowing their perception of what is currently in place at their schools and districts could provide information on how to make new teachers' first few years less challenging and help them succeed and remain in their positions (Allen et al., 2013; Colwell, MacIsaac, Tichenor, Heins, & Piechura, 2014). It is also important to hear directly from teachers to know what teachers find useful about the professional development their schools already offer and how it helps them develop their instructional and other classroom competencies (Christesen, & Turner, 2014; Qablan, Mansour, Alshamrani, Sabbah & Aldahmash, 2015). Teachers are an important aspect of students' learning, and schools and districts should acknowledge teachers' learning needs (Colwell et al., 2014; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013; Shaw & Newton, 2014).

The proposed 2016–2017 budget for improving instructional support in the local district is \$26 million. During the first 3 years of employment, new teachers go through the induction program, which includes professional development designed to equip teachers with instructional practice, support and knowledge they need in the classrooms,



mentoring by a veteran teacher to provide academic and emotional support, and opportunities for collaboration (Gray & Taie, 2015). In spite of the initiatives and programs the district offers to retain new teachers, the school district lost close to 400 teachers in 2015 and struggles annually to fill positions in the critical areas such as math, science, and special education (Jackson, 2015).

Professional and instructional support for new teachers is important for positive learning outcomes for students (Lattuca et al., 2014; Owen, 2015). New teachers' needs are not the same as the needs of veteran teachers, and without being equipped with necessary support in the classroom, they may find it difficult to manage classroom issues, which may be significantly different from those they encountered in preservice internships (Shockley, Watlington, & Felsher, 2013). When new teachers are not adequately supported in the continuing development of necessary skills and resources for success in the classrooms, the outcome could negatively affect student education (Rand Education and Labor, 2013). New teacher experiences during the first few years could also influence new teachers' decision to stay (Albright et al., 2017, Karsenti & Collin, 2013).

### **Rationale**

It takes time for teachers to be qualified. Qualified teachers with knowledge of the curriculum and the skills to deliver it effectively in classrooms are key to improving student achievement (Rand Education and Labor, 2013; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Shockley et al., 2013). There is need for effective sustained support programs that are also continuous, so new teachers grow and improve their skills (Darling-Hammond,

Furger, Shields & Sutchter, 2016). Retaining highly qualified teachers is crucial because of the known, positive influence it has on student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

According to French (2015a), at the beginning of the 2015 school year, schools and districts were having difficulties retaining teachers. In Merritt County School District, induction program for new teachers may not be effective. Several studies suggested that qualified teachers are key to student success, so there is need for effective support programs that are ongoing in the areas of instructional support so new teachers develop and improve their skills (Luft, Dubois, Nixon & Campbell, 2015; Sun, Penel, Frank & Gallagher, 2013).

Merritt County School District is located in a metropolitan area and is one of the largest school districts in the state, with about 7,300 teachers who work at 54 schools. In 2015, the district lost close to 400 teachers and, as of 2016, had yet to fill about 224 positions, of which 174 openings were in the critical areas of special education, math, and science (Jackson, 2015).

There is a lack of information about whether new teachers perceive support in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and other school-related duties as consistent and effective. Student performance depends on the quality of teachers in the classrooms and having access to effective professional development and instructional support are important for learning best classroom practices (Darling-Hammond, Newton & Wei, 2013; Winters & Cowen, 2013). New teachers come fully prepared with teaching

certificates; however, once hired they may find that the situations facing them are different from the ones they were exposed to in college. With the necessary professional and instructional support that could improve teacher classroom practices, they would continue to learn instructional strategies and apply what they learned in school to the classroom.

A few years ago, the southern state in which the school district is located adopted the Common Core, and each school district now has a yearly report card known as college and career ready performance index (CCRPI). Based on information found on the state's department of education (DOE) website, the CCRPI is a way to hold school districts accountable for preparing and ensuring that students are ready for college and the workplace. The goal is for students to be ready to compete in the global economy. The 2014-2015 report, also found on the DOE website, stated that the CCRPI for most of the schools in Merritt County School District had grade a of 62.8% or less suggesting that these schools were low performing

In a conversation about the profession, a new teacher stated she felt like she was left to handle her classroom without any help (personal communication, June 7, 2016). The year 2015 was her first year and she had no classroom experience nor instructional practices but had to figure things out on her own. The same teacher stated she was thrust into the classroom without adequate preparation and resources that would equip her in the classroom. She was able to improvise with what she had, but she felt she would and could benefit tremendously from more professional development and instructional support from the school.

Another teacher in the conversation who came in the middle of the school year felt he did not have adequate preparation and resources to equip him in the classroom (personal communication, June 7, 2016). A third teacher with a background in social studies was offered a science position because he passed the Georgia GACE in math and science. According to him, he needed more help with the science curriculum, and he was not prepared for what he met in the classroom (personal communication, June 21, 2016). Teachers are crucial to student success, and without targeted, purpose-driven professional development and instructional support that focus on their individual needs, they may have difficulties succeeding (Davies, 2013; Dufour, 2015; Learning Forward, 2015a). Teachers who are masters in their content areas are able to improve students' capacity to learn and student performance (Allen et al., 2013; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). To support and retain high quality new teachers they need both theoretical and practical knowledge, and if they are not equipped with necessary support and resources, they may face challenges in the classrooms (Legette, 2013).

### **Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature**

Colleges and universities do well providing teachers with the theoretical aspect of teaching; however, they may need assistance applying what they learned to the classroom (Legette, 2013). The first few years is a period when new teachers are more vulnerable. Schools and districts should provide the necessary resources to enable new teachers to succeed in classrooms as well as grow and remain in the profession (Betts, 2018; Cook, 2014). New teachers should be supported with learning opportunities on best classroom

practices instead of having them participate in extracurricular activities (Richter et al., 2013). New teachers may need assistance with aligning the curriculum with instruction and student learning, as well as effectively engaging students in the classroom. According to Wong (2004), professional development is crucial to retaining highly qualified teachers, and other researchers have maintained that teachers need support through meaningful induction programs (Kelly, Reushle, Chakrabarty, & Kinnane, 2014; Schaefer, 2013). There are several reasons teachers leave the profession, most of which cannot be solved by the schools or districts; however, one issue schools and districts may control is providing support for new teachers (Gilles, Carrillo, Wang, Stegall & Bumgarner, 2013; Ingersoll, Merrill & Perda, 2014). The responsibility lies with schools and districts to ensure that new teachers have the continuous professional development and instructional support that improves their practices in the classrooms and ultimately improves student performance.

In their first few years, new teachers may not be adequately equipped to handle issues that confront them in the classrooms (Cook, 2014; Yilmaz, 2016). It is crucial that new teachers have access to quality instructional support that might increase their effectiveness in classrooms, help them grow, increase student achievement, and possibly increase their retention rate. Schools and districts should provide beginning teachers with training and support that deepens their knowledge of the content they teach so that they are able to deliver the content effectively to meet the diverse needs in the classrooms (NCES, 2013). Other studies suggested that ongoing, high quality professional and instructional support could influence new teachers' decisions to stay in the profession.

(Hobson, Grant, & Harris, 2013; Southern Regional Education Board, 2013). Teachers and students benefit when teachers are engaged in continuous learning that would improve their pedagogical skills (Blank, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to examine what professional and instructional support is currently offered to new teachers and whether they perceive it to be effective in the Merritt County School District. The study also explored the perceptions of new teachers about the effect of instructional and other support that may influence them to stay in or to leave the school district. Knowing teacher perceptions regarding their own development could provide information for schools and districts to improve what is currently in place to support new teachers (Cook, 2014; Evans, 2014; Jimerson & Wayman, 2015).

### **Definition of Terms**

In the effort to provide understanding of the project study content, the following terms are defined:

*Attrition*: Loss of teachers who decided not to return to the classroom (Farthing, 2006).

*Common Core State Standards (CCSS)*: Guidelines adopted by states to provide high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018).

*Highly qualified teacher*: A teacher who holds a state certification and an in-depth knowledge of the content the teacher is teaching (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2012).

*Induction program:* A comprehensive sustained training program for novice and transfer teachers provided by school and districts. The induction program is organized by districts to “train, support, and retain new teachers which seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program” (Wong, 2005, p. 43).

*Job-embedded professional development (JEPD):* A teacher-specific professional development targeting the teacher’s content and pedagogical needs as well as classroom practices to meet students’ academic needs. (Sutton & Shouse (2016).

*Just-in-time professional development (JIT):* Professional development with which teachers are able to get assistance when they need it regardless of where they are without sitting through professional development all day. It may be computer based.

*Mentors:* Veteran teachers assigned to help new and transferred teachers, ease into the school culture, usually at the beginning of the school year. Mentors help new teachers learn classroom management, curriculum development, and assessments, as well as provide emotional support.

*New teacher:* A teacher new to education or to the school system or a teacher with less than 5 years in the teaching profession (GADOE, 2012; Pogodzinski, 2015).

*Professional development:* Ongoing learning for teachers aimed at improving teacher classroom practices and improving student achievement (Killion & Roy, 2009, p. 18).

*Race to the top:* The policy that introduces choice and competition among school systems. Like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 policy, teachers and schools are accountable for how the student is performing (McGuinn, 2012).

*Retention*: Teachers who remain in education.

*Self-efficacy*: A person's confidence in their ability to successfully perform any task (Bandura, 1995)

*Teacher efficacy*: A teacher's belief in the teacher's ability to perform the task at hand with positive outcome (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Shaw & Newton, 2014)

*The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)*: Federal statute replacing the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

*Veteran/experienced teachers*: Teachers who have over 5 years teaching experience in the classroom (Kim & Roth, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it examines the professional development and instructional support offered to new teachers in Merritt County School District in a metropolitan area of a state in the Southern United States as well as the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of these offerings. Several studies have indicated that beginning teachers are leaving the classroom before their fifth year in the profession and one reason cited was the lack of support they received (Carrillo et al., 2013; Morrison, 2013; Schaefer, 2013). Other studies suggest the instructional support offered by some schools/districts may not adequately meet the needs of these teachers (Clandinin, Schaefer, Long, & Downey, 2013; Heineke, Mazza & Tichor-Wagner, 2014; Kidd, Brown, & Fitzallen, 2015). Each year new teachers are hired to replace teachers who left through either retirement or attrition. They may be unprepared for the demands of the



rigorous curriculum and keeping up with instructional innovations is quite daunting (Ortega, Luft, & Wong, 2013).

The first year of teaching is the most critical and is also a time many new teachers describe as overwhelming, as they are left alone in their classrooms to work on their content and instructional skills as well as deal with class management issues (Bayar, 2014; Legette, 2013; Rodgers & Skelton, 2013). According to van Ginkel et al., (2016) instructional supports are most effective when offered early in the educator's teaching career, and they learn needed skills. Professional development that meets individual teacher needs could enhance their professional growth and should be designed for both the teacher and student need (Killion, 2013; Learning Forward, 2015a). Students benefit from a highly qualified stable teacher corps, and the attrition of new teachers negatively influences student learning and achievement, as students do not have access to highly qualified teachers in the classrooms (Rodfeldt & McQueen, 2017). New teachers have more theoretical knowledge and may find it difficult articulating their knowledge in the classroom. They are not instructional experts overnight without some form of professional development, especially in developing pedagogical skills (Buchanan et al., 2013; Legette, 2013; Sun et al., 2013). Rodfeldt & McQueen, (2017), suggested that one of several ways to become effective is for a new teacher to have been in the classroom for 3 to 5 years to develop adequate skills.

Despite participating in the Race to the Top grant program and having a vision for improvement, much is not known about the perception of professional development and instructional support for new teachers at the study site. This study will examine the

instructional support currently available to new teachers, whether they perceive the support to be effective, and whether it affects their decision to remain in their position (Morrison, 2013). Information from this study of new teachers is significant because schools and districts could benefit from knowing the challenges new teachers report, and based on their perceptions create effective professional development and instructional support to improve their knowledge and skills in the classrooms (Dufour, 2015; Sanders, 2013).

This study will benefit new teachers as it provides information that could assist schools and school districts to improve teacher confidence. Increased support could positively influence teacher decisions to remain at the schools/districts. Students may have increased achievement as they learn from highly qualified teachers who are masters of their content. Schools and school districts could use information from the study to implement policies and offer professional development that may positively influence new teacher effectiveness and ultimately influence new teachers' decisions to remain and with this school/ district. According to the district's website "learning is a continuous process and most productive when the needs of each child is met through instructions provided by competent and caring teacher." Social change may occur if through information on teacher perceptions, schools and school districts can revise what they currently have in place to more effectively meet the professional and instructional needs of new teachers (Lattuca et al., 2014; Owen, 2015). If the findings assist the district to support new teachers to increase their skills, this may ultimately influence student learning. When

schools better meet these needs, it also may encourage new teachers to stay in the profession. A more stable teacher corps is a benefit to students and to the community.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine what actual professional and instructional support is currently offered to new teachers and whether they perceive it to be effective in the Merritt County School District. There are several reasons why districts are unable to retain new teachers, one being the level of support provided for new teachers (Leroux & Theoret, 2014). New teachers can become highly qualified teachers when they have ongoing support and attend content-specific professional development learning that would improve their pedagogical skills (Jones, Stall, Yarbrough 2013; Luft et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2013). Information from this study is relevant to schools and school districts because it can be valuable to new teacher success in classrooms and to new teacher retention.

RQ1: What specific curricular and instructional supports can be documented as offered to new teachers throughout the district?

RQ2: How effective, or not, do new teachers perceive the current supports to be in developing their instructional and other classroom competencies?

RQ3: What are new teachers' perceptions about the supports they need to remain in their instructional positions?

### **Review of the Literature**

This literature review examines the scholarly literature regarding the social cognitive framework model of Lent and Brown (1996) and supporting the professional

development and instructional support provided to new teachers. In education, providing teachers with the opportunity to learn continuously could enhance their abilities in the classrooms. By offering effective ongoing professional learning and instructional support, teachers are empowered to deliver the content and affect student achievement (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Gersten, Taylor, Keys, Rolffhus, & Newman-Gonchar, 2014; Kunter et al., 2013).

A critical review of documents is presented, related to the local and broader problem addressed in the study. Next, a search for current articles in peer-reviewed journals and/or academic journals and texts was conducted. The primary sources used to gain insight to the issue included peer reviewed journals, books, national center for statistics, the state department of education for the study site, policy papers, and several dissertations that addressed the issue of professional development for novice teachers. Most of the information used for the study was obtained through the Walden Online Library, EBSCO Host-Education Research Complete, ERIC, Sage, ProQuest Central, ScienceDirect, Taylor and Francis Online and Google Scholar. The Search terms included *novice/beginning/new teachers, professional development, self-efficacy, teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, retention, attrition mentors and inductions, instructional support, Job-Embedded Professional Development, and Just-in-Time Professional Development.*

### **Conceptual Foundation**

The conceptual framework that framed the research questions and discussion for this study is the social cognitive theory of the Lent, Brown and Hackett (1996) a model

tested and validated by Badri, Mohaidat, Ferrandino, & El Mourad (2013). The model by Lent, Brown & Hackett (1996), places emphasis on the perception of “job satisfaction at the work place and links it to an individual’s self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals” (p. 262). The model suggests that one’s career choice is a result of the belief individuals develop in the following areas: a) “personal performance accomplishments, b) vicarious learning, c) social persuasion and d) physiological states and reactions” (p. 102). All of these occur when an individual develops the expertise/ability and is successful. This process affects one’s self-efficacy or confidence that one can succeed. Because self-efficacy is the confidence in one’s ability to succeed, it affects how the individual performs. New teachers entering the profession constantly face challenges which could negatively influence their self-efficacy (Johnson, 2014).

Holzberger, Philipp & Kunter (2013), asserted that self-efficacy is important because student learning is affected by the teacher’s self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy in the subject matter knowledge is able to increase student achievement because the teacher is able to identify areas that the student needs (Sadler et al., 2013). Hudson (2013) stated that the early years of a teacher’s professional career in the classroom is a time for them to develop self-efficacy and onus is on schools and districts to ensure that they get the support they need to improve their teaching efficacy (Botwinik & Press, 2013). The feeling of satisfaction and motivation determines how a new teacher confronts challenges such as the rigorous curriculum and the ever-changing instructional innovations which can cause anxiety for new teachers (Ortega et al., 2013). New teachers who perceive they lack adequate support may choose not to stay in the profession whereas teachers who

perceive that they have support that would enable them to succeed in the classrooms stay (Burke et al., 2013; Leroux & Théorêt, 2014). When teachers feel they have the support they need to grow professionally to become masters of their content, they may exhibit better work skills and high self-efficacy (de Lourdes Machado-Taylor et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2014).

This framework focuses the study on the support new teachers are provided in the areas needed to increase their job satisfaction and feelings of efficacy. Student learning is influenced by teacher practice in classrooms. Applying best practices learned during professional development as well as instructional support could improve teacher motivation and job satisfaction as well as affect how they teach. Support given to new teachers in the early years could promote their efficacy and improve their teaching compared to those teachers who receive little or no support (Jones, Dana, LaFrumenta, Adams & Arnold, 2016).

### **Attrition Rate Among New Teachers**

New teachers leaving the classrooms early in their careers is not a new phenomenon (Journell & Webb, 2013; Paris, 2013; Whipp & Geronime, 2015). The rate of teachers leaving the profession across the country is 6%; while that of new teachers is about 15%. There are several reasons for this, most of which is outside the control of schools, however providing support for teachers within the first few years is when it matters the most (Marinell & Coco, 2013; Shockley et al., 2013). According to Ingersoll and Perda (2013), teachers thrive better in an environment that allows and supports their professional growth. Results from a MetLife survey showed that 44% responded that

they did not have enough time to collaborate with other teachers while 72% of those who responded felt that they were not afforded opportunities for professional development (MetLife, 2012). Another study suggested that when teachers feel that they have the support there is the likelihood that they may decide to stay in the profession (NCES, 2013). Teacher departure is costly for schools and districts, the cost to the United States of teachers leaving is about \$1 & 2.2 billion each year (Alliance for Education, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Ingersoll & Perda, 2013). It also negatively reduces resources available for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2015).

New teachers are leaving without acquiring skills and practices necessary for classrooms and when they leave schools and districts have to start the recruiting process all over (Albright et al., 2017; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). From the first day, new teachers may become anxious and frustrated when faced with the reality of the job requirement (Mendler, 2014). When confronted with understanding the rigorous curriculum, innovative technology and classroom management on their own they may find it challenging (Bayar, 2014; Voogt & McKenney, 2016). As some new teachers are coming with little or no experience and have to learn on the job, they need to be supported in areas that equip them for success in the classrooms. Student's success depends on the quality of teachers, it is crucial that new teachers have access to meaningful professional development learning and receive instructional support (Goldhaber & Walch, 2014; Gulamhussein, 2013). A structured system that eases their entry to the classrooms will be beneficiary to them. An effective induction program includes mentoring, teacher orientation and professional development and could help

beginning teachers or those new to the profession ease into their new positions in the classroom (Mena, Hennissen & Loughran, 2017).

### **Induction Programs**

Induction is a foundation for new teachers where they learn to apply teaching strategies and classroom management. It is offered from the time new teachers are employed and usually lasts for about three years. It offers support programs, classroom strategies, as well as training geared towards assisting new teachers in their first few years to develop skills (Hudson, 2013; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). The quality of the induction program is an important component of professional development. The purpose of an induction program is (a) to help new teachers with classroom instruction and management (b) to ease their entry into teaching (c) to increase new teachers' retention (Harris, 2015). Components of an effective induction program should be comprehensive, ongoing and sustained; week long; include an orientation of the school, districts and community; involve mentors; support from school administrators; led by trained individuals and specific to needs of new teachers (Mena, Hennissen & Loughran, 2017).

Induction should be guided by policy, formal, structured, and under the auspices of an accreditation agency for it to be effective (Kearney, 2014). States started implementing induction programs in the 1980s with the purpose of supporting beginning teachers (Luft et al., 2015). The effectiveness of a teacher in the classroom has been linked to meaningful induction programs (Mena, Hennissen & Loughran, 2017; Hudson, 2013). Participation in the induction program also increases the likelihood of retention



among new teachers, as they need to develop support in their early years in the classroom (Caspersen, & Raaen, 2014; Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014).

Schools and districts often implement their own programs to increase the effectiveness and retention rate among new teachers and ultimately increase student performance (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015). van Ginkel, et al., (2016) stated that what works in the induction program and makes it effective is when it is designed to usher new teachers to a collaborative professional learning environment. van Ginkel et al., (2016) also suggested that during the induction stage, teachers should not have large amount of teaching responsibilities. Instead, they should be assisted when it comes to getting instructional materials and the opportunity to focus mainly on their professional growth.

A quality induction program prepares and equips the teacher with skills and best practice techniques. The focus of an induction program is to support individual teachers (Kearney, 2014). School improvement is not complete without quality teachers in the classrooms (Hinchman & Moore, 2013; Ingersoll, 2012). A well-developed induction and mentoring program could improve teacher effectiveness, improve student achievement and teacher retention (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015). A teacher's beginning years in the classroom involves a learning and a loneliness stage, new teachers need the support that would ease them into the profession (van Ginkel, et al., (2016)

### **Mentor Support**

According to Conway & Bulgren (2015), the most common of the induction practice is mentoring in the United States. The mentoring program is another form of support for teachers early in their careers in the classrooms as well as increase their

retention in the schools (Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Korstjens, & Volman, 2014; Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014). Some areas that mentors provide assistance are in areas such as creating and sharing lesson plans assist when classroom management and emotional support. Early in a new teacher's career she/he should also be mentored by an experienced teacher with limited workload so as to be able to fully assist the new teachers; and problematic students should be given to more experienced teachers (Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Korstjens, & Volman, 2014). As well, new teachers should also be adequately informed about the community, the neighborhood, and students that attend the school (van Ginkel et al., 2016).

An effective mentoring program involves carefully selecting mentors, training them and providing adequate support for them. Richter et al (2013) suggested that mentors have to be trained and should be knowledgeable in the goals and mission of the schools and districts. According to Kutsyuruba et al. (2014), ensuring that mentees are matched with the right mentors is instrumental to the success of new teachers. Other research studies further suggested that mentors/mentees' selection should be based on the subjects they teach, mentors and mentees should be able to observe each other in classrooms and be able to give each other meaningful feedback (Fox & Wilson, 2015; Hochberg et al., 2015; Range, Duncan & Hvidston, 2013; Simoncini, Lasen, & Rocco, 2014).

Mentors are important and without their guidance new teachers could be unprepared. New teachers may be unable to articulate their needs in their first few years, and a mentor could provide them with support in that area (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014).

However, one study stated that even though some schools have new teacher induction programs only about 1% of teachers feel they are getting the comprehensive induction that includes learning from other teachers, and collaborating with mentors who teach the same content, (Martin; Buelow, & Hoffman, 2016). As supporting teachers in their first few years is critical, it is important that a mentoring program is structured and implemented based on the areas where the support is needed (Hudson, 2015; Niemi, 2017). New teachers come into the profession focused on making a difference and improving student learning ultimately succeeding in the classroom (Aguilar, 2013). New teachers may not have the necessary skills to teach young students, so providing guidance to new teachers in the first few years could have a positive effect. Providing teachers with support to succeed in the classroom could factor in their reasons to remain in the profession (Kearney, 2014). According to NCEES (2013), a new teacher who perceives he or she has opportunities for professional development learning and instructional support would likely stay in the profession as opposed to those who perceive that they do not have such opportunities. The ability for new teachers to cope without support is one of the challenges facing new teachers across the nation (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Resta, Huling, & Yeargain, 2013). According to Caspersen & Raaen (2014), about 29% of new teachers claimed they worked in schools that do not have meaningful induction program, while 25% claimed their schools do not provide mentoring program for new teachers. Golden (2013), suggested that teachers are very concerned about the support they receive, and this could factor in their decision to either stay or leave (Golden, 2013; Resta, Huling, & Yeargain, 2013).

Student behaviors are a major cause of new teachers' reality shock; this is another area where they need assistance to cultivate a safe environment conducive for learning (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015; Resta, Huling, & Yeargain, 2013). New teachers need the assistance and support of a veteran teacher to assist and prepare them with the classroom responsibilities (Hudson, 2013; Luft et al. (2015). Some new teachers may be entering the profession without in depth knowledge of the curriculum and classroom instruction strategies (Luft et al., 2015). They could benefit from being paired with a mentor knowledgeable in all these areas as well as one who can effectively communicate and impart knowledge (Hudson, 2013, Lynch, 2016). Shaw and Newton (2014) stated that a component of a well-designed mentoring program assist new teachers with instructional skills and feeling of efficacy. New teachers would benefit from been be paired with a skilled teacher with best teaching practices.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development is a crucial part of education and one of the support systems offered to new teachers' staff development (Abilock, Harada, & Fontichiaro, 2013; Goldring, Taie & Riddles, 2014; Ho, 2014). Professional development is one of the key mechanisms to improving schools (Jones et al., 2013). Studies have shown that professional development that teaches best practices to teachers has shown an increase in student performance (Nicolae, 2014; Pehmer, Groschner & Seidel, 2015; van den Berg, Ros, & Beijaard, 2015). The increased focus on professional development for teachers increased in the 1990's as the of quality teachers was considered an important aspect of students' achievement (Bannister, 2015; Saint-Hilaire, 2014). Gusky (2014) suggested

that effectively developed professional development provides resources that could improve teacher classroom practices. Effective professional development is believed to improve teacher performance in classrooms because it teaches best practices that ultimately could increase student success (Gersten et al., 2014; Thessin, 2015).

According to a research and policy brief from the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ), effective high-quality professional development should change and improve teacher classroom practices (NCCTQ, 2011). NCCTQ also stated that the characteristics of high-quality professional development should (a) connects with the school's mission and vision, state and district standards and assessments, and other professional learning activities (b) provides opportunities for active learning (c) allows teachers to collaborate, and (d) offers follow-up, and immediate, ongoing feedback (NCCTQ, 2011). Classroom practice improves when professional development is carefully designed to assist new teachers with resources that will empower them to affect student achievement positively (DeMonte, 2013).

According to Franey (2013), "Professional development of teachers is one of the most effective methods of improving teacher quality, teacher practices and student learning" (pg. 1). Effective professional development is focused on ensuring that teachers are introduced to best teaching practices that would increase student learning, as well as results oriented and have clearly defined standards (Goldring, et al., 2015). For professional development training to make a difference and be meaningful to the teachers it should be differentiated based on the needs of the teachers. The approach of offering all teachers the same professional learning, regardless of their content areas, their need,

and to sit down and not actively participate approach may not be effective (Joo, Lim, & Kim, 2013).

An effective professional development involves activities that are differentiated, accounts for the individual needs of each teacher and teachers are actively participating in the professional development (Bradley, 2014; Franey, 2013). According to research studies, because this form of professional development training builds mastery, it is thought to influence a teacher's job satisfaction and self-efficacy (Althausser, 2015; Thompson & Woodman, 2018; Tzivinikou, 2015). While McDonald (2013), stated that professional development is an ongoing part of classroom instruction that includes benchmarks, evaluations, as well as best practices. Parry (2014) stated that one reason schools/districts offer professional development to teachers is to empower teachers in the classrooms as it focuses on teacher learning. Professional development influences teacher learning as it links theory with practice and will improve teacher instructional practices, and ultimately support student performance (Learning Forward, 2015a; Song, 2016; Sywelem & Witte, 2013).

The National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices issued a brief which stated that for professional development to be considered effective it should be based on school improvement plans, continuous, thorough, rigorous, connected with teaching practices, and student focused (NGA, 2011). Schools and districts require that highly qualified teachers are in the classrooms and providing professional development enables them to be highly qualified and improve student performance (Gorozidis, Papaioannou, 2014; Twinning, Raffagehelli, Albion, & Knezek, 2013). By offering

teachers the opportunities of attending professional development learning could improve their classroom practices (U.S. DOE, 2015). Teacher quality is an integral part of student success using research based instructional strategies (Goldhaber, Krieg & Theobald, 2016). Studies suggested that schools and districts should offer ongoing sustained content driven professional development to increase the skills for effective delivery of instructions (National Staff Development Council, 2011; Sun et al., 2013).

New teachers may not have cultivated the ability to establish positive, organized learning environment, which is crucial to student learning. They are coming directly from university, where they are taught the theoretical aspects, but they may have minimal pedagogical knowledge, classroom management capabilities skills and less knowledge of instructional strategies (Yilmaz, 2016). New teachers are coming into the profession in an era where they are expected to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills as well as integrating technology into the curriculum and not many of them may have this expertise (Kafyulilo, Fisser & Voogt, 2016; Twinning, Raffaghelli, Albion & Knezek, 2013). About 62% of new teachers stated that they are not ready for the responsibilities they face on the job (Hobson, Grant & Harris, 2013). If new teachers are not equipped with necessary resources they may face hurdles in the classrooms that could negatively affect their career (Blank, 2013). New teachers may not be able to effectively perform in the classrooms without quality professional and instructional support that could equip them to deal with challenges, (Blank, 2013). Professional development provides teachers with best teaching practices that empowers them to be highly qualified and influence students positively (Gorozidis, Papaioannou, 2014; Hudson, 2013; Twinning, et al., 2013).

Effective professional development empowers teachers to be highly qualified teachers with in-depth knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogy skills (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Haug & Sands, 2013). That way they are able to effectively deliver the curriculum to students, teach problem solving, critical thinking and creativity skills, knowledge they need for college and beyond (Bartolini, Worth & Jensen LaConte., 2014; Pehmer, Gröschner, & Seidel, 2015; Tam, 2015; Totterdale & Lambert, 2016).

Retaining new teachers involves providing them support with instructional strategies for their success in classrooms (DuFour, 2015; DuFour & Reeves, 2016). New teachers may have innovative ideas that would be beneficial to student learning and performance, however, they need time and support to be able to effectively meet the needs of students (Rout & Babera, 2014). Access to quality instructional support is crucial to their effectiveness in classrooms, increase student achievement and possibly increase their retention rate (Hobson, Grant, & Harris, 2013; Southern Regional Education Board, 2013). Gellert (2013) suggested that when teachers have the opportunity of professional development and mentoring, they are given a solid foundation. If schools/districts are privy to new teacher perceptions of professional development and instructions support they are offered they may revamp what is currently in place (Dufour, 2015; Sanders, 2013).

### **Job Embedded Professional Development**

According to Zepeda (2015), the focus of JEPD is to continuously improve teacher classroom instructional practices and content skills so as to positively affect student learning. Teachers learn to tailor their instructions and assessments to meet the



learning styles of students in their classrooms. JEPD focuses on teacher collaborating to discuss strategies that would improve student learning, review student work and data, create assessments as well as observe each other in the classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2009a). The format for JEPD includes “Action Research, Case Discussions, Coaching, Critical Friends Groups, Data Teams/Assessment Development, Examining Student Work/Tuning Period, and Implementing Individual Growth/Learning Plans, Lesson study, Mentoring, Portfolios, Professional Learning Communities and study Group” (The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality 2010 p.6). The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2010), that teachers should have support and their only duties should be focused on instructions. High quality JEPD improves teacher’s knowledge of the content and effectively delivering it in classrooms (Shaffer & Thomas Brown 2015). It teaches how classroom instructions could be driven from the analysis and result of student data create assessments and increase student achievement. It is not done in isolation but through collaboration with other teachers allowing the opportunity to learn from each other and ultimately grow professionally.

### **Just-in-Time Professional Development**

Opportunity for professional development learning (PDL) specific to teacher needs at the time they need it instead of waiting for a time and place to attend a professional development. Teachers are not in a designated area listening to someone deliver the professional development. The content is immediately available to teachers and teachers are in control of their learning. This serves as a motivation for teachers because they are in charge and in control of their own learning. As well they do not have

to wait to get the information they need because it is readily available, and they have access to it whenever they want it and wherever they go. According to Perez-Poch & López, (2017) an important feature of JIT learning is that it takes the learning styles of the students into account.

### **Benefits of a Stable Teacher Corps**

Teacher stability is crucial to student success (Morgan, Hodge, Trepinski, & Anderson, 2014). However, new teachers are leaving the classroom before acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills for success and affecting how much schools and districts have spent on training them (Buchanan et al., 2013; Lassila, Jokikokko, Uitto & Estola 2017; Torres, 2013). New teachers experience emotional exhaustion within the first year in the profession which could account for reasons why they leave the classrooms early in their profession before gaining experience (Dicke, Parker, & Holzberger, 2015; Lassila et al., 2017). When teachers leave, they may be replaced with less qualified teachers and the highest turnovers are in low income school districts. Teacher turnover/attrition negatively affects students' achievement because students benefit from experienced teachers (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

New teachers' departure from classrooms disrupts student's learning, and negatively affects schools/districts financially as resources have to be diverted to training new teachers (Schafer, Long & Clandinan, 2014). Teacher departure from the classroom is disruptive to the teaching environment, which is often the case in low-income areas (Ingersoll, Merrill & May, 2014). When schools/districts are unable to keep teachers, students are directly affected (Morgan et al., 2014). Districts and schools have great

influence on teacher retention especially new teachers because providing them with resources to succeed could influence their self-efficacy (Resta, Huling & Yeargain, 2013).

### **Implications**

This study will examine what actual professional and instructional support is currently offered to new teachers and whether or not they perceive it to be effective in the Merritt County School District. According to Karsenti and Collin (2013), a teacher's early years in the classroom is an important time when schools should provide new teachers with support for best practices. The support for new teachers is likely to improve their efficacy and be a factor in their decision to stay in the classrooms as students benefit from highly qualified stable teacher corps. When schools/districts are unable to retain teachers' student learning and achievement are negatively affected as students are robbed of having highly qualified teachers in the classrooms (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). This study about the perception of actual new teachers may provide information on the type of professional development and instructional support that could improve their classroom practices, their efficacy, and their decision to remain in the classroom.

Recommendations based on the findings may include reviewing and/or revising the school/districts current professional development to include JEPD and JIT for new teachers. The findings of this study could provide information to schools/districts which allows them to reexamine what supports are currently in place and determine if they meet the needs of individual new teachers. The findings may also provide information about

practices that would increase classroom performance and increase new teacher retention as it is based on teacher perception. Tentative future projects could include designing a program that caters to specific needs of new teachers based on teacher perception, researched and documented best practices. Knowledge of information on assisting new teachers to increase their knowledge and skills could ultimately influence student learning as well as increase teacher retention (Martin, Buelow, & Hoffman, 2016). Students will benefit from a more stable teaching corps.

### **Summary**

The first few years in a new teacher's career is crucial, however new teachers are leaving the classrooms at a high rate. The purpose of this study is to examine what actual professional and instructional support currently offered to new teachers and whether or not they perceive it to be effective in the Merritt County School District. This study will examine the need for providing support for new teachers. The social cognitive theory of Lent, Brown and Hackett 1996) tested and validated by Badri et al., (2013) will frame the study and influence the research questions. The model places emphasis on the perception of job satisfaction at the work place, and links it to teacher self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals to career choice. Section 2 will include the methodology that will be used to conduct the study. The participant selection, the data collection, and directions for presenting analysis and findings will also be discussed.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Research Design and Approach**

Teachers are responsible for providing students with tools to succeed. Professional development and instructional support should provide teachers with practices and strategies they can apply as tools in the classroom to improve student learning and success. The focus of professional development and instructional support for teachers reported in the literature has been on programs that schools and districts have chosen for teachers (Dufour, 2015; Evans, 2014; Pinho & Andrade, 2015). However, there has been limited research reported regarding the perceptions of what teachers consider necessary for their professional growth. For this project study, I selected a qualitative approach to provide the perceptions of teachers on what they need for their professional growth and to become more effective in the classroom. Qualitative research is an appropriate approach to uncover an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through the participant's experiences and the meaning they ascribe to the experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). According to some studies, the process of how self-efficacy is developed in the teaching profession is not easy to comprehend. It is best to hear the teachers' perception of what challenges they face in the classrooms and what type of supports they need (Badri et al., 2013; Botwinik & Press, 2013; Holzberger et al., 2013).

This study was conducted to examine new teachers' perceptions of the professional development and instructional support provided in 37 elementary schools and 17 middle schools in a school district in Southeastern United States. A case study is a

method used to examine an individual, a group of people, an activity, a process, or an event bounded by time (Creswell, 2013). Case studies allow for one or several techniques such as observation, survey, and interview to be used to collect data that will broaden an understanding of the research topic and deepen comprehension of the problem by knowing what happened and what was experienced (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I used an instrumental case study design because I wanted to focus on highlighting a particular issue, the need for teacher professional development and instruction, from the perspective of teachers themselves (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2013). Creswell (2013) describes a case study methodology as the perceptions of the participants, their feelings and experiences, that are collected through rich, thick descriptions gathered from interviews. When researchers use qualitative methods, they are able to collect data by examining documents, interviewing participants, and through observation (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Ramohai, 2013; Yin, 2013). Themes based on teacher information such as feelings and experiences from teacher perspectives begin to emerge through qualitative methods (Creswell, 2013). This methodology was employed to examine how new teachers perceived the professional development and instructional support.

A quantitative approach would have been used to test hypotheses to explain the relationship between variables, collect relatively large amounts of numerical data for statistical analysis, and generalize to a larger population (Creswell 2012, 2013; Merriam, 2015). My intent was not to generalize to a larger population, but to understand the perspectives of teachers in the local setting. I considered other qualitative methods, but none would have provided the depth of information on the issue of teachers' perceptions

of their needs for professional development and instructional support. Ethnography was a possible choice of qualitative design, but I was not seeking to examine the shared experiences of a culture or to be fully engaged in the culture for a longer time (Creswell, 2013). I also did not select a narrative design because I did not want to collect stories about individual teachers' lives (Creswell, 2012). Grounded theory was another qualitative design that I considered, but my purpose was not to develop a theory from the data collected. Finally, I considered a phenomenological approach, which Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle (2010) explained as a way to document the lived experiences of participants, but I wanted to examine teachers' perceptions of their need for professional development and instruction, not their overall lived experiences as teachers (see Marshall & Rossman, 2014)

### **Participants**

The setting for this qualitative case study was Merritt County School District, a public school district in a metropolitan area in a Southern state. The district includes 37 elementary schools, 17 middle schools, 11 high schools, 4 alternative learning schools, and one adult education program. The district employs 7,300 teachers. Because I was interested in an extensive exploration of a central phenomenon in this qualitative case study, I used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013). This type of sampling enabled me to select individuals to maximize the understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Inclusion criteria for the selection of the participants were teachers with 1 to 5 years of teaching experience but no previous experience in the Merritt County School District and currently participating in the induction program offered by the Merritt

County School District. I intended to purposefully select 10 teachers from the elementary, middle and high schools within the same cluster in the Merritt County School District. However, I had to limit the sample to elementary and middle school teachers because I was unable to obtain permission to recruit participants from the high schools.

There were approximately 1,000 teachers in the elementary and middle schools in the selected cluster. Of these 1,000 teachers, 135 were new to the Merritt County School District and 25 had from 1 to 5 years' experience as a teacher. I intended to collect a sample size of at least ten participants. There is no specific formula when deciding on how many participants a researcher should select in a qualitative study. The number of participants may vary depending on the purpose of a given study. However, according to Creswell (2013), spending more time with a smaller number of participants allows the researcher to complete deeper inquiry into each individual's perceptions and to effectively capture the phenomenon. Merriam & Tisdell (2015) also supported the use of smaller numbers of participants to allow for deeper understanding. For this qualitative study, I intended to obtain a maximum variation sample by selecting from the elementary, middle, and high schools of one cluster of the Merritt County School District. This would allow for diversity in experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and opinions. Although I was limited to selection from elementary and middle school teachers in the Merritt County School District, this still provided variation of experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. After identification of teachers who met the inclusion criteria and inviting participants, I found that I still had fewer than the 10 participants that I intended recruit, so it was necessary to include one teacher with more than 5 years of teaching experience



but new to the district and currently participating in the induction program. The induction program has many standardized elements across all levels of teachers, and its purpose is to provide support to teachers during the first few years. Although the inability to obtain permission to invite high school teachers to participate and lack of acceptance from at least ten elementary and middle school teachers who met the criteria affected my sample size, I was still able to reach data saturation through my interviews with participants (Creswell, 2013).

The focus of this study was to highlight a specific issue and develop a thorough understanding of the issue, which is why choosing an instrumental case study was the best approach. Creswell (2013) describes a case study methodology as the perceptions of the participants, their feelings and experiences that are collected through rich, thick descriptions gathered from interviews. When researchers use qualitative methods, they are able to collect data by examining documents, interviewing participants, and through observation (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2013). Themes based on teacher information such as feelings and experiences from teacher perceptions begin to emerge through qualitative methods (Creswell, 2013). This methodology was employed to examine how new teachers perceive the professional development and instructional support.

I invited all teachers who met the criteria to participate in the study. Teachers were not obligated to participate; their participation was voluntary, and no money or gifts were provided to those who participated (see Little, 2013). Along with taking notes during the interview, I also recorded their responses; that way, I ensured that their

responses were effectively noted. The intent was to get a better understanding of new teachers' perceptions of the professional development and instructional support for new teachers in classrooms early in their teaching career, as this group is most at risk of leaving the classrooms (Jo, 2014; Kraft & Papay, 2014).

### **Procedures to Gain Access to Participants**

As part of the districts' guidelines on conducting research, I attended the district's mandated informational meeting for those interested in collecting data in the district. To gain access to the participants, prior to getting an approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) from Walden University, I sent an e-mail to the district's superintendent with my proposal attached to the e-mail asking for approval to conduct my project study in the district (Appendix B). I also sent e-mails to the administrators of the schools where I intended to collect the data (Appendix C). The completed application form along with the conditional IRB approval (approval no. 08-08-17-0413708) and the Basic Human Research certification were submitted to the school district.

On October 12, 2017, the school district officially approved my application to conduct the project study in the district and my IRB status was confirmed by Walden University. I approached the administrators of the various schools and presented the school district's approval letter and introduced myself and the purpose of the study. I asked the administrators for names and e-mail contacts of individuals who met the inclusion criteria. Upon receipt of names of individuals, I sent e-mails to the individuals inviting them to participate in the study. I sent 20 e-mail invitations to teachers to participate (8 from the elementary school and 12 from the middle school). Of these, 18

teachers agreed to participate. The content of the e-mail included an introduction of me as the researcher and the purpose of the study. However, when I was ready to conduct the interviews, two teachers decided not to participate and two did not respond to my e-mails. I attempted one more time to reach the two individuals who had agreed to participate initially but did not return my e-mails, and I still did not get a response from either of the two individuals. Once I had a positive response from those to whom I sent the e-mail, I narrowed the participants' pool by purposefully selecting individuals from those who returned the e-mail. The intent was that this group would be able to provide in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

### **Establishing a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship**

I have been an employee of the study site for 14 years. During that time, I have worked as middle school and high school teacher. I selected all participants from a cluster in the Merritt County School District where I have not worked. Because participants were all new to the Merritt County School District, I had not worked with any of the participants in any role and I would not be supervising any of the participants in any way. To establish a researcher-participant working relationship, my goal was to ensure that the participants were comfortable and not apprehensive about sharing their views and experiences with me. One of the ways that a researcher-participant working relationship was established was setting up and conducting the interviews during convenient times of participants' availability, sharing and reporting results honestly, and respecting each participant's commitment to the study. From the onset, all the participants were made aware of the methods I used to collect the data, and what I expected from each of them.

All necessary information pertaining to the study was communicated to the participants prior to their signing the informed consent. Each participant was given my cellphone number and email address to communicate with me if they had any questions and/or concerns related to their participation in the study. They were told that if they were more comfortable speaking outside of their school settings, the interviews would be arranged for another location. They were also informed that any information they shared were kept confidential and only be accessible by me and no one else.

### **Measures to Protect Participants' Rights**

The necessary IRB approval from Walden University (Walden IRB approval number 08-08-17-0413708) and the local setting were first secured prior to collecting any data. The IRB process ensured that methods employed met the ethical requirements (Xerri, 2018). I followed the guidelines set forth by Walden University to ensure that participants' privacy and rights are protected. As part of the process to establish trust and credibility with the participants as well as to establish a positive relationship with the participants, before I began collecting the data, all the participants each signed a consent letter that informs them of the purpose of the study as well as the steps I took to protect their confidentiality. I informed them of their rights and told them that participation was voluntary, and they had the option to opt out of the study at any time (Creswell, 2013). I also informed the participants that each participant will have access to review the interview transcripts to ensure that their perceptions were accurately captured before I finalize the findings.

### **Data Collection**

The various forms of data collection in a qualitative research study includes observations, collecting documents as well as interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For this study, the data sources were individual interviews and any document the teachers were willing to share on new teacher professional development and mentoring materials. According to Yin (2014) collecting multiple source of evidence will add to the study's construct validity because it is ensuring that initial claim being investigated is accurately supported. In this case study, I was able to examine agendas for in-school professional development learning offered at one of the project sites and used insights from the examination to probe further during interviews about the perceived effectiveness of these supports.

Letters of invitation were emailed to all the participants selected by the principals as an initial contact and data collection. The email stated the purpose of the research, my role as the researcher, a detailed description of the methods, assuring them of their confidentiality as well as my respect of their time and that the interview would be conducted at the school site or any other site of their choice. Eighteen teachers who met the selection criteria had initially indicated their willingness to participate. However, I ended up with only ten participants; three from an elementary school, seven from a middle school.

As soon as I received responses to the letters of invitation stating their willingness to participate in the study, we decided on a day and time for the interview. During the meeting, I provided each participant with a detailed explanation of the purpose of the

study and the steps I would take to protect their identities. I also informed them that their participation was voluntary, and they could decide to opt out any time without any repercussions (Creswell, 2013). Those who agreed to participate were given two copies of the consent forms to review and sign. They returned one signed consent form to me and kept the other form. Enough time was given to the participants to review the consent form before committing to participating in the project.

### **Conducting Interviews**

For this study, as the researcher, I collected data using an interview protocol that I developed from the research question and the framework (Appendix D). Prior to the day of the interviews, I confirmed the time and location via email and I also sent reminders to each participant. The face-to-face interviews were conducted over the Thanksgiving break during the 2017-2018 school year with each of the 10 new teachers. I conducted a total of 10 interviews. The interviews were each recorded after gaining permission from the participants (Yin, 2014). Each interview lasted no longer than 60 minutes at a location and time agreed upon by the participants. The location was decided based on convenience and comfort of each participant. At the end of the interview, I thanked each participant for participating in the study. I also informed each participant that they would be given the transcribed data from the interview to check that I had accurately captured their perceptions. The participants were informed that each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect his or her identity. I also informed them of the possibility of a follow up interview in case there was need for further clarification. The interviews were semi structured with open-ended questions to allow the participants to provide detailed

responses based on the research questions on professional development and instructional support for new teachers (Appendix D). Also, within 24 hours after I conducted the interviews, I transcribed each interview.

### **Documents**

For this study, in addition to the interviews, I reviewed professional development agendas from one of the project sites and it provided specific insight into the participants' responses. According to Yin (2014) documents are a strong, stable source of data. Using different sources of data, serves as a strength of the case study research design. Since the study's central focus is the perceived effectiveness of the available new teacher support and development, the additional data collection occurred with the current instructional and professional support available in the district. I maintained a journal to record all the activities while conducting the study. The journal included the pseudonyms of the participants instead of their real names, dates of receipts of the documents and notes jotted down during the interview sessions. The journals also included my thoughts and any question I had. I created and kept individualized folders for each participant that contained documents received from each participant throughout the study (such as their signed letter of consents and any communication). The data did not include any information that could easily be linked to any of the participants, but identifiers to protect each participant's confidentiality. The data collected during the interview was transcribed by me and electronically archived. The data collected during the study was only used for the purpose of the project study. All documents are maintained in a secure

locked file cabinet in my home office, which is accessible only by me and will be destroyed after 5 years, per Walden University policy.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Although I work in the district where I conducted the study, I did not collect the data at the high school where I am currently employed. I have no supervisory role over the new teachers and throughout the duration of the study I do not envisage working with the individuals or supervising any one of them. It was important that I was able to control my bias (Patton, 2015). I have no prior knowledge of these individuals, and the principals provided me with names of those who fit the criteria. My only contact with the participants was when I invited the individuals to participate in the study after receiving their names from their principals. Most communication was limited to emails. The only times I physically met with the individuals was during the first meeting to introduce myself and the project, and when I conducted the one-on-one interview. During the first meeting, I explained the purpose of the study, how I planned to protect their confidentiality and the various methods I would use to collect the data such as conducting a one on one interview with each participant at the local setting. I did not envisage any risk to the participants during the course of the study. There were no payments involved for their involvement in the study. Pseudonyms was assigned to each participant as part of the extra measures to protect the confidentiality of the participants' responses.

### **Data Analysis Process**

A sample of ten new teachers in the Merritt County School District were interviewed regarding the perception of professional development and instructional



support for new teachers in the district. By interviewing the participants, the researcher is able gather detailed information from the interviewee that may not be able to observe (Creswell, 2013). The next step involved understanding the data collected by sorting them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The analysis of the data was done immediately after each interview was completed. Lodico et al. (2010), stated that in a case study research, the researcher attempts to discover meaning, investigate the process to gain an insight into the understanding of the participants and/or situation (p. 269). The process of data analysis includes organizing the data, the exploring of the data, coding of the data, constructing detailed descriptions of the participants and the settings, creating themes, and finally interpreting the data. Data analysis was done the same time that the data were collected, and it is an ongoing process throughout the study Yin (2014). Creswell (2013), stated that hand analysis involves reading, making, and coding the data. The interview process enabled me to get information through the questions they were asked (Creswell, 2013; Xerri, 2018). The first step was organizing and preparing the data for analysis and creating folders for each participant, where I kept each participant's information. The folders were colored coded based on the schools; elementary school teachers were assigned blue, while middle school teachers were assigned red. The interviews were transcribed by me within 24 hours following each interview and each participant was emailed the transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the information. After the participants had reviewed the transcripts, each transcribed document was placed in the participant's folder.

As a preliminary analysis, I copied and pasted the transcripts to Wordle cloud to generate words that appeared frequently to get a sense and basic understanding of the data. The codes generated from Wordle were my first set of codes and they provided me with some information. I placed a copy of the Wordle cloud in each participant's folder. I initially quickly read through all of the transcribed documents and then read through each document several times, reading the data line by line and highlighting information that I felt was relevant to the study. In the margins, I came up with what I called codes (similar responses were colored the same). I did this with each participant's transcribed interview. During this process as well, I cut and pasted in another word document statements that I thought were relevant and could be useful later. This process was repeated for all the nine interview transcripts and repeated several times because I was looking for patterns that I could use to create emerging themes. As codes emerged, I used a method of constant comparison as an analysis tool to examine each participant's response to determine common words, phrases, or sentences for open coding. After comparing all ten transcripts, I sorted the codes and grouped them into similar codes. I compared the codes to the words from Wordle to come up with emerging themes.

## **Findings**

The problem examined through this study was new teacher perception of the professional development and instructional support for new teachers. Through this study, I was able to identify teachers' perceptions of the types of support available at the elementary and middle schools in Merritt County School District the perceived effect on their classroom practices. Six themes emerged from the data: (1) time to implement

feedback and strategies in the classrooms, (2) instructional support, (3) professional growth and effectiveness in the classroom, (4) lack of collaboration, (5) professional development and training, and (6) new teachers' orientation/support and feelings.

Table 1

*Demographics of the Participants*

Participant	Years in classroom	Content taught	Grade level
A	5	Math	6th
B	3	P.E	Middle school
C	1	ELA	7th
D	1	ELA	7th
E	3	Science	8th
F	2	Special ed	2nd
G	5	Science	8th
H	3	Math	7 <sup>th</sup>
I	1	ELA/SS	2nd
J	2	Music	Elementary

The following are the themes and subthemes that emerged: Lack of Time, Instructional Support, Professional Growth and Effectiveness in Class, Lack of Collaboration, Professional Development & Training, New Teacher Orientation/Support and Feeling.

## Participant Responses

Table 2

### *Qualitative Themes*

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Theme 1–Lack of Time

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Theme 2–Instructional Support

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Theme 3–Professional Growth and Effectiveness in class

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Theme 4 – Lack of Collaboration

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Theme 5–Professional Development & Training

Subthemes

- a. Professional development that positively influences their classroom practices
  - b. Strategies to effectively deliver instruction in classroom
- 

Theme 6–New Teacher Orientation/Support

Subthemes

- a. Induction
  - b. Mentors
  - c. Lack of administrative support
  - d. Classroom management
- 

Theme 7–Feeling

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**Theme 1: Lack of time.** The first theme that emerged from the interview with the participants was that they do not have the time to digest and/or implement what was learned at the professional developments/trainings or what was suggested by school or the district administration. Teachers have other work duties in addition to teaching and learning the curriculum. Teacher C stated that “they have us doing unnecessary things, extra stuff.” Most of the participants feel that they are not able to effectively use their

planning time to actually plan lessons. They said that planning time is often used for other school activities such as meetings instead of actually meeting with other teachers to collaborate and plan the lessons. Teacher D stated that “I am pulled to go cover other classes, attend meetings such as parent conferences, call parents, I have never used my planning time to plan anything.” Teacher J stated that “here we teach, enter grades constantly and other things, going to all these behavioral conferences as well, they try to grab us while they can, It’s the teaching and the admin, whereas in Peace Corp it’s just the teaching the curriculum.” Teacher G stated, “Give me more time to learn the material instead of focusing on the extra stuff like we have to do.” According to Lambert (2013), new teachers struggle with effectively managing their time which could be very stressful in their first years in the classrooms. The participants were emphatic that they needed time to plan and learn the curriculum instead of being pulled out to do school activities that is not related to their classroom duties. Their main duty is to focus on the curriculum and all these other duties adds to the stress they are feeling.

**Theme 2: Instructional support.** The first few years is very critical as this is when they develop their classroom competencies. This period is a learning phase. As they are new to the profession, they have unique needs and should have access to resources that would help them become proficient in the classrooms. Instructional resource includes books, access to laptop carts and other materials that teachers need access to in order to facilitate student learning. Some of the complaints included lack of access to resources and other readily available instructional resources. They have to find resources online on their own with little or no direction. Some of the teachers

complained that they do not know where to access the resource materials. Teacher G stated, “The main problem is that you are teaching a subject that you are not familiar with and I have to look up resources.” The same teacher felt that the current textbooks are not that helpful/useful. Teacher C stated that “I like the google drive, but I will also like to have to computer resources, but it’s just not easy to get the laptops to use them effectively, with writing it is a process, writing is a process.” According to Teacher J, she did not get materials she needed for the classroom at the beginning of the year, she stated:

Those who do not start at the beginning of the school year have little or no resource, no laptops, no keys, no access to the gradebook etc. I have not been assigned the district’s instructional resources, I just got my log in credential, I have been using another teacher’s login credentials, and everything is catch up me mode. I came in and for 2 weeks, I did not have a laptop. I believe that they should offer professional development throughout the year because teachers leave all the time and new teachers are employed throughout the year and need all the support they can get.

The district uses online resources known as EDUTRAX but she said that no one has shown her how to use it. The middle school teachers mentioned that they now have Instructional Site Facilitators (ISF) for each subject area. The role of the ISF is to help teacher with their classroom practices. However, the amount of support they get varies. All, but two felt the ISFs were helpful. Teacher E stated, “this year the district started giving us content-specific instructional site facilitators, and it has made a huge

difference.” Teacher C finds ISF supportive she stated that “the ISF is helpful in terms of when she is available which is not often because she is split among 3 other schools.”

**Theme 3: Professional growth and effectiveness in the classroom.** Most felt any growth they have made is from their own initiative and tenacity and not from the school/district. However, Teacher H, who is part of the school leadership stated that:

The new teacher orientation provided at the beginning of the year with the district offered a crash course on what to be expected. There were some opportunities to speak with current employees about expectations within the school. At the school there were new teacher meetings and orientation to continue to develop the individual and the relationships with colleagues. Curricular supports were provided though in district training and collaborative planning.

Teacher A stated that

I don't, I don't feel that the alleged support that they give me has impacted my growth as a teacher in the classroom, I believe that any growth I have is from myself reflecting on what could've done better, because in all honesty the support that we receive is minimal. You know, you get two walkthroughs in a year so two days out of 180 is not really support in my opinion so I don't feel like their support helps you to grow and develop as a teacher I believe is my own reflection of what I'm doing.

The more training new teachers receive that would enable their professional growth and effectiveness in the classrooms the more satisfied and less disillusioned they are. New

teachers want to know that their professional growth is supported however, if they are not satisfied with their jobs it may be difficult to stay in the school/district.

**Theme 4: Lack of collaboration.** When new teachers have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers, they learn instructional strategies on an ongoing basis (Shaffer & Thomas Brown, 2013). Teacher A responded that:

Our most frustrating challenge is that we have special Ed teachers and they don't share our planning. They can't sit down and think this is what I would like to do. They can't look over the lesson plans and let you know if anything has to be adjusted or come up with strategies to deliver the curricular to the Special Ed students in the classrooms. But it's not a sit down and plan with them because they don't have the time.

Teachers will benefit from meeting with other teachers so that they can share their ideas and plan instructions. According to Owen (2016) by participating in the collaborations teachers develop new skills and improve their classroom practices. Being able to collaborate with other teachers is important to new teachers so that they will not feel isolated and left alone to deal with issues.

**Theme 5: Professional development & training.** One of the most effective ways to increase new teacher knowledge, practices, and improve teacher mindset is through meaningful and sustained professional development (Holm & Kajander, 2015). Districts should provide professional development that would improve new teachers' instructional practices by focusing on their areas of need that affect student learning (Jenkins and Agamna (2013). Some of the participants described school and district professional



development experiences as being ineffective, and inadequate. Teacher E stated that “I honestly feel that most of the professional developments that I have attended have not been beneficial to my instructional practices.” Teacher G stated that:

Because it's not helping them (the students) to learn the content and the content is what they are going to testing on I don't have enough content knowledge, I just don't have enough content knowledge to see value in it different.

Teacher F stated that “the meetings are about compliance and not the trainings on curriculum. So, they just talk about the things we need to know.” However, Teacher D stated that “hmmm and I think it's impacting me to actually know what to do with the data because plickers is great you collected it but what does that actually mean I think it's help me be able to have some clarity. I asked her what plickers was and said that an application tool she uses to assess students and gets immediate feedback. Under this Theme, I came up with the following subthemes:

***Professional development that positively influences their classroom practices.***

When asked the type of professional development that would positively affect their classroom practices, the overwhelming response was help with differentiating Instructions (Holm, & Kajander, 2015). According to Darrow (2015), through differentiated instruction teachers are able to adjust the classroom activities and assessments to support the growth of each student. Teacher H stated that “Professional Development could include more courses to actually demonstrate and teach differentiation and delivery strategies.” Teacher D stated that “I would need a lot of support with differentiation.” Teacher C stated that “I would like to see how it is done,

overall modeling, I will say that I need this to be modeled, show me.” Teacher C wanted something she deemed as meaningful professional learning and stated:

I would say that it will be great to use some of that time for school, let the kids out and have real professional planning day. Let the students out for a day and use that time for the teachers to have conversations about what the past week has been, just debrief and talking about how the lessons were when we taught it.

Two of the teachers stated that they would like for the administration to not just tell them what they want to see, but also to model it. As new teachers in the classrooms, they have to be shown what is expected from them. It is not enough to come and tell them verbally what they are doing wrong and expect them to implement it without some modeling. Administration support is crucial to new teachers and key to remaining in the profession.

***Strategies to effectively deliver instruction in class.*** New teachers thrive in environments where they feel that they are supported through professional learning in areas they need most. They need help with the content they are teaching. Teacher B stated that:

I do not feel like I get enough assistance on the subject that I teach. There is no professional development for PE teachers specifically. I need more support based on the subject that is taught, and not just teachers in general.

Teacher I stated that “I don't feel like there has been much support for me as a music teacher in my role.” Teacher E stated that “there was no veteran 8th grade physical science teacher at my school when I was hired on, so I felt like I really had no one to go

to for guidance when it came to deliver specific content.” Teacher G stated that “I don't have enough content knowledge, I just don't have enough content.” She also stated that “all these modules have nothing to do with my job, my job is about teaching pedagogy.” They should give us ideas to navigate the google drive.” However, teacher C stated that “it has been beneficial, we are still stagnated at the process of actually implementing it and it been shown in an actual classroom environment that I work in.” Overall, the response was that they are not getting support in this area which is crucial to their growth and student learning.

**Theme 6: New teachers orientation/support.** They felt that they did not get enough information from the new teacher orientation and that it was not relevant to their content. The theme New Teacher Orientation/Support is broken into the following subthemes:

**Induction.** This program is a support for novice teachers and takes place at both the district and the school levels. The goal is to provide new teacher with information that would improve their effectiveness in the classrooms. Some of the participants are not in the induction program or are not aware of if they are in the program. Teacher C stated that “I don't, I don't think that I am part of that.” She immediately sent a text message to her principal during the interview to confirm. The principal did say that she was indeed in the Induction program. While teachers D and E said they were not aware. Teacher D stated that “I think that is what I am under, it's not Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP), they have it to where you have some time to go into a teacher preparation program because the GACE (certification program in the State) has already

been satisfied that programming mission all that so now it's just a certification program.”

Teacher J stated that “I am supposed be in a program that will give me all these lovely resources. I have to get it as I'm teaching, I don't have access to resources.” Teacher F stated that “I don't know if they ever reached out because I came in March, the school year was almost over so I don't know they just never reached out or they just forgot, I don't know but then I never ask about it because, because some of the stuff will be here.”

*Mentors.* This is an integral part of the induction program. Mentors are veteran teachers who have been trained in coaching techniques to assist new teachers. Their goal is to provide new teachers with ideas for teaching content, strategies on dealing with classroom management, and provide emotional support to new teachers. Teacher F stated that “no Mentor. I know because I came in under the old administration for two years, I came into 2016 but in 2017, but they are now trying to make me a mentor.” Teacher I stated that “having a mentor that taught my same subject or even have an opportunity to be able to go to other schools and visit veteran music teachers in elementary school would be great.” Teacher C stated that “that the one I have is not officially a mentor because she's not gone through the training required to be a mentor however if I need advice and I was told that this is my mentor and that I go to her.” Teacher G stated that a suggestion is to “assign a veteran teacher who is successful in the subject in the building or in the county someone who is willing.” Teacher A stated:

They did assign me a mentor but unfortunately, I did not see my mentor often and when I say often I mean I saw her in passing in school it was not a regular

scheduled and then after that for the next couple years I think it was up to my third year.

Teacher J was employed October and was assigned a mentor right before Thanksgiving break and has not had time to get with her. She started that “I was assigned a mentor last Tuesday.” Especially in the first few years mentors are a crucial support to new teachers. They can provide emotional support as these new teachers need someone to talk to and professional support by helping with instructional strategies, providing and implementing classroom management strategies, creating lesson plans and delivering lessons. They can also observe the mentees in the classrooms and give feedback.

***Lack of administrative support.*** The participants expressed the type of support they are looking for from their administration that they feel would be influential in the classrooms and lead to student learning. The middle school teachers expressed that they would like for the administration to “model” for them what they feel they should do better after each walkthrough. During the conversation, when asked to elaborate on some of the type of support she would like, teacher A wants her administration to show some empathy and listen to her.

My administrator said she doesn't want a gripe session, but as teachers we need a gripe session when you say this is this is what I'm going through and survived, how do you survive? All the support that I received on my grade level were from veteran teachers on the grade level supported me far more than my mentor teacher, they were my mentors.

Teacher C and teacher A mentioned that one of the assistant principals seems to be more helpful. Teacher C stated that:

I have seen Admin W, he is really good, he will model, cause I have seen him, he will go in a class with a substitute in there and do what has to be done, but the time constraint is just not allowing anyone to do it and it is just too much to put on anyone's plate.

One thing that was evident from their responses was that they receive more support from veteran teachers and not their administrations especially in the middle school. As well, the administrators do not seem to have the time to support the teachers because of their other duties. Teacher B also stated: That I have learned to get support from other veteran PE teachers. By talking to them, I see I'm not the only one facing these issues. The veteran teachers have given me pointers on how to manage my class, handle disciplinary issues, and how to implement differentiated instructions.

Teacher C stated that her fellow teachers "Ms. P and G have been very helpful." New teachers need the support of their administration to effectively perform their classroom duties. School administrators in the case principals and assistance principals are the leaders that influence teacher success and satisfaction. They would feel motivated if they perceived that they were receiving support from the administration. They want the administration to be present and empathize with them but some of the participants felt that no one is willing to listen to what they have to say.

***Classroom Management.*** Another issue was the support or lack thereof with classroom management to create a conducive learning environment from the

administration. This is a reality for new teachers and they felt that it was disrupting the learning environment and negatively affecting student learning. It is very difficult to effectively deliver contents in the classrooms. According to research, the issue of classroom management remains a major challenge for beginning teachers (Garrett, 2014; Bayar, 2014; Greenberg, Putnam & Walsh, 2014; Simonsen & Myers, 2015). It is one of the reasons for teacher burn out (Simonsen & Myers, 2015). All participants indicated that classroom management is an issue even though the degree varied. Teacher A, a middle school teacher stated that “there is disruption during lessons and students not completing assignments.” They felt that the administration was not doing much to solve this problem. Teacher E stated:

Discipline seemed to be applied unevenly and somewhat arbitrarily by administration and teachers were encouraged to handle things within their classrooms but not given a lot of guidance or support on ways to do so.

In the place of the administration the support has been from veteran teachers. According to Teacher B “veteran teachers have given me pointers on how to manage my class, handle disciplinary issues, and how to implement differentiated instructions.” A lack of classroom management training impedes their ability to effectively deliver the content in the classroom. Teachers need help with classroom management and effecting discipline in classrooms because teachers that are skilled in classroom management are able to influence students' academic performance positively (George, Sakirudeen, & Sunday, 2017). Classroom management includes how the teacher works, the classroom dynamics, the relationship between the teacher and students and how teaching and learning takes

place. Classroom management is not just about student control and discipline. It also involves what teachers do in their classrooms to encourage students' academic involvement and cooperation in order to promote a conducive learning environment for all students. When teachers have classroom management competencies it affects educational goals and student learning.

**Theme 7: Feeling.** Because self-efficacy is the confidence in one's ability to succeed, it affects how the individual performs. Teachers new to the profession constantly face challenges that could negatively influence their self-efficacy (Johnson, 2014). Teacher J and Teacher G are still yet to complete all their teaching requirements. They were employed under a new policy that was implemented by the county because of teacher shortage that gave them a provisional employment. They both planned on taking the required GACE in December 2017. Teachers E and G both teach the same content and on the same grade level, stated that they will not be returning next school year. Teacher E stated that "I am leaving the profession next year. I have already been accepted." While Teacher G stated that "I am leaving the school that's it." The impression I got was that most of the teachers are disillusioned. One of the teachers said that she did not expect what she is finding herself on the ground. This seems to be the general. Even though only two teachers stated categorically that they were leaving, I got the feeling that others are thinking about it especially in the middle school.

This study is based on the social cognitive theory model of Lent, Brown and Hackett (1996) that places emphasis on work place job satisfaction linking it to an individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectations as well as personal goals. The model



tested and validated by Badri et al. (2013), suggests that one's career choice is a result of the belief individuals develop in the following areas: a) "personal performance accomplishments, b) vicarious learning, c) social persuasion and d) physiological states and reactions" (p. 102). All of these occur when an individual develops the expertise/ability and is successful. This process affects one's self-efficacy or confidence that one can succeed. Based on the collective responses from the participants during the one-on-one interview, my observation of the overall perception is that they do not perceive the professional development and instruction support to be relevant, consistent and effective. Below is a brief synopsis of the interview data, including the 7 themes, subthemes and selected response examples are displayed in table 2-C.

Table 3

*Identified Themes and Selected Theme Responses Examples*

Theme	Participant response
Lack of time	All responded not adequate as there are other things they are required to do that do not involve teaching requirement.
Instructional support	Only participant H gave a favorable response Others stated they needed support from Leadership i.e., model a lesson
Professional growth and Effectiveness in class	Only participant H gave a favorable response
Lack of collaboration	All responded that they would like the opportunity to collaborate with others
Professional development & training	Does not address their specific needs They need help with differentiating instructions, lesson plans
New teacher's orientation & support	Not relevant, need support with classroom management, access to resources
Feeling	Two said they would not be back the next year.

**Quality and Credibility**

Merriam (2009) stated that by using both member checks and peer examination one is able to check for credibility and validity. To validate the findings, I employed member checks, which allowed the participants to review, correct and/or confirm the draft before finalizing it. Employing this method ensured the accuracy of the analysis and that my biases were limited and did not influence how their views were portrayed (Creswell, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010, p 274; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For credibility, I

triangulated the data from comparing the interviews and I employed member checking as well. A discrepant case is anything that does not seem to support the findings after the analysis the data (Creswell, 2013). In research one should be prepared for discrepant cases after analyzing the findings. There was not any discrepant case in this study however, if there were any discrepancies, follow-up interviews would have had to be conducted to classify the issue. I strived for trustworthiness by employing triangulation and member checking as the participants were able to review the transcribed data and ensured that there was not any misinterpretation of any of the participants' statements.

However, before I was able to obtain the permission to interview the teachers in the elementary school, the principal stated her reservation because she felt that the responses would not be accurate as she and the assistant principal, at the time of collecting the data have only been at the school for two months. I assured her that this would be included in my conclusions and explained the reason based on the clarification provided from the participant(s) perception (s) and that it is an exception.

### **Findings by Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine new teacher perception of the professional development and instructional support for new teacher. The conceptual framework that framed the research questions and discussion for this study is the social cognitive theory of the Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1996) a model tested and validated by Badri et al. (2013). The following research questions were used to guide the study to examine new teacher perception on professional development and instructional support for new teachers:

**RQ1: What specific curricular and instructional supports can be documented as offered to new teachers throughout the district?** Theme 2 emerged in the analysis in response to RQ 1, regarding the specific curricular and instructional supports offered to new teachers. The participants also complained of not having access to district resources. This theme is relevant because teachers need to have access to all instructional resources that would prepare them for the classrooms. If they do not have these resources readily available, it could hasten their departure from the classroom as they do not have the needed support. New teachers should not spend their time looking for resources for their classrooms.

**RQ2: How effective, or not, do new teachers perceive the current supports are, in developing their instructional and other classroom competencies?** Themes 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 emerged in the response to RQ 2. According to the responses, theme 6 emerged that new teacher orientation was not effective and did not address their content areas and area of needs. Theme 3 is on professional growth and effectiveness in the classroom and middle school teachers' responses included support in the areas of differentiating instructions so as to meet student needs in the classroom and "modeling." They would like their administration to show them what exactly they would like to see when they observe classrooms. Lack of administrative support is cited as the reason why new teacher leave (NCES, 2013). They also need support with theme 4, classroom management and any support they can get will make a lot of difference in instructional practices and student learning because the environment is conducive for learning.

**RQ3: What are new teachers' perceptions about the supports they need to remain in their instructional positions?** Meaningful professional development that would influence their growth in the classroom is what all the participants would like to see instead of one-size-fits all learning. Some new teachers come in and are given the same responsibilities as veteran teachers and they do not have enough time to meet with other teachers to write lesson plans and implement strategies for the classroom (NCES, 2013). The participants said that they would not like to have other duties and would rather concentrate on working on getting better in the classrooms. They also mentioned that it is very important that mentors are available, and they felt that mentors and mentees should teach the same content. The teachers also spoke about support with classroom management issues, as new teachers they do not have the experience with dealing and handling student disruptive behaviors (NCES, 2013). Some of them expressed that the new teacher orientation does not address needs of all the content areas. The PE teacher would like to be paired with other PE teachers during orientation activities instead of been paired with other content area teachers. They would like to have mentors on the same grade level and in the same content area. The questions to whether participants stay or leave according to the conceptual framework used to frame the research questions places emphasis on the perception of “job satisfaction at the work place and links it to an individual’s self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals” (p. 262) and aligns with support for new teachers to equip them with best practices, increase retention among this group and student success. Job satisfaction could be the deciding factor in whether the new teacher stays or leaves. The type of professional development they need include

differentiating instruction, effectively delivering instructions, developing lesson plans, classroom management, help with scope and sequence of the curriculum, creating assessment and using data to inform teaching, access locating resources and materials and ability to collaborate with other teachers especially those teaching DES students. Themes 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 all emerged in the analysis of the data in response to the Research Question of new teachers' perceptions about the supports they need to remain in their instructional practices.

### **Summary**

This section included a description of the research methodology and approach that was used to examine the professional development and instructional support for new teachers. It also included the criteria I used to select participants for the study, how I was able to gain access to the participants and how I protected their identities. It included the various forms of data collection method I used such as interviewing the participants, and maybe reviewed documents relevant to the study. My role as a researcher was to collect the data, identify the themes and using various methods such as member checking and triangulation to ensure the accuracy of the findings. I presented how the data were collected, analyzed, and reported as well as the processes for collecting and storing data. A detailed description of the data collected were reported and interpreted. I identified the emergent themes and categories and discussed which included the types of professional development the participants felt was relevant to their growth and student learning and as well as the types support they needed from their administrations. The findings, patterns, and themes showed that new teachers did not have enough time to plan and meet with

other teachers, they did not have access to resources they need. Most of the participants indicated that they needed support in the areas of classroom management, differentiating instructions, and lesson planning. Information from this project will allow administrators and school district gain a better understanding of the perception of new teachers and some reasons why this group leave the profession within their first five years. As well, the information from this study could help develop strategies to help keep their teachers in the classrooms.

Section 3 is a description of the proposed project to address the findings in this study. For this study, the project is a white paper report that identifies the specific local problem new teacher perception of professional development and instructional support for new teachers. The report will include the data collection, and data analysis and based on the data analysis findings, I will provide recommendations to the district that can directly affect new teachers' practices, new teacher retention and student learning. Section 4 will discuss the project's strengths and limitations and offer recommendations for how the problem could be addressed in a different way.

### Section 3: The Project

This qualitative project study examined the perception of new teachers on professional development and instructional support for new teachers in the Merritt County School District (pseudonym) a school district in the southeastern United States. Based on this research, I was able to gain insight into whether or not new teachers perceived support in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and other school-related duties as relevant, consistent, and effective. The findings of the study indicated that for new teachers to continue to discharge their classroom duties effectively and to remain in the profession, they need support in specific areas addressed in the study (Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014). The suggestions offered included (a) targeted professional development and learning (b) provide instructional resources (c) pair new teachers with mentors in the grade level and content area (d) reduce new teacher workload (e) provide assistance with classroom management (f) receive feedback from administration, and (g) collaborate with other teachers.

Section 3 of the study includes rationale, literature review, a detailed description of the white paper, the project evaluation plan, and project implications. Based on the findings presented in Section 2 of the study and the literature review, I developed a white paper report (Appendix A), which is a document that identifies a specific problem for the school district that includes recommendations and research-based solutions to the issues. I chose to present the recommendations for action in a white paper as white papers are policy documents created purposefully to convey policy, present technical information, or propose a problem and solution. According to Graham (2013), white papers provide



information designed to highlight a problem and offer persuasive points with specific solutions.

### **Rationale**

The findings from the study showed that participants expressed the same perception regarding the professional development and instructional support for new teachers at their schools. I concluded that a white paper report that includes the findings and recommendations is appropriate to present to the district. A white paper report is a document that identifies a specific problem for an organization and offers recommendations. This type of report provides information that highlights the issue and delivers convincing facts with solutions. My goal for creating the white paper was to present important information on the issue as well as solutions that can be implemented easily and in a timely manner by the school or district. The report would assist the district with research-based strategies and practices to augment what is currently in place to meet the needs of these new teachers.

The report does not replace what is currently in place at the district, but it provides the district with information that the new teachers do not perceive the district's current offerings as relevant and effective. The report provides recommendations based on the findings. Teachers are a critical factor in student learning. In the first 3 years of employment, which is the induction period, the support new teachers receive is crucial to their success and could determine whether new teachers stay or leave the profession (Voss, Wagner, Trautwein, Klusmann, & Kunter, 2017). Because a stable work force is important to student learning, I believed that it was necessary to hear directly from new

teachers at the school district to get firsthand information. To gain an understanding of how teachers perceived the professional development and instructional support at their schools, I chose to conduct a one-on-one interview with 10 new teachers who were in their first 5 years in the classroom setting. According to Yin (2014), “interviews are an essential source of case-study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or behavioral events” (p. 108). Furthermore, in qualitative studies, interviewing is the most common data-collection method (Merriam, 2015). During the interview process, the interviewer and interviewee are interacting; by taking notes, the interviewer is able to ascertain information such as feelings, thoughts, and intentions that cannot be observed. My intent was to use the study’s findings to inform the district of new teachers’ perceptions regarding the professional development and instructional support currently in place in the district. That is why I chose a white paper report as the suitable project genre.

### **Review of the Literature**

For this project, I selected a white paper report (Appendix A) that details the recommendations for the school district based on the research study and the review of literature. I conducted the literature review for this project through the Walden Online Library, EBSCO Host-Education Research Complete, ERIC, Sage, ProQuest Central, ScienceDirect, Taylor and Francis Online, and Google Scholar. The search terms included topics pertaining to the following emerged themes: *professional development mentorship, administrative support, classroom management support, and access instructional to resources*. Key words for the search included: *Georgia Performance Standards, retention novice/beginning/new teachers, professional development, self-*

*efficacy, teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, attrition, induction program, job embedded professional development (JEPD), mentor-mentee relationship and induction, instructional support, collaboration, resource, and administrative supports.*

That new teachers are leaving the classrooms in the first 5 years of being in the profession is a nationwide problem (Kena et al., 2014); Prosen, 2015; Yaffe, 2015).

Owens (2015) stated in his study that about 47% of new teachers leave in their first 5 years. A report by New Teacher Center (2017) stated that during the first few years in the classroom, new teachers go through the following stages:

- Anticipation Phase, the preservice preparation phase when new teachers are excited and at the same time are apprehensive about their new profession;
- Survival Phase, the overwhelmed stage when they are learning new things at a fast rate, and they do not think they are able to keep up;
- Disillusionment Phase, the phase at which their morale is negatively affected, they begin to question their commitment and ability to perform the job, and they may be faced with classroom management issues;
- Rejuvenation Phase, usually after the winter break when they go back to their routines before they entered the profession, they have time to themselves to do what they love doing, and they now accept their teaching profession and understand its realities; and
- Reflection Phase, around May when the school year is coming to an end, and they begin to reflect on the lows and highs of the year and are thinking about

what their second year in the classroom would be like should they decide to return.

New teachers are important to student learning, and when they struggle with performing their job in the classrooms, students are the ones negatively affected. Although there are several reasons for the departure of teachers, many of which schools and school districts are not able to solve, they can solve the conditions at work (Green & Munoz, 2016; NCES, 2014). New teachers come into the profession with expectations and the desire to influence students; however, this enthusiasm may not last because of the challenges they face in the classrooms. They may not be prepared to handle these challenges, which include having the same duties as experienced teachers, large class sizes, and difficult students while they are still learning in their new profession and lack proper guidance and assistance (Kearney, 2014).

It is important to know the reasons why this group leaves the profession. Teacher departure cost districts. A report by Haynes (2014b) stated that the cost of teachers leaving annually is estimated to be \$2.2 billion. Districts have to start the hiring process over again and spend money that could be used for the classroom to train these new hires. Also, when these teachers leave, they leave with the training and experiences they received at the schools and districts. This problem is especially prevalent in low income school districts.

The group that is most negatively affected by the unstable teacher corps are students as they may have to be taught by unqualified teachers (Adnot, Dee, Katz & Wyckoff, 2016; Clandinin et al., 2013). Based on the responses of those who participated

in the study, and the rate at which new teachers are leaving the profession early in their careers, the goal of this study was to provide information about the challenges new teachers' face, their needs and effective ways to prepare and train them to be successful in the classrooms.

To solve the issue and increase new teacher retention so that student achievement will not continuously be negatively affected, it is important to understand the reasons why teachers leave the profession in the first few years in the classroom (Day & Gu, 2014; Ingersoll, Merrill & May 2014; Schaefer et al., 2014). Ten teachers in the elementary and middle schools participated in the study, and their responses indicated that they do not perceive the professional development and instructional support for new teachers relevant, consistent, or effective.

### **Professional Development**

Schools and districts offer teacher's professional learning as means to improving teacher practice and student learning (Bambrick-Santoyo 2013). One of the mandates of the Every Student Succeeds Act, the federal law enacted in 2015 to replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, is that professional development should be a part of school district improvement plans because key to improving student achievement is improving teacher content knowledge (ED, 2015a). Professional learning is integral to improving teacher quality and for development of organizational capacity to boost school improvement for student learning. Providing new teachers with quality sustained professional development is key to teacher effectiveness in the classroom and student

learning (Green & Allen, 2015). The Georgia department of Education (GADOE, 2015) states that:

Professional Learning is the means by which teachers, administrators, and other staff acquire, enhance, and refine the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions necessary to create and support high levels of learning for all students.

An effective professional development gives teachers the opportunity to grow professionally as they develop their knowledge and skills because it incorporates their needs and equips them with best practice strategies (Bubb & Earley, 2013; Caddle, Bautista, Brisuela, & Sharpe, 2016; Carpenter & Linton, 2016; Desimone & Garet, 2015). According to Desimone (2015), professional development is one of the critical factors when it comes improving the quality schools. Because the qualities of an effective professional development incorporate the needs and concerns of the participants and is aligned to the goals of the schools/ districts, it can influence teachers' learning, the method and practice of teaching, and increase student achievement (Christesen & Turner, 2014; Martin, Kolomitra, & Lam 2014; Lee, 2016; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015).

A quality professional development uses research best practices to assist new teachers build pedagogical knowledge and skills (Burke et al, 2013; Tran, 2015). Sustained professional development enables new teachers to be able to improve their teaching skills and student achievement (Beane-Katner, 2014). Participants in the study indicated that they would rather attend profession development that is targeted at their needs instead of the usual a one size fits all professional learning. When professional

development addresses areas that are relevant to their needs and not just an activity that is added to their already busy schedule, teachers see the professional development as helpful (Huffman, Hipp, Pankake, & Moller 2014). A meaningful professional development is based on the needs of the teachers as it is targeted at the areas where the novice teachers need to develop effectiveness in the classrooms and professional growth (Caddle, et al., 2016; Desimone & Garet, 2015; White, 2013). As teachers are mandated to differentiate instructions in their classrooms, their professional development learning should be differentiated as well instead requiring the teachers to attend the same professional development. Teachers should be offered the opportunity to choose the types trainings and topics they perceive they need to effectively discharge their duties in the classrooms.

A survey conducted by GPBI on why school districts are having difficulties keeping good teachers, stated that about 9 percent of responding districts say poor preparation or lack of professional learning is a problem (GPBI, 2017). The focus of Professional development at schools and districts should be on providing practices and strategies in the classrooms that will increase new teacher skills in the classrooms as teachers are responsible for student learning (Thomas-Brown, Shaffer, & Werner, 2016). Effective professional development provides teachers with skills that enable them to be skillful and knowledgeable in their content areas and to be able to meet the needs of most students' (Burke, 2013). Studies state that effective professional development improves teacher quality as it positively changes teacher teaching practices, and could ultimately

improve student learning (Gersten, et al., 2014; Dixon, Yssel, McConnell & Hardin, 2014; Krasnoff & Education Northwest, 2015).

Additionally, Desimore (2015) suggests that professional development should be coherent, focused on the content, involve active learning and new teachers should be exposed to job-embedded professional development needs that is relevant to teacher's knowledge. Job embedded professional development improves teacher knowledge, instructional delivery and student learning as teachers are receiving assistance on their everyday classrooms needs (Huffman et al., 2014). It is ongoing, aligned to standards, curriculum, and assessments. Job embedded professional development provides opportunities for teachers and coaches to work together daily to assess, address and solve issues happening in the classrooms. Job embedded professional development allows teachers to work with veteran teachers in their classrooms where they are getting ongoing feedback (Murray & Zoul, 2015). Teachers are able to solve the day to day problems they encounter in the classrooms as part of their ongoing improvement. According to Gellert (2013), job-embedded professional development through collaborative efforts narrows student achievement gap. Learning Forward, (2017a) stated that professional learning opportunities designed to be collaborative, job embedded as well as based on documented needs and supported by data, professional learners have the opportunity to increase efficacy and affect student learning outcomes positively.

Well prepared and trained teachers have the greatest influence on student achievement because of their effectiveness (Burke, 2013; Killion, 2013). The participants in the study indicated that for them to be effective in the classroom, they



need help in the areas of creating lesson plans, using the data to inform classroom instructions, differentiating instructions, managing the classroom environment, delivering instruction, as well as assessing learning, time management and accessing materials and resources

**Focus of the content.** According to the GADOE, teachers should have a solid knowledge of the content area that he/she teaches and to be highly qualified a teacher must have a solid knowledge of the subject and confident teaching the content and create activities that affects students' achievement. When new teachers have the opportunity to attend effective professional learning, they are empowered in the classroom. When the focus is on content of professional learning targets skill development it helps new teachers with their professional growth and identity. Skilled teachers and rigorous instruction are some of the components of effective schools preparing students for the workforce (Suggs, 2017). The GA Performance Standard 1: Professional Knowledge Georgia Department of Education Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (2014): The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, pedagogical knowledge, and the needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences and reports. Most new teachers do not have the same professional needs as veteran teachers and most professional development learning is one-size-fits-all (Garet, et al., 2016; Liljedahl, 2014). The first few years in the classroom can be very challenging as new teachers are coming with little or no practical skills and yet to master the skills they need to be effective in the classroom. That is why for professional training to be meaningful it has to address specific areas that will enable new teachers effectively teach the content on

the classroom (Gersten et al. 2014). A 2016, report conducted by Polly found that teachers who participated in a mathematics professional development that focused on developing teachers' knowledge showed a deeper understanding and performed above their peers in problem-solving. New teachers may not be exposed to pedagogical strategies and how to build rigor into the instruction which is an area where teachers need to prepare students for college and career readiness. Content driven learning activities using strategies particularly in support of different learners in the classrooms requires the teacher to employ differentiation strategies (Campbell, Osmond-Johnson, Faubert, Zeichner, & Hobbs-Johnson, 2016).

**Active learning.** Studies considered this form of learning an integral part of professional development because the participants are fully engaged and participating. In other words, teachers have the opportunity to explore and do and are able to form their understanding Professional development learning should move away from traditional one day workshop where someone is delivering the session while teachers are passively listening (Gulahussien, 2013; Kang, Cha, Bong-Woon, 2013). The way a professional development learning is structured and conducted determines the degree of participation and interest of the participant. Various ways to encourage active learning involves interacting with veteran teachers, collaborating with other teachers on how to improve classroom practices, reviewing and scoring student work, as well as writing lesson plans. According to Darling-Hammond & Richardson, (2009), "Hands-on work that enhanced teachers' knowledge of the content and how to teach it produced a sense of efficacy—especially when that content was aligned with local curriculum and policies" (p.2).

Research show that there is a positive relationship between active learning through professional development and teachers' knowledge or teaching practice (Kang, Cha, & Bong-Woon, 2013).

**Coherence.** Students benefit when classroom teachers are masters of the contents because they have the skills to help them learn and achieve. According to Desimone & Garet (2015) professional development learning should align with teacher learning opportunities, teachers' knowledge and beliefs, with school, district, and state reforms and policies. Blank (2013) conducted a study to evaluate the relationship between quality measures on professional development and change in science teaching practices and the findings showed that instructional practices of teachers in the Utah science professional development showed significant improvement gains relative to teachers in non-participating comparison schools. The result was that teachers that participated in professional development that is coherent changed their instructional practices and increased their knowledge and skills.

**Duration.** The amount of time spent on providing the training, and how long the professional learning training lasts is important for the learning to be effective for the teachers. Enough time has to be provided for the professional learning. New teachers would benefit from a sustained ongoing professional development in order to be effective in the classroom (Desimone & Garet 2015). Wong (2004) stated that professional development for new teachers should be a "systematic continuum of training offered over a period of 2 or 3 years" (p. 48). Wong continued and suggested that professional training should involve an initial 4 or 5 days of orientation before the beginning of school

and should continue throughout the year with ongoing opportunities for new teachers to collaborate with other teachers. As well, Desimone & Garet (2015) suggested that professional development activities should be ongoing and spread over a semester including several hours or more of contact time. Liljedahl, 2014 stated that a one-day professional learning is not effective and professional development opportunities should be ongoing for new teachers. A recent study determined that the total number of contact time spent on professional development influenced teachers' outcomes, such as attitude, preparedness, and teaching practice and the studies analyzed the Local Systemic Change (LSC) initiative, which National Science Foundation (NSF) supported teacher enhancement effort to improve instruction in science, mathematics, and technology (Kang, Cha, Bong-Woon, 2013).

**Collective participation.** Participants in the study all stated that they would like more opportunity to collaborate with other teachers where they can learn and share information. During professional development there should be a set time side aside for new and veteran teachers to work collaboratively where teachers are able to observe each other and share ideas (Zapeda, 2014). Teachers on the same grade level and teach the same content should have the opportunity to meet as part of the sustained ongoing professional development (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015; Tzivinikou, 2015). Professional development for new teachers should include providing time for new teachers to work collaboratively, engaging in meaningful learning with colleagues, shared accountability and a sense of community learning (Demonte, 2013). Factors that influence teachers' professional learning includes being active in various workshops,

offered the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers, focusing on content and the coherence of activities. As well, Wong (2004) stated that schools that enable new teachers' network with other teachers and collaborate with other teachers, showed that the retention rate increased in those school districts. Studies suggest that effective professional development learning influences student achievement because it enhances teacher knowledge and practices in the classrooms (Goldsmith et al., 2014; Lane et al., 2015).

**Mentorship.** A critical aspect of the induction program is mentoring (Callahan 2016). Mentoring is a system of support for new teachers in their new career (Achinstein & Davis, 2014; Nollan & Molla, 2017). A key support for new teachers in the first few years in the classroom is the assistance they receive from their assigned mentors while in the induction program (Gut et al., 2014). For new teachers to feel supported their assigned mentors should have the time and have the necessary training in mentoring. A research study that examined two groups of new teachers, where one group received mentors, and the other group did not have mentors concluded that the mentored group showed consistent improvement. The result was that 86% of teachers who had mentors continued to teach beyond their first year, compared to 71% who did not have mentors (Asgari & Carter 2016).

As part of professional training, new teachers should be able to observe veteran teachers in their classrooms and be observed by veteran teachers. After the observation, they should be able to get instant feedback on the observation. As well, they should have the opportunity of co-teaching where they will make curriculum decisions and share their

expertise together. Some studies suggest that the current mentoring system available to new teachers may not be effective enough and may not meet the needs of new teachers (Kane & Francis, 2013; Kearney, 2014; Watters & Diezmann, 2015). To increase new teacher effectiveness in the classroom mentors should provide support in the areas of classroom management, pedagogical skills and instructional strategies, assistance on where and how to access instructional resources (Hudson, 2016). The quality of a mentor is critical to new teachers, schools should be strategic and intentional when assigning mentors to new teachers. Assigning mentors, the old way has not been beneficial, and mentors should be assigned mentors at the beginning of each school year. Mentors should be available to assist new teachers, maybe teaching the same content and on the same grade level, as well as share the same planning period. But most importantly, mentors should be given the opportunity to have the time to meet with and observe teachers during the school day. According to (Ambrosetti, 2014) a good teacher is a result of a good mentor that is why the selection of the mentor-mentee should be intentional and training is very important.

**Administrative support.** Support from administration was echoed by most of the participants in the study. According to Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2015) support from administrators is a key factor that could influence a new teacher's decision to leave or to remain in the school/district. Goldbrick, (2016) concluded that, "School administrators play a key role in new teachers' success and growth." Because administrators know what type of instructional practices they would like to observe during walkthroughs, they should be able to effectively communicate this to the teachers

and be able to model lessons using strategies that could improve how the lesson should be delivered (Gorsuch & Obermeyer, 2014; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Lochmiller, 2016). Regular and immediate feedback from the walkthroughs could help teaching practices and improve student learning. If new teachers feel supported and believe that the administration is interested in their professional growth and their ability to improve classroom instruction, new teachers could likely stay at the school. Administrators set the tone of the school culture and their actions help create a culture where teachers feel supported (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Other studies affirmed that school leaders influence teachers' perceptions and indirectly the school outcomes (Lee & Nie, 2015; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014).

**Classroom management.** This is another area where new teachers struggle and would need targeted professional development in, as well as support of mentors and administration (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Some of new teachers usually have challenging students in their classrooms and coming directly from college are not equipped to handle issues as this (Ingersoll & Perda, 2013). This makes the environment not conducive for learning. According to GA Performance, "the teacher provides a well-managed, safe, and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and encourages respect for all. The classroom environment refers to the conditions, circumstances and influences surrounding and affecting the development and performance of learners" (Standard 7: Positive Learning Environment of Georgia Department of Education Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, 2014). How to effectively handle discipline in the classroom is an issue for new teachers as it influences the learning environment. They have no

experience handling disruptive behaviors and are usually given classes of academically low students and students with bad behaviors. And perceived lack of administrative assistance is an area of frustration for new teachers. Effective classroom management is one of the most influential variables in the classroom as it increases student engagement, reduces disruptive behaviors, and makes good use of instructional time.

**Access to Instructional Resources.** Not having access to instructional resources was another theme that was echoed by the participants. New teachers should not have difficulties locating resources they need to deliver the content that students need to acquire knowledge and skills in their classrooms. Resources included access to the county online resources, laptop carts, and textbooks. They should be equipped with all necessary resources. According to Georgia Policy and Budget Issues (GPBI), 2017, one of the six core components of effective schools is adequate and flexible resources. Without all six components schools may not be successful in meeting students learning needs as well as preparation for the workforce.

In conclusion, the Social Cognitive Theory that was used to frame the research questions and discussion for this study suggest that one's career choice is a result of the belief individuals develop in the following areas of, personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion and physiological states and reactions. All which happens when individuals develop the expertise/ability and is successful. This process negatively influences self-efficacy/confidence it affects how the individual performs. The first year is a very difficult one and new teachers are faced with challenges that could negatively influence their self-efficacy (Johnson, 2014; Morrison,



2013). Teachers are a crucial part of student learning. For teachers to influence student achievement they need access to meaningful, sustained ongoing professional development as well as support from administration and veteran teachers to survive the first few strenuous years in the classroom. However, a new experience and level of support during this time could influence his or her decision to remain to the classroom (Gray & Taie, 2015).

A stable teacher corps is very beneficial to student achievement and everything should be done to keep them in the classrooms and provide opportunity to be highly qualified. When teachers leave, students may be taught by inexperienced and underqualified teachers. This could negatively affect student learning and these students may not be opportune to access high-quality instruction, a requirement for the 21st-century economy. As well, the effect is also financial because schools and districts have to provide funds for additional recruitment programs, conducting interview and hiring procedures, and provide additional professional development. These funds could be used to provide needed resources for the students. When teachers leave the classroom, it disrupts the quality of education especially in low income school districts (Sutcher et al. 2016). Also, when teachers leave, not only does it negatively affect student learning, it also affects teacher enthusiasm and dedication, instructional preparation, managerial procedures, and school environment (Ozoglu 2015).

### **Project Description**

The purpose of this study was to examine what professional and instructional support currently offered to new teachers and whether or not they perceived it to be

effective in the School District. The study also explored the perception of new teachers on the effect of instructional and other support that may influence them to stay in or to leave the school district. Ten teachers were interviewed, four from the elementary school and six from the middle school. The findings indicated that the participants valued an environment they perceive as supportive which gives credence to the conceptual framework of the social cognitive theory of the Lent, Brown and Hackett (1996), a model tested and validated by Badri et al. (2013). They created the satisfaction model that consists of job satisfaction, self-efficacy, work conditions, goal support and goal-directed conditions, which suggested that satisfaction was tied to self-efficacy and conditions at work. The support new teachers receive, such as opportunity for collaboration, support from administration, targeted professional development training and instructional support tend to increase job satisfaction and feelings of efficacy.

The findings of the study will be presented on a white paper report to the school district. After the final approval from Walden University, the report will be presented to the superintendent of the school district. The white paper consists of an introduction, a description of the local problem, a summary of the doctoral study including the data analysis, recommendations based on research-based literature, where I examined professional development, targeted at new teacher needs especially in the area of collaboration and differentiating instructions. It also included the need to strategically peer mentors with mentees based on content taught, teaching on the same grade level, the opportunity to meet regularly, perform classroom observations, assist with classroom management and co-teaching. Finally, administrative support for the teachers and

providing teachers with immediate constructive feedback and modeling the lessons.

Targeted professional development as well as instructional support could improve teacher motivation, job satisfaction and improve their classroom practices.

### **Potential Resources and Existing Support**

Potential resources are the district's personnel who are also key resources as they will be the ones that will implement the recommendations included in the white paper.

The potential support would include offering ongoing professional training to the school administrators targeted at what to look for during walkthroughs, offering immediate constructive feedback, modeling and delivering instructions in classrooms. This would be beneficial as some of the school administrators may not have enough knowledge of the content taught. School administrators and teachers are also important resources. Another potential support could be that the district offers workshops to potential mentors and provide ongoing trainings for mentors. The recommendations will be implemented in the schools and teachers need the resource and support to be effective in the classroom. Another potential resource includes the cost of printing and distributing the white paper report to schools/districts. The report will be printed and bound before copies are distributed to stakeholders. Resources used to complete the white paper report were the same ones used to complete the doctoral study such as using the Walden Library to conduct research of peer – reviewed articles and journals as well as the data collection and analysis from the doctoral study which led to the findings and recommendations to the Merritt County School District. The additional resource was the data retrieved from the participants which led to the recommendations in the white paper report.

### **Potential Barriers and Solutions**

There are several potential barriers for this white paper report. One potential barrier could be that school district would not accept the recommendations put forth and would rather continue with the current professional development model and structure already in place. A possible solution is to present a more persuasive report to the district's director of professional development with findings that include similar evidence-based strategies and the results. The second potential barrier could be the cost. The district recently proposed costs to the budget for the school year 2018-2019. As a result of the proposed budget costs this could affect the staff at the district professional development department and trainings offered. Funds previously allocated to professional development training may have to be allocated to other areas. A possible solution would be for individual schools to implement the recommendations from the study instead of district wide. Another potential barrier is that the district already has an induction program in place. A possible solution is gradual implementation of the white paper recommendations in the coming school years while incorporating the recommendations after the white paper has been reviewed.

### **Proposal for Implementation Including Timetable**

After receiving approval and acceptance of my doctoral study by Walden University, I will schedule separate appointments to meet with the superintendent and the director of professional Learning department at the school district to present the individuals with a copy of my study and white paper. A timetable for the implementation of the recommendations in the white paper is to begin review and gradual implementation

of the recommendations prior to the 2019-2020 school year based on the potential barriers. The district could start reviewing recommendations in the spring of 2019-2020 so that funds required for the implementation would be included in the budget for the 2019-2020 school year. A copy of the report would be sent to the school principals for review and possible feedback as some of the actions could be implemented at the school level. During the summer of 2019-2020 the district could start offering professional training for the individuals. The start date will also be based on considerations for the budget costs and training of individuals.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

As the researcher, my role and responsibility was conducting the research from the literature reviews and interviews regarding new teacher perception of professional development and instructional support for new teachers at the district. I developed a white paper based on the findings. After the approval and acceptance from Walden University, I will present my findings and recommendations to the superintendent and the director of professional development department. If it is approved, my role will be to provide guidance with others involved as they are adopting and implementing the recommendations and evaluating the program.

### **District's Superintendent**

Without the approval of the district's superintendent this project would not have been possible. Upon approval from Walden University, I will submit my white paper which includes the findings and recommendation to the superintendent for review. The district will decide on either to accept the recommendations as is or ask for revisions to

be made or reject the white paper. The district's approval signifies that the project can move on.

### **Director of Professional Development**

Upon approval from the district's superintendent, the next responsibility is the director of professional development as this person is in charge of the district's professional development training. This department oversees the induction program which includes the mentoring program. We will work together to create a professional development training that includes the recommendations.

### **School Administrators**

Once the district's director of professional development has approved the white paper recommendations, school administrators will be contacted and presented the recommendations. As schools also conduct in-school professional trainings for their teachers, the recommendations would be helpful. I can work with the administrators to determine what the needs are for the teachers at the various schools so that we can create in-school profession training that meets those needs. As well mentors are assigned at the school levels by the administrators and the recommendation includes assigning mentors with mentees that teach the same content and are on the same grade level.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

The focus of this study was to examine the new teacher perception of the professional development and instructional support for new teachers in a local public school district. I provided a white paper report that includes recommendations (Appendix A) for the current professional training and induction for new teachers. It is

important to evaluate the effectiveness of the recommendations and the implementation of the white paper. According to Caffarella & Daffron (2013), a program should be evaluated as it enables it to ascertain if the design and implementation of the program was effective and produced the desired outcomes. The evaluation plan to determine whether or not the recommendations and implementations had the desired affect was the following: (1) Work with the director of professional development by creating a survey to be completed by participants of the professional training and induction program. (2) Work with school administrators to conduct interviews of the new teachers at the end of each year. The responses to the interviews would indicate whether the new teachers perceived the changes made to be beneficial. There are several ways to measure the effectiveness of the project. One way would be to work closely with principals to keep track of the new teachers at the schools. They will be asked to complete a survey on their perception of the program and its effectiveness. Another way is to have access to the exit interviews of those who left to examine reason(s) for their decisions to leave.

### **Project Implications**

The purpose of a white paper is to inform or persuade and white paper reports are generally authoritative and informative (Mattern, 2013). This white paper will inform the district, of the perceptions of new teachers on the professional development and instructional support currently in place in the district. Teachers leave the classroom in the first five years of being in the profession and the number is higher in urban districts (Ingersoll, Merrill & May, 2014). A study by Gray & Taie (2015) found that one in five teachers leave within the first 5 years in the profession. New teacher retention could also

be linked to the induction program offered at the school districts as this is the time when new teachers entering the profession are expected to get the help they need for the classroom (Goldrick, 2016).

The most important factor that influences student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. For the teacher to be able to influence the student learning they need targeted ongoing support. New teacher need support to be to prepare them and provide them with skills to do their job effectively in class so that students will learn and according to Goldrick (2016):

Without strong support and continued growth, many new educators do not stay on the job—and fewer who do can be effective in helping students reach higher academic standards. No matter the quality of their preparation, new teachers encounter many distinct challenges as they navigate their first months and years in the classroom. Their job is too important in children’s lives and futures to let them to simply “sink-or-swim” without continued guidance and support.

The white paper report highlights the perception of new teachers regarding the professional development and instructional supports offered to new teachers in their school district. It addresses providing targeted professional development based on the needs of teachers, providing opportunity for collaboration, access to resources throughout the school year. It also provides recommendations for school administrators to use walkthrough feedbacks to teachers that is constructive, immediate and frequent to have a positive effect on the teacher’s professional growth (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). It is important that teachers see the walkthroughs as positive and beneficial to their



professional growth. The recommendations put forth are aimed at providing solutions to the problems.

#### Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

This section includes my reflection on the project study, its strengths and weaknesses in addressing the problem of new teacher perceptions of professional development and instructional support for new teachers in the district. The section also includes the strengths and limitations of the project, recommendations for alternative approaches, and reflections on what I learned about the research process and about myself as a scholar and project developer. Finally, the section ends with an overall reflection on the importance of the project and a discussion of the implications, applications, as well as directions for future research.

The findings from the project study revealed that the 10 new teachers who participated in the study did not find the professional development and instructional support currently provided to new teachers in the district to be consistent, relevant, or effective. The participants stated that in order for them to be effective in the classroom and grow professionally, they needed targeted professional development and not the usual one size fits all approach. They stated that they would like to attend more professional development training in the areas of developing classroom strategies, writing lesson plans, differentiating instructions, classroom management, time management, and opportunity for collaboration.

Based on the findings from the project study and the review of the literature, I created a white paper report that includes recommendations for actions on support and training to enhance or improve new teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills to be

presented to the district leadership. A white paper is geared towards a specific audience to provide them with information that is objective and educational.

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

#### **Strengths**

There are several strengths associated with the project study. By interviewing the 10 participants, I gained an understanding of the phenomenon, which I addressed in the white paper report. As I analyzed the data, themes emerged that led me to come up with the recommendations and actions I presented in the report. Based on my findings after I collected and analyzed the data, the recommendations and actions I put forth for support are in the following areas: (a) By providing support that focuses on content areas and specific needs of the teachers during professional development, teacher practice and student achievement would improve; (b) by making classroom resources available, new teachers would be more effective in the classrooms; and (c) as administrators are instructional coaches, they can influence instructional practices by providing more support in the areas of student discipline as well as providing immediate feedback after walkthrough. A second strength of the project is that the district can choose to implement all the actions at once or implement each action one at a time. A third strength of the white paper report is that recommendations and actions could be presented to individual schools to be implemented directly as some of the actions could be implemented at the school level. The intent of the recommendations and actions is to provide information to the schools and school district on supports relevant to new teachers based on research,

literature review, and the interviews I conducted. Although the project has several strengths there are also limitations with the project study.

### **Limitations**

Despite the strengths of the project study, I also identified some limitations. The first was that the district may not accept the recommendations and actions put forth in the white paper report. The district may believe that what is currently offered in the district works and the district does not need to change it. The second identified limitation was the sample size of 10 participants, three participants from the elementary school and seven participants from the middle school, all from the same cluster in the district. I was not able to interview any participant from the surrounding elementary and middle schools. As well, there were no participants from the only high school in the cluster. The high school is a priority school and only state and federal studies are allowed to be conducted at the school. There are four clusters in the school district. I was not able to include other clusters in the district in the study. I could have had a richer data had I been able to include the other clusters. The findings are limited to the two schools (elementary and middle); the results could have been different if I had the opportunity and time to interview more teachers.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

I decided on a white paper report as the project for this study to address the perceptions of new teachers on the adequacy and effectiveness of professional development and instructional support for new teachers. The purpose of creating the white paper was to persuade the district leadership and promote my position based on the

literature research and findings. There are alternative approaches that I could have employed to address this problem such as a professional development training. The professional development would need to focus on the needs of new teachers based on the findings. By implementing professional development training, teachers would learn new strategies that they could use in the classrooms that would improve their teaching practices and improve student learning. Professional development would include training that would assist teachers develop their knowledge in their subject areas and increase their professional growth. However, implementing a professional development training is not feasible because the resources may not be available to train the teachers and administrators. As well, the district may decide that I do not have the adequate training to effectively implement a professional development training in the county. However, one of the recommendations/actions in the white paper report as an action is professional development training that the district could implement.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change Scholarship**

My doctoral journey was trying most times, but it was worthwhile. When I began my doctoral journey, my research and writing skills were limited. The doctoral process enabled me to develop my writing skills and to communicate in a scholarly manner. As the study progressed, I was able to research literature reviews and acquire knowledge on how to locate reliable, peer-reviewed sources relevant to my study using Walden University Library and other resources. Through my research, I found literature that provided me with a deeper understanding of the project study. The skills I developed

enabled me to be able to identify the local problem and choose the best research methodology that would effectively address the local concern. I acquired the knowledge on how to conduct a qualitative study, how to gain access to participants for a study, how to protect participants' rights through the IRB approval process, and the importance of the participants' informed consent. Additionally, I learned how to collect, organize, transcribe, and analyze data and develop themes that addressed the research questions, resulting in writing recommendations and actions addressing local issue to be presented to the district. I learned to write and present my recommendations and actions by creating a white paper report. The knowledge and skills acquired in my growth as a researcher were critical to the completion of this project study.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

When I started the process, I was not sure what direction I would take. The goal was to choose the best method to present the findings to the district. After completing the analysis of the data, I examined several ways to present my findings to the district leadership. I decided on creating a white paper report that summarized the qualitative case study that examined new teacher perceptions of professional development and instructional support for new teachers at the school district. This report provides information on how new teachers in the Merritt County School District perceived the professional development and instructional support they were currently provided at the school district. Based on the information, I was able to create a report that included recommendations and actions that could positively influence change within the school district to improve the support currently provided. After presenting the white paper

report to the district, the district could decide on implementing all the recommendations and actions at once or in phases or chose to implement some of the recommendations and actions. The recommendations are supported by peer-reviewed literature and local research data. The goal of the white paper report was to provide research-based information to the district leadership that would be beneficial to the teachers and the 55,000 students.

### **Leadership and Change**

Enrolling in the doctoral program has developed my leadership skills; I also believe this study will bring about social change. As I completed my study, I had become proficient in conducting research, collecting and analyzing data, and writing recommendations based on findings that is supported by literature. Because of the skills that I have acquired, I have developed leadership skills and have become an advocate for change. One of the missions of Walden University is to provide its students the education they need to influence positive social change (Walden University, 2013, p. 5). It is my goal that the recommendations and actions are implemented and bring about social change at my school and school district.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

New teachers leaving the classroom in their first 5 years is a national problem and the literature review supported the investigation of this issue. The white paper report provides recommendations for actions that could be beneficial to the teachers and students. Students will have the benefit of being taught by highly qualified teachers. Also, teachers will benefit from targeted ongoing professional development that will

provide them with research-based practices that would increase their effectiveness in the classrooms as well as their professional growth. As well, schools would benefit financially as the cost of recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers could be reduced and diverted to other areas of support in the school/district.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

In recent years, the Merritt County School District continued to hold employment fairs as it struggles with new teachers leaving the district in the first 5 years in the profession. Teachers may be leaving the profession because of the lack of support. Support is critical to their success in the classroom. By conducting this project, I was able to identify research-based best practices that could be beneficial to new teachers. After the analysis, the findings led to the creation of a white paper policy (Appendix A) that specifically offers recommendations/actions for new teachers. The white paper policy would benefit new teachers as well as the district because the district could use its funds for student learning and teacher development training instead using its funds to recruit, hire, and train new teachers. Students have the opportunity to be taught by highly qualified experienced teachers in the classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2013) and develop a lasting teacher-student relationship (Kloss, 2013).

Targeted ongoing professional development training based on their specific identified needs and the opportunity for collaboration to learn and share ideas from other teachers could improve their effectiveness in the classrooms. As well, administrative support ensuing that new teachers have access to resources for/in the classrooms and providing more assistance with student discipline would create a conducive learning



environment. By having administrators model lessons in the classrooms and provide immediate feedback after each walkthrough, teachers could improve their instructional practices and professional growth effectiveness in the classroom. New teachers leaving the classrooms within the first 5 years in the profession is not unique to the state where this study was conducted, this problem is nationwide (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014).

The purpose for this qualitative project study was to examine new teacher perception of professional development and instructional support for new teachers in the district. The findings revealed that the participants did not perceive support in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and other school-related duties as relevant, consistent and effective. Because the study consisted of a sample size of 10 participants in the same cluster in the district, the findings cannot be generalized to the general population. I created a white paper report that included recommendations/actions that could impact social change because it could be beneficial to the teachers and students in the district (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Social change may occur if the findings assist the district to support new teachers to increase their skills and may ultimately influence student learning.

Teachers can benefit from the recommendations because they are provided with research-based practices that could positively influence their classroom practices and professional growth which could increase their efficacy. Students are positively affected because they are taught by highly qualified teachers and their learning is improved and are been prepared to be college and career ready. Additionally, districts could benefit

because they can divert their funds to other pertinent things in the district instead of using the funds to hire and train new teachers who are likely to leave within 5 years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014).

### **Directions for Future Research**

This study was limited to one elementary and one middle school in the same cluster in the district. A recommendation for future research is to include all the schools in the cluster. Another recommendation is to include several schools from each of the 4 clusters in the district. My final recommendation for future research would be to complete a study reviewing the effect of the recommendations/actions provided in the white paper report.

### **Conclusion**

The project was chosen to examine new teacher perception of professional development and instructional support for new teachers in the school district. The first few years in the classroom can be frustrating for new teachers. It is a period when new teachers need the support to be effective in the classrooms as well as grow professionally. New teachers come with theoretical knowledge and may not have the practical knowledge that could enable them to function effectively in the classroom. To grow professionally and develop effectiveness in the classrooms, they would benefit from targeted ongoing professional development support. As well, access to resources could provide new teachers the opportunity to be more effective and empower them in the classrooms which is very beneficial as they are preparing students for the future.

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Appendix A: The Project: White Paper Report

New Teacher Perception of Professional Development and Instructional Support for New  
Teachers

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## New Teachers Perception of Professional Development and Instructional Support for New Teachers

Prior to the 2017-2018 academic year, the Merritt County School District noted 300 unfilled, certified teaching positions. Public information also indicated over 900 substitute teachers were used to fill the open teacher positions (Jackson, 2016). The school district's Board of Education approved a \$53.4 million incentive plan that included increasing teacher pay, signing bonuses and relocation assistance for new hires. A 2016 study conducted in the state found that 44 percent of new teachers leave within 5 years (Tagami, 2016). Because of the study, State Superintendent Woods emphasized the need to bolster recruitment and retention efforts as and that teachers and would-be teachers have grown increasingly discouraged by their career prospects in the field (Jackson, 2016).

The Merritt County School District is a Title 1 school district with a high percentage of students from low-income families and is struggling to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Good teachers are less likely to stay in high poverty school districts. Additionally, teachers in high poverty areas tend to hold bachelor's degree as opposed to master's degree holders or higher in low poverty areas (GPBI, 2017). A report written by NCTAF (2016), quoted the U.S. Department of Education that "students in high-poverty districts are twice as likely to be taught by teachers with temporary alternative licenses as students in low-poverty districts. This includes both urban and rural high-poverty schools." The report also stated that compared to white and Hispanic students, more than half a million black students are likely to be taught by unqualified

teachers, “high-poverty students and students of color are least likely to be taught by well-prepared, profession-ready teachers.” Furthermore, it stated that the teacher’s retention rates in these areas in 2014-2016 was 74.5 percent while the rate was 84.6 in low poverty areas.

According to the Walker (2018), “the profession has become a bit of a revolving door for professionals in Georgia, with many only choosing to stay in the field for about five years, according to a recent study by the Georgia Federation of Teachers.” Some classrooms in school districts are filled with uncertified teachers which could negatively impact student achievement as some students may not be leaving school prepared and not able to compete in the global economy. Teachers are the critical in-school factor in student learning. GPBI (2017) stated the following:

Effective schools attract and keep teachers with strong content and instructional knowledge, provide high quality professional development linked to schools’ priorities, foster commitment to shared responsibility for student learning, and cultivate a professional community that focuses on core issues in teaching and learning.

Schools districts across the state, indicate that challenges to student learning includes lack of instructional effectiveness, lack of high-quality preparation, lack of instructional strategies that gives students the opportunity to access curriculum at their reading levels, inadequate engagement strategies that hook and sustain student interest and lack of differentiating strategies that meet student’s where they are. Academically. It is critical that school district understand the reasons behind teacher flight because it

creates a disruption in student learning and is costly to school districts (Alliance for Excellence Education, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2014).

### **Local Problem**

Prior to the 2017-2018 academic year, the Merritt County School District noted 180 unfilled, certified teaching positions, with approximately 26 unfilled non-teaching certified positions. Public information also indicated over 900 substitute teachers to fill positions (Jackson, 2016). Despite employing different tactics to address this issue; such as offering an employment recruitment and retention incentives program totaling nearly \$54 million to bolster the retention of certified and highly qualified teachers (Middleton, 2017), the district continues to struggle to attract and keep certified and highly qualified teachers in recent years. The district continued to hold several job fairs throughout the year (Walker, 2017). School officials acknowledge that the struggle to retain highly qualified teachers has influenced the district's push to lift academic achievement. It is important to know what teachers need to be successful, as retaining highly qualified teachers is key to student achievement (Jones, Stall, & Yarbough, 2013; Onsrud, 2015; Qablan et al., 2015). The problem studied in the Merritt County School District is that new teachers do not perceive the professional and instructional support currently offered to new teachers to be relevant and effective.

### **Summary of Doctoral Study**

New teachers are leaving the classrooms in the first 5 years. Not keeping teachers in the classrooms negatively effects student learning as student will only have access to non-experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2014). When teachers leave, it



places financial burdens on the schools/districts because they have to start the hiring and training process over again (Alliance for Education, 2014). This problem is not an isolated problem as schools across the nation have been experiencing this issue of teachers leaving in the first few in the classrooms. To better understand the problem and explore possible solutions, I conducted individual face-to-face interviews with ten teachers in their first 5 years of being in the profession from the elementary and middle schools in the same cluster in the district. The approach was an instrumental case study to highlight the specific issue and develop a thorough understanding of the issue which is the perception of new teachers on the professional development and instructional support for new teachers.

Ten certified participants from the elementary and middle schools in the same cluster at the school district were interviewed over the Thanksgiving break. The one-on-one interviews lasted for no more than 60 minutes with each participant. After each interview the data collected was organized and sorted. I transcribed the interviews within 24 hours following each interview and each participant was emailed the transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the information. I have no relationship with any of the participants. The administrators at the selected school sites provided me with the names of the participants who met the required criteria for the project study. The participants in the study expressed what they saw as the gaps in the district's practices that could lead to teachers in the group leaving the classrooms early in their careers. The following were the research questions that helped guide the interviews:

RQ1: What specific curricular and instructional supports can be documented as offered to new teachers throughout the district?

RQ2: How effective, or not, do new teachers perceive the current supports are, in developing their instructional and other classroom competencies?

RQ3: What are new teachers' perceptions about the supports they need to remain in their instructional positions?

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the social cognitive theory of the Lent, Brown and Hackett (1996) a model tested and validated by Badri, Mohaidat, Ferrandino, & El Mourad (2013). The social cognitive theory places emphasis on the perception that job satisfaction is linked to an individual's self-efficacy, as well as outcome expectations and personal goals (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1996). Self-efficacy is the confidence in one's ability to succeed, it affects how the individual performs (Johnson, 2014; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1996).

### **Data Analysis/Results**

The one-on-one interviews with the ten participants were conducted over a period of two weeks. The findings were compared to the literature review based on the conceptual framework of the social cognitive theory of Lent, Brown & Hackett (1996). Based on the data collection and analysis the following five themes emerged:

**Theme 1: Professional development.** Most of the participants expressed the desire to attend more professional development training that addresses their individual needs instead of one-size-fits trainings. The participants indicated that they needed assistance with writing lesson plans, intense training on how to use the data to inform

classroom instructions, modeling the lessons as well as learn how to implement differentiating instructions into the classroom. Most of the participants felt that they should be excluded from non-teaching assignments so that they would have more time to implement the practices learned at trainings in their classrooms. During the interviews, the participants also stated that they would benefit more when they have the opportunity to spend more time collaborating with other teachers especially those with inclusive classrooms where they could learn and share ideas. The concept of collaborating with other teachers during professional training is supported in the current literature. Collaboration plays an important part in teacher effectiveness as they are learning from other teachers and building self-efficacy. Collaboration also encourages teacher retention as teachers get the opportunities to share ideas and listen to others about strategies are helpful in the classroom (Galkhorst, Beishuizen, Zijstra, & Volman 2015; Ronfeldt 2015).

**Theme 2: Mentorship program.** The mentorship program is part of the new teacher induction program. Mentors are meant to assist new teachers in the first few years, however the findings indicate that this may not be case. During the interview, some of the participants stated that they would like to spend more time with their assigned mentors on instructional support. However, they are not able to do so due to other factors at the schools such as not sharing the same planning period. While three of the participants stated that they did not know that they had being assigned mentors. One common narrative from the participants during the interviews was that they received assistance from fellow teachers on their grade levels and/or who taught the same subject.

**Theme 3: Administrative Support.** According to Ingersoll & Preda (2013) the teaching profession has become a “revolving door” and one factor attributed to their departure is the absence of adequate support from their administrators. Nine of the participants expressed desire for more support from their administrators in the area of classroom management. Classroom discipline is an area that new teachers struggle more with compared to veteran teachers (Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Labat (2015). The other area mentioned by the participants was the need for immediate feedback after walkthroughs from their administrators. The participants felt that immediate feedback would be very helpful, as the areas of concerns highlighted during the walkthroughs by the administrators could be implemented immediately. Two of the participants, middle school teachers, in their first year at the school stated that they would like the administrators to “model” a lesson for them, so they know exactly what is required of them. They also stated that they would like to spend more time on classroom assignments and less time on other school activities that they perceive has no bearings on teaching in the classroom. These two participants also felt that teachers need more support from the administration with collaboration as this is part of their support system. All participants expressed the desire for more administrative support with ensuing access to resources needed in the classrooms especially since the school district is a Title One.

**Theme 4: Classroom management:** All the participants stated that they struggled with classroom management. They stated that they wanted more support with discipline. They felt that adequate support in this area would help mitigate bad reviews of not having a conducive learning environment during administrative walkthroughs. The

participants also felt that they have more students with disruptive behaviors and those struggling academically in their classes. The participants felt they were left alone to sort things out by themselves in their classrooms and around the schools. They stated this period is the time that they need help with classroom management, learning and teaching the curriculum as well as navigating the school environment.

**Theme 5: Access to instructional Resources:** Instructional resources are resources that could be used to effectively deliver instructions in the classrooms. The administrators would like to see instructions centered around technology, however most of the participants stated that they do not have access to online technology and the laptop carts on most days. While some of the other participants felt that they did not find the textbooks to be that useful or that the textbooks were not immediately available during the first couple of weeks of school year. One participant who came in a couple of months after school started stated that she was not assigned credentials and she had to use that of another teacher.

### **Recommendations**

New teachers come into the profession with a passion and mindset of making a difference in the lives of their students. According to research, new teachers leave the classrooms in the first few years of been employed. Ten teachers were interviewed, and the analysis of the data collected during the interviews, suggested that some of the new teachers did not perceive the professional development and instructional support for new teachers to be effective. Based on the results the following are the recommended actions:

**Action #1 Professional development should focus more on the content**

The goal of professional development is to improve teacher practice and student achievement (Russell, Taylor, Keys, Rolffhus, & Newman-Gonchar, 2014). Without adequate training and ongoing support, new teachers may have difficulties in the classrooms and become frustrated which could lead to disillusionment. According to Desimore (2015), the features of an effective professional development includes being content focused, active learning, coherent and collective participation. (Main, Pendergast, & Virtue, 2015; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015; Wilson, 2013):

The participants indicated they would like more assistance with teaching their subject areas and would prefer to attend professional development training in the areas of their needs. The professional needs of new teachers are different from veteran teachers and professional learning should be based on teacher needs so that they are invested in participating in it (Brody & Hader, 2015; Murray, 2013). Another area the participants expressed the need for assistance in, is with differentiating instructions. This is an area where they stated that they received low scores during walkthroughs. Hinnant Crawford et al., (2016) stated that “teachers have to meet their students where they are and understand that there may be as many different places as there are students in the classroom.” Effective professional learning that models how to differentiate lessons could enable teachers know the multiple ways of learning and their readiness level, differentiating the content, process, and product that meets the diverse learning needs of the student (Hsu, 2017; Taylor, 2015). With the right training new teachers can become highly qualified and experts in their content and become motivated as they self-efficacy

grows which could increase retention (Abilock et al., 2013). According to Carpenter & Linton (2016), as teacher quality is critical to student achievement, teachers should have an input in what they feel they need to be successful in the classroom. Given the opportunities for effective ongoing professional learning, teacher's classroom practices improve, and this bolsters their confidence in their classroom abilities (Lin, Cheng, & Wu, 2015).

Opportunities for collaboration with other teachers to develop knowledge and skills that would be beneficial to student learning (Murray, 2013). While Dufour (2004), explained collaboration as “a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practices, while working in teams and engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions promoting deep team learning” (p.9). According to Owen (2016), when new teachers engage in collaborative learning they are able to improve their classroom instructional skills and knowledge. New teachers learn from other teachers and become conversant with teaching and delivering the content, pedagogy and learning new strategies to meet most students in the classrooms (Bauml, 2016). As well, through this form of support new teachers have the opportunity to cultivate relationships based on trust when interacting with veteran teachers which could be positive emotionally in their early years in the classroom and possibly increase retention (Charner-Laird et al., 2016). Professional collaboration could help teachers feel less isolated and less frustrated in their first few years. By collaborating with other teachers, new teachers have the opportunities to learn new ideas and strategies that they can apply to their practices in the classrooms that enables them to be effective in their classrooms (Battersby & Verdi, 2015).

Another area of support is for administrators to be involved in the selection of mentors and mentees. Administrators could ensure that the mentors are allowed regular on-going time to mentor their mentees and are available to provide effective support especially with content and classroom management (Pogodzinski, 2015; Tatto et al., 2016). According to Hochberg et al., (2015), it is beneficial that the mentors and mentees teach the same contents and that they are on the same grade level where they share the same planning time. According to the New Teacher Center (2013), positive teaching conditions promotes job satisfaction and teacher retention (New Teacher Center, 2013).

### **Action # 2 Access to classroom resources**

Classroom resources are the things teachers need to be effective in the classroom. According to Pogodzinski (2015), for their stress level to be at a minimal, new teachers should be able to have access to instructional support. During the interviews, another support echoed by the participants was access to instructional resources. New teachers should not have difficulties finding resources they need to deliver content that students need to acquire knowledge and skills in their classrooms. Some of the participants stated that as new teachers they need support locating resources. Resources included access to the county online resources, laptop carts, textbooks which all should be readily available. According to Georgia Policy and Budget Issues (GPBI), 2017, one of the six core components of effective schools is adequate and flexible resources. Without all six components schools may not be successful in meeting students learning needs as well as preparation for the workforce.

### **Action # 3 Administrative support**



School administrators are important support to new teachers and without their support, new teachers may struggle in the classroom and become frustrated (Bauml, 2016). Administrative support could lead to teacher empowerment (Owen, 2015). Classroom management is critical to a teacher's development in the classroom. New teachers need support with establishing routines in class. School administrators could provide support with classroom management and behavior management especially in urban schools. (Trujillo & Scott, 2014). School administrators are responsible for instructional improvements at the schools, providing immediate feedback after each classroom visit is a critical support for new teachers. According to Khachatryan (2015), teachers would like to know how they are doing and would like to receive immediate feedback that could improve their teaching practices and not negatively affect their self-esteem. He further emphasized that leadership is the second most important to student achievement and an important factor in improving student achievement is by examining and improving the effectiveness of teaching and leadership.

School administrators are educational leaders and their duties include maintaining the school culture and instructional programs favorable to student learning and the professional growth of the teachers. Grissom, Loeb, and Master (2013) suggested that a good indicator of students' gains is time that is spent on teacher coaching, evaluation, and developing the school's educational program. In addition, the participants would like their administrators to be more conversant on the content. The participants expressed the need to see more of their administrators modeling instructional practices they would like to see going on in the classrooms. The participants indicated that if the administrators

show them what exactly they would like to see during a classroom visit, they feel that they will be able to implement it in their instructional practices in the classrooms. Kraft & Gilmour, (2016) suggest that feedback from classroom walkthroughs provide opportunities for professional growth. Leadership strategies that affect teachers, includes principals making suggestions, modeling, giving descriptive feedback on teaching, taking an inquiry approach, and soliciting teachers' opinions (Goddard R, Goddard Y, Kin E. S, & Miller, R. 2015).

Another area that all the participants expressed the need of is how to effectively differentiate instructions. Even though some of participants feel that they are already differentiating instructions in their classrooms, the feedback from the school administration is that they are not. The participants indicated that they would like to see the administrator's model what differentiating instructions looks like, seeing this could help improve their instructions in this area (Lochmiller, 2016). Finally, the participants indicated they would like to have more time and opportunity to collaborate with other teachers. New teachers feel the need to discuss the work with other colleagues so that they can and improve their classroom practices. Since schools aim to improve and increase student achievement, administrators should provide teachers the opportunities to engage in collaborative learning to improve teacher classroom practices and ultimately student achievement (DuFour, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

Schools and districts aim to hire and retain quality teachers in the classrooms. Teachers are the most important influence when it comes to student achievement

learning. When teachers leave the profession within the first few years in the classrooms, students are negatively impacted (Donovan, 2014). Some school districts have tried to mitigate teacher flight by filling the classrooms with substitutes who most times do not have mastery of the content and struggle with classroom management. This is prevalent in low income school districts, where according to the U.S. Department of Education that the likelihood that non-qualified teachers are more in high-poverty districts (NCTAF, 2016). These students are not been prepared for the workforce and may not be able to compete in the global economy. Access to quality education and been taught by highly qualified teachers is important.

This white paper report summarizes this qualitative case study which examined new teacher perception of professional development and instructional support for new teachers at the school district. Ten teachers from the elementary and middle schools in the same cohort participated in one-on-one interviews. The participants in the study expressed the feelings that they did not feel that they are trained enough to prepare them to be effective in the classroom and to impact student learning. They also indicated that would like to have an input in the type of professional training they find helpful to their growth professional (Ermeling & Yarbo, 2016). Finally, they stated that the lack of resources and PD training for their individual needs and not the typical one size fits all training offered.

This study provides information on how new teachers in the Merritt County School District perceive the professional development and instructional support they are currently provided at the school district. As well, the study provides recommendations

that could positively impact change within the school district to improve the support currently provided. The recommendations supported by peer reviewed literature and local research data are provided in this white paper report (Appendix A). It addresses the professional development and instructional support that could benefit new teachers and possibly lead to an increase in the retention rate of new teachers in the district.

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## Appendix B: Superintendent's Letter of Permission/Cooperation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Re: Permission to Conduct Project Study

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is [REDACTED]. I am enrolled in the EDD in Education, at Walden University. My area of specialization is Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. I am conducting a project study on the Professional Development and Instructional Support for new teachers and I am writing to request your permission to conduct my study at \_\_\_\_\_ . Attached is my proposal for your review,

If my request is granted, I will contact the administrators of the schools and recruit teachers to participate in the study. The teachers will be involved in a one-on-one interview either at the school site or off site outside the school hours. There is no risk involved. Also, there will be no costs incurred by the districts, schools and the participants. Their participation is voluntary and there is no money involved.

It is my hope that my request is approved. I am available to answer any questions and/or concerns you may have concerning the project study. I may be reached on [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Walden University

## Appendix C: Principal's Permission to Conduct Study

Date

Re: Permission to Conduct Project Study

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is [REDACTED]. I am enrolled in the EDD in Education, at Walden University. My area of specialization is Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. I am conducting a project study on the Professional Development and Instructional Support for new teachers and I am writing to request your permission to conduct my study at \_\_\_\_\_ . Attached is my proposal for your review,

If you approve my study at you school, you will have to sign the district's "Local Site Support form" confirming your approval for the data to be collected at you site. As well, I will like some names of new teachers with one or five years in the classrooms so that I can reach out to them. The teachers will be involved in a one-on-one interview either at the school site or off site outside the school hours. There is no risk involved. Also, there will be no costs incurred by the districts, school and the participants. Their participation is voluntary and there is no money involved.

It is my hope that you will allow me access to some teachers at your school who have one to five years' experience in the classrooms. I will follow up with a phone call next week. I am available to answer any questions and/or concerns you may have concerning the project study. I may be reached on [REDACTED] or via my email [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Walden University

## Appendix D: The Interview Protocol

### **I. Opening**

#### **Researcher Introduction**

- Interview date
- Location
- Time
- Interviewer
- Interviewee
- Thank the participant for participating
- Purpose of the study
- Consent letter
- Discussion about protecting their identify and their confidentiality
- Forms of data that will be collected
- Taking notes and recording of the interview

### **II. Participant's Background**

- Information about the participant (Why did the participant choose the teaching profession, years of teaching, participant's level of education, subject and grade taught, did the participant teach before, did the participant come through the Teaching Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP)?

### **III. Interview**

1. What specific curricular and instructional supports are offered to new teachers in the district?
2. What are the problems you encountered as a new teacher?
3. How do you perceive the current supports are in developing instructional and other classroom competencies?
4. How has the support impacted your classroom practices?
5. How do you perceive that that support has impacted your growth as a teacher?
6. What strategies learned during professional development do you perceive have been beneficial to your instructional practices?
7. What perception of the type of support you need to remain in the profession?
8. What suggestions do you have for the professional development and instructional support offered at the school/district?

#### IV. **Closing**

- Ask for clarity on some questions that need to be clarified
- Discuss possibility of a follow up interview
- Thank the participant for participating



