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Job Satisfaction and Retention of Middle School Teachers

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Rebecca Gault

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Job Satisfaction and Retention of Middle School Teachers

by

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MA, Towson University, 1991

MS, Towson University, 1997

BS, Towson University, 1990

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

The problem investigated in this study was the high turnover rates of experienced, quality, and highly effective middle school teachers, which has a negative effect on student learning and achievement. The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover what specific support and professional development middle school teachers need to remain teaching. The conceptual framework that grounded this study was Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. The research questions explored what experienced middle school teachers need in terms of support and professional development in order to improve their job satisfaction and increase their retention. Nine teachers, one from each middle school in the district, were interviewed by phone or through a face-to-face format. After first-round initial coding and second-round pattern coding, it was determined that teachers need (a) to be valued by their administrators, (b) supported by their colleagues, (c) professional development with meaningful content, (d) professional development that honors their experience, and (e) professional development that is collaborative. This study promotes positive social change by offering specific ways to support and provide useful professional development to middle school teachers, which in turn will increase job satisfaction and foster their retention. Such retention will increase student achievement, improve the overall school environment, and create stability in the surrounding community.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my children, Sarah, Anna, and Joshua Rozmiarek. They were so patient and encouraging as I went through the process to complete my study. It is my further hope that their children may have quality, highly effective, experienced teachers.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful for the support of my chair, Dr. Jerry Collins, and my second chair, Dr. Andrew Alexson as I engaged in this process. It is only with their wisdom, feedback, and encouragement that I was able to complete my study.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Teacher turnover is a problem because it has a negative impact on students and schools. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) posited that high levels of teacher turnover negatively affect student achievement for the students who are directly impacted as well as for the other students in the school. Geiger and Pivovarova (2018) affirmed that large numbers of teachers exiting, entering, or transitioning between schools is detrimental to students, other teachers, and school culture. Furthermore, there is a specific need to retain experienced quality, highly effective teachers because their retention positively and significantly impacts student achievement (Fisk, Bassett, Gaddis, & McKnight, 2014; Young, 2018).

The middle school years are a critical time period in which experienced, quality, highly effective teachers are necessary. During early adolescence, students undergo a wide range of psychological, social, and biological changes (Capella, Schwartz, Hill, Yeon Kim, & Seidman, 2017). Ladd and Sorenson (2016) affirmed that the adolescent brain is developing during middle school with different students maturing at different rates, both cognitively and behaviorally. Middle school students are developing their identity in relation to academic performance, which in turn affects their overall engagement in school. Furthermore, middle school students face increasing peer pressure and declining parental support and expectations. Ladd and Sorenson (2016) argued that teaching the middle school student is the most complex and challenging assignment in

education. Therefore, the need for experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers is great.

The Local Problem

Teacher turnover amongst experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers is a problem in the local district, located in the northeastern region of the United States. What follows is a description of the district and relevant attrition and evaluation data to support this assertion. According to the 2018–2019 budget report, the district has an enrollment of 37,826 students (Board of Education's Approved Budget, 2020). There are 4,870 full-time faculty and staff, and approximately 2,842 of these are classroom teachers. There are 54 total schools in the district: 34 elementary schools, nine middle schools, eight high schools, one technical school, one special education school, and one alternative school. For the purposes of this study, I have titled the district Coleman School District (CSD).

Table 1 shows that 702 (25%) teachers were in years 0–5, while 2,140 (75%) were in years 6 and beyond in the local district. Given that experienced teachers represented the majority of teachers, it is important to understand what they need to support their retention. Table 1 also shows that 417 teachers left the district. Those who retired with more than 30 years are not represented. Of the 417 who left, 231 (55%) represented teachers in years 0–5, while 186 (45%) represented teachers beyond Year 5.

Table 1

CSD Teacher Years of Experience and Attrition Profile in 2018–2019

Years of Experience	Total Teachers (Number and Percentage)	Teachers Who Left (Number and Percentage)
1 or less	219 (8%)	88 (21%)
2-5	483 (17%)	143 (34%)
6-9	369 (13%)	67 (16%)
11-15	615 (22%)	70 (17%)
16 +	1156 (41%)	49 (12%)
Total	2,842 (100%)	417 (100%)

Note. This table represents raw numbers of teachers relevant to their years of experience and attrition rates. This data was obtained from the CSD Human Resources Office.

Table 2 shows the effectiveness ratings for a portion of the experienced teachers who left the school system. Teachers who are tenured only receive formal evaluations every three years. Many of the experienced teachers who left the school system at the end of 2019 were not formally evaluated during the 2018–2019 school year. Of the 186 experienced teachers who left the system, there was evaluation data for 128 of them. 54 (42%) of these teachers achieved a highly effective rating. This table also shows the effectiveness ratings for a portion of the middle school experienced teachers who left the school system. Of the 61 exiting experienced middle school teachers for whom there was data using the Danielson framework, 28 (46%) achieved a highly effective rating.

Table 2

CSD Teacher Attrition and Evaluation Profile in 2018–2019

Years of Experience	Irregular		Effective Developing		Effective		Highly Effective	
	MS	Overall	MS	Overall	MS	Overall	MS	Overall
6-9	2	2	2	4	5	26	6	15
10-15	1	1	1	3	4	18	5	22
16 +	0	0	1	1	8	19	17	17

Note. This table represents raw numbers of teachers, years of experience, and evaluation ratings (Danielson, 2007). This data was obtained from CSD Human Resources.

Rationale

The purpose of the study was to discover what specific support and professional development experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching. When teachers work in supportive environments, they are more likely to remain teaching (Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2016 and Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas 2016). Lack of administrative support is the number one predictor of teacher turnover. When teachers do not get the necessary support, they are more than twice as likely to leave the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Furthermore, appropriate professional development is also needed to retain teachers (Sutchter et al., 2016).

The local district has identified that support is important for retention. The need for support is articulated in the Strategic Plan (2017, p. 1) through the following vision, core value, and long-term goal statements:

Vision: We inspire and prepare students to achieve success in college and career.

Core Value: We attract and retain highly skilled personnel.

Long-term Goal: Hire and support highly effective staff who are committed to building their own professional capacity in order to increase student achievement.

In creating these statements, the local district determined that student success and achievement are connected to the retention of highly effective teachers. Furthermore, the district recognized that such retention is contingent on an appropriate level of support that meets the needs of the most highly skilled personnel.

The local budget narrative that aligns the local Board of Education funding priorities to the aforementioned Strategic Plan, includes specific support for probationary teachers (Board of Education's Approved Budget, 2020, p. 90) in the form of workshops and visits to model teachers' classrooms. However, no specific support is identified for the retention of experienced teachers, or more specifically middle school teachers.

The local district has also identified a need for professional development for all teachers. In the budget narrative, the district stated a desire to develop strategies, create programs, and ensure a positive work climate in order to retain all teachers. The district further acknowledged the need for differentiating content, processes, and structures in order to create personalized job-embedded professional learning (Board of Education's Approved Budget, 2020, p. 90); however, the local district has not articulated specific professional development opportunities designed to support and retain teachers beyond the probationary period, much less experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers.

Definition of Terms

In this section, the essential terms used in the project study are defined to provide a better understanding of the research and concepts presented.

Attrition: Attrition refers to teachers who leave the profession prior to retirement (Den Brok, Wubbels, & Van Tartwijk, 2017).

Beginning teacher: Gallant and Riley (2014) conducted research on beginning teachers, defined as those teachers within the first five years of their teaching career.

Experienced teacher: According to Bressman et al. (2018), experienced teachers are those who remain teaching after their initial induction years. As noted in the induction definition, induction programming is most notably designed for beginning teachers, those in their first five years of teaching. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, experienced teachers are those in years 6 and beyond of their careers.

Highly effective teacher: In this study, a highly effective teacher is defined by the local context of this study as a teacher who performs at the distinguished level using the Rubric for the Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2013). Through the observation process, teachers are evaluated in four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities (Danielson, 2013).

Induction: Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) examined the effects of induction methods that persist across the first five years of teaching and the association with teacher turnover during that time frame. Therefore, induction refers to the supports provided to beginning teachers in their first five years.

Meaningful work: Herzberg (1966) identifies meaningful work as a state of being in which the individual seeks to serve the needs of the organization, the needs of the community, and the needs of mankind.

Middle school teacher: As defined by the local district, a teacher who teaches grades 6-8.

Probationary teacher: as defined by the local district, a teacher who is in years 1-3 of his or her career.

Professional Development (PD): According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), PD is a school and local education agency strategy for giving teachers the knowledge and skills necessary to help students succeed. PD must be sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.

Retention: According to Kelchtermans (2017) teacher retention refers to the need to prevent good teachers from leaving the job for the wrong reasons.

School leader: A school leader is a principal, assistant principal, or other individual in a leadership position who is responsible for the daily instructional leadership and operational management in a K-12 school (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2018).

Support: A construct associated with administration that measures how teachers rate an administrator's ability to encourage and acknowledge staff, communicate a clear vision, and generally run a school well (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Turnover: Teacher turnover is comprised of two categories: those who permanently leave the profession and those who move between schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Quality teacher: In the literature, quality teachers are defined as certified, fully prepared, and teaching in their field of preparation (Castro, Quinn, Fuller, & Barnes, 2018).

Significance of the Study

Experienced, quality, highly effective teachers have a positive and significant impact on students (Young, 2018). Retaining such teachers at the middle school level is critical because the academic demands have increased in the last decade. In 2011, the state adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013 (CCR-CCA) furthered the commitment in the state to prepare all students for success in post-secondary school and beyond. These standards have been used to design the local CSD curriculum, which requires students to analyze and evaluate information across the content areas. Middle school is when the rigor increases in the CCSS; therefore, the best teachers are needed to facilitate curriculum derived from these standards. This belief is affirmed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative Report (2014) which described the increased need for high quality teachers to prepare students for rigorous curriculum and their post-secondary education and careers.

Retaining experienced, quality, highly effective teachers will also have a positive impact on the community. If the teaching population is stable, with fewer experienced

teachers leaving education, there will be fewer family relocations which will result in greater stability in the local economy. Retaining experienced middle school teachers will also relieve the pressure on social services and other agencies providing support for students and families. Experienced teachers know how to support students, allowing them to thrive in their educational environment and be less likely to need intervention from community support services.

The results of this study may provide the necessary insights for creating the support and professional development needed to retain our best middle school teachers; thereby creating positive social change for the school district and the surrounding local community.

Research Questions

Due to the problem of experienced middle school teacher attrition and the lack of needed support and PD in the local district, this study was conducted to better understand what these teachers need to remain teaching. Retaining these teachers will positively impact students (Young, 2018) and help them be better prepared to meet the demands of high school, college, and beyond (Common Core State Standards Initiative Report, 2014).

My guiding research question was: What do experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching? To explore this question, I generated the following subquestions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What kinds of support do experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What kinds of PD do experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I used to ground this study was Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation (Herzberg, 1966). Herzberg argued that hygiene factors such as working conditions, interpersonal relationships, personal life, pay, administration, job security, and supervision fall into the category of dissatisfiers. Moreover, motivating factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, the work itself, advancement, and personal growth fall into the category of satisfiers (Herzberg, 1966, p. 72). Herzberg posited that work *satisfaction* and *dissatisfaction* are not on a continuum with one decreasing as another increases (Herzberg, 1966, p. 78).

Dissatisfaction is evident in the teacher attrition research. In examining the reasons that teachers leave the profession, Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) noted that 55% leave due to their dissatisfaction with the profession. This dissatisfaction falls into three categories: those who are upset about accountability measures, those disillusioned with school leaders, and those who are unhappy with the profession overall. With regard to those who move between schools, 66% express dissatisfaction with the following aspects of their job: poor school-level leadership, lack of opportunity to participate in decision-making, and inadequate facilities and resources. These dissatisfiers are examples of what Herzberg identifies as hygiene factors.

Herzberg's satisfier category is built on the belief that the motivated worker is affected by three psychological states: experiencing meaningfulness in the work itself, experiencing responsibility for the work and its outcomes, and receiving meaningful performance feedback. These psychological states lead to job satisfaction. This qualitative project study will focus specifically on the first of the psychological states: experiencing meaningfulness in the work itself. Herzberg (1966) discussed this state of being as one in which the individual seeks to serve the needs of the organization, the community, and mankind. Understanding what kinds of support and PD best serve teachers' desire to do meaningful work is paramount for improving job satisfaction and ultimately, teacher retention.

Teachers have a strong desire to do meaningful work. Frase (2001) found that teachers are intrinsically motivated by the idea of knowing that they have connected to students and helped them to learn. This motivating factor was found to be more powerful than any extrinsic rewards associated with the hygiene factors. Teachers experienced their highest levels of satisfaction from knowing they have made a difference in students' lives. Chiong, Menziesb, and Parameshwaranc (2017) discovered that the longest serving teachers remained teaching due to altruistic and intrinsically motivated reasons. Experienced teachers believe that they are making a difference in students' lives and as such are contributing to the common good and the success of future generations. Holliman and Daniels (2018), who focused on retention amongst college teachers, found teachers were most strongly motivated by their dedication to students and positive working relationships with colleagues.

The satisfaction of meaningful work can override feelings of dissatisfaction. Ugwa and Onvishi (2018) discovered that when teachers feel a sense of calling and meaningfulness in their work, their frustration levels diminished and their levels of work engagement increased. Individual teachers with high levels of psychological meaningfulness were able to sustain their feelings of positivity despite high levels of organizational frustration. The researchers concluded that it is necessary to understand teachers' sense of calling and feelings about the meaningfulness of their work in order to foster a positive organizational climate, conducive to teacher retention.

The construct of meaningful work and associated job satisfaction is also connected to teachers' knowledge and skill with their content. Chiong, Menziesb, and Parameshwaranc (2017) found that experienced teachers have achieved a level of professional mastery within their content area and feel satisfied by their level of expertise. The researchers posited that this understanding of what motivates experienced teachers must be considered when making organizational and policy decisions at the school and district levels. The authors recommended that experienced teachers be provided with the support needed to promote student success and progress with content learning.

Herzberg identified job satisfiers as motivating factors and intrinsic; whereas dissatisfiers are hygiene factors and extrinsic. Throughout the attrition and retention literature, there are many references to administration and leadership and how people in these roles positively and negatively affect teachers, thus creating satisfying or dissatisfying environments. Holliman and Daniels (2018) clarified that leadership is not

identified in Herzberg's theory as either a hygiene or motivating factor and noted that Herzberg categorized administration as a hygiene factor. In considering Herzberg's theory and the associated factors, further questions arise. If meaningful work is the psychological state that contributes to teacher retention, and teachers need support and PD to do meaningful work, who provides such support and professional development? When and where? How? What is the content? What is the role of leadership and/or administration in the needed support and PD?

Given the problem of teacher attrition in the local context, a qualitative study was warranted to find out more about what kinds of support and PD will retain teachers. I used Herzberg's theory because motivating quality teachers to remain in the profession despite poor hygiene factors such as low pay, limited resources, poor leadership, or the condition of the school building, is essential to students' futures. I used a qualitative approach for this study because I wanted participants to reflect on their lived experiences in classrooms and schools. The teachers in this study provided insights into the kinds of support and PD they need to be satisfied, feel connected to meaningful work, and be better able to sustain a career dedicated to teaching the middle school student.

Review of the Broader Problem

I conducted a comprehensive review of the literature using the Walden Library databases including ERIC, Education Source, Google Scholar, and ProQuest Dissertations. The search terms I used were: *middle school, teacher turnover, teacher retention, teacher attrition, meaningful work, experienced teacher, quality teacher, highly effective teacher, professional development, self-efficacy, support, collective efficacy, and*

leadership. In using these terms, I gained a breadth and depth of knowledge regarding the problem of teacher turnover at the national, state, and local levels and the interplay amongst this terminology in finding the most relevant and current literature.

Teacher Turnover at the National Level

Teacher turnover is costly, and it is projected to get worse. Nationally, teachers leave the profession at the rate of 8%, a 3% increase since 1992 (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Those teachers who shift between schools represent 8% of the educator population. Therefore, the current turnover rate amongst teachers is 16%, costing districts up to \$20,000 to replace each teacher, particularly if the loss is from an urban location (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Teacher turnover is expected to increase in the coming years. According to Husser and Bailey (2016), there are an additional three million students who will be enrolling in public schools by the year 2024. This increased enrollment will require 375,000 teachers annually to replace those teachers who are leaving the profession at the current and projected rates. Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) affirmed the increase in student enrollment between 2018–2025, which will significantly exacerbate the teacher shortage crisis.

Teacher turnover has a negative impact on students because it is detrimental to learning and achievement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018; Kini & Podolsky, 2016) Sorensen and Ladd (2018) expanded on the research with their observations about the impact of teacher turnover on the total school. Teachers with inadequate qualifications and little experience reduce the

quality of instruction and subsequently student learning. When teachers struggle to meet with success in the classroom, they are more likely to exit the school. These teachers are often replaced with inexperienced, inadequately qualified teachers, and therefore, the cycle is perpetuated. This disruption not only affects the students being taught, but also the overall coherence and cohesion of the school in general. Overall teacher and staff morale declines, leading to further teacher turnover (Sorensen & Ladd, 2018).

Teacher turnover is worse in high-poverty schools. When schools have large amounts of economically disadvantaged students, they are more likely to be taught by teachers who are not teaching in their area of certification. When teachers lack experience, the quality of instruction is diminished which has a negative effect on students (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). Additional researchers (Atteberry, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2017; Holme, Jabbar, Germain, & Dinning, 2018; Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017) affirmed that schools with higher levels of poverty and/or locations in urban areas have higher teacher turnover. Such turnover is detrimental to student learning and achievement.

Teacher Turnover at the State Level

Teacher turnover is also a problem in the state in which the district is located. Janulis (2017) examined trends in teacher retention during the years of 2005–2015 using data from the United States Census Bureau (USCB), the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), and the State Department of Education. Janulis (2017) discovered that trends relevant to early-career (years 0–5) turnover and late-career turnover (21+ years of experience) remained steady over the 10-year period. However, mid-career teachers

(years 6–10 and years 11–20) had an increased rate of turnover during the 10-year period under investigation. In 2006–2007, 1,398 mid-year teachers left teaching in the state; whereas, 1,722 mid-year teachers departed in 2015–2016. Janulis (2017) concluded that the state has improved its efforts to retain early career teachers but that more effort needs to be made to retain mid-career teachers.

The state also has a problem with filling classroom vacancies with quality teachers. When there are teacher vacancies due to turnover, the state makes an effort to fill these vacancies with a quality teacher, one who is certified in the subject area of need. However, there are instances when quality teachers are not available. According to the *Uncertified Teachers and Teacher Vacancies by State Report (2018)*, 661 teachers out of total of 59,194 (1.5%) were teaching with conditional certificates during the 2015–16 school year in the state in which the district under study is located. Furthermore, this report also indicates that teachers in the state defined as “not highly qualified” are teaching an additional 8.9 % of courses. More than 10% of the state teaching population does not meet the quality criteria necessary.

Lack of Professional Development for Experienced Teachers

Nationally, a wide range of induction research and corresponding PD exists to support the retention of beginning teachers (Gallant & Riley, 2014; Mansfield, Beltman, & Price, 2014; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017) but this is not the case for experienced teachers. Ingersoll (2015) stated a need for research regarding what motivates experienced, highly effective teachers to remain teaching. Bressman et al. (2018) found that experienced teachers have unique PD needs and that leaders must seek ways to

understand their interests, goals, and issues. A further gap exists in the area of retaining middle school teachers. The research revealed efforts to retain elementary school teachers (Hammonds, 2017) and high school teachers (O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017), but very little current research or PD exists focusing on the support of middle school teachers and their retention.

The Interplay Between Individual and Organizational Characteristics

The phenomenon of teacher turnover is complex, involving an interplay amongst individual and organizational factors (Smith & Ulvik, 2017). To fully examine this phenomenon, it is necessary to explore the nature of individual teacher characteristics: teacher experience, teacher identity, teacher resilience, and teacher efficacy: as well as the organizational characteristics: collective efficacy, collaboration, and leadership. Specifically, Kraft (2018) explored connections amongst teacher efficacy, teacher collaboration, school leadership, and meaningful work environments. Kraft (2018) noted that school leaders who create meaningful work environments recognize that many teachers see the field of teaching as a calling, a true commitment to serving the common good. Such environments have the highest levels of teacher retention.

Kraft (2018) posited that school and district leaders must strive to understand their teachers as individuals as well as the contexts in which they serve. Understanding the interplay of individual and organizational characteristics will help shed light on issues of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction as identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory. What follows is a comprehensive review of the individual and organizational characteristics necessary in understanding the problem of teacher turnover.

Individual Characteristics of Teachers

Teacher Experience. For the purposes of this study, I defined an experienced teacher as one who has completed 5 years of teaching. While this definition is supported in the literature (Bressman et al., 2018), it is important to explore some of the skills, behaviors, and attitudes of an experienced teacher. According to Ladd and Sorenson (2016), experienced teachers are observant, recognize patterns, and are able to discern the wide variety of complexities they experience. Experienced teachers are able to draw on their knowledge and resources to manage these complexities. Furthermore, experienced teachers are flexible; they have a huge range of skills that they know how to access to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. Experienced teachers reflect on their experience and seek mastery over time.

Teacher experience is directly associated with teacher effectiveness as documented by student achievement and attendance data. Kini and Podolsky (2016) reviewed 30 studies which have been published in the past 15 years and found that teachers continue to grow in their effectiveness into the second and third decades of their careers. Teacher effectiveness improves significantly when teachers have stability in their assignment, support from their administration, and a collegial work environment (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). When experienced, effective teachers have unstable assignments, feel unsupported by their leaders, and lack a network of colleagues, they are more likely to leave the teaching profession.

Teacher Identity. Teacher identity is an integral concept in the teacher retention data. Brown, Horner, Kerr, and Scanlon (2014) used a mixed methods research design to

survey 468 K-12 teachers in 22 schools. The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' feelings of isolation, vulnerability, stress, and emotional exhaustion in response to workplace expectations. The researchers discovered that when teachers experience negative emotions, their professional identity is compromised because they believe such emotions are incongruent with those of the ideal teacher. Loss of professional identity leads to high levels of teacher turnover. The researchers concluded that school leaders must create a working environment in which teachers can construct a healthy professional identity, one which will lead to their long-term retention.

Yinon and Orland-Barak (2017), discovered that quality teachers develop meaningful relationships with the students they teach and describe these relationships as positive and rewarding. When quality teachers leave the classroom, they describe feelings of regret and loss; furthermore, these exiting teachers are so discouraged, that they feel as if they are no longer fit for what they describe as the vocation of teaching (Yinon & Orland-Barak, 2017). These findings are corroborated by the research of Towers and Maguire (2017) who discovered that experienced, quality teachers become overwhelmed by accountability measures and incorporate these results into their sense of worth as a teacher.

Towers and Maguire (2017) reported that quality teachers derive their self-esteem and professional fulfillment from student success. When quality teachers believe that they are somehow a part of student failure, they perceive that they are no longer living up to the expectations of the ideal teacher, and therefore are no longer worthy of the job or the calling of teaching (Towers & Maguire, 2017). The researchers posited that quality

teachers have unrealistic expectations of themselves and draw incorrect conclusions about their worth as teacher. Unfortunately, these expectations and conclusions often result in quality teachers leaving the field of education (Towers & Maguire, 2017).

Dunn and Downey (2018) qualitatively explored the relationship between teacher identity and teacher attrition. The authors affirmed that teacher attrition research falls into two categories, the individual characteristics of teachers and the contextual factors of their environment. They argued that the area between the two categories is one where the individual and contextual overlap and this overlap is the place where teacher identity is formed. By examining the teacher identity of highly effective teachers, Dunn and Downey (2018) discovered that these teachers have a great love for students and their content area. They invest deeply and emotionally in their classrooms, but also in extracurricular activities, and such emotional investments ensure teacher retention. The authors further emphasized that when school leaders provide meaningful PD for highly effective teachers, their job satisfaction improves.

Teacher Efficacy. Reaves and Cozzens (2018) used a quantitative approach to determine whether or not a correlation exists between climate/work conditions and teachers' beliefs of self-efficacy. The researchers administered a questionnaire and a survey to 250 teachers from seven public schools in Tennessee. The researchers found that teachers who feel safe and supported stated that they felt much higher intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. Leaders who desire to retain the best teachers must create meaningful work environments that foster motivation and self-efficacy in ways that are appropriate to their needs.

Van Wingerden and Van Der Stoep (2018) conducted a quantitative study of 459 employees at a global health organization who completed questionnaires to test a meaningful work and performance model. The researchers posited that doing meaningful work requires employees to use their strengths, resulting in a sense of efficacy which promotes deeper levels of work engagement. The researchers gave an example from the educational field when they posited that meaningful work is directly connected to teachers' sense of self-efficacy, levels of work engagement, and overall performance. School leaders must understand the importance of meaningful work and how it prevents burnout and promotes the retention of the most highly skilled teachers.

Teacher Resilience. Greenfield (2015) conducted a meta-ethnography of six qualitative studies focused on teacher resilience and the conditions that protect and promote this quality in teachers. One of the key findings of the study was that teachers hold specific interrelated beliefs about themselves and their work. Specifically, when school leaders promote hope, a sense of calling, and self-efficacy, teacher resilience is protected and increased. The researchers suggested that timely PD opportunities are key for motivating experienced, quality, highly effective teachers to strengthen their resilience as they retain their commitment to teaching.

Ainsworth and Oldfield, (2019) researched teacher resilience using a questionnaire gathered from 226 teachers. The questionnaire focused on issues of teacher resilience including satisfaction on the job, burnout, and a sense of well-being. The researchers discovered that contextual factors were just as important as individual factors when determining teacher resilience and the likelihood that teachers are retained. The

researchers specifically recommended that school leaders strengthen the professional environment to ensure that teachers are able to fully develop their personal resources.

Organizational Characteristics

Collective Efficacy. Kunnari, Ilomaki, and Toom (2018) used an explanatory multiple case study approach with five teams each consisting of 15 teachers. The purpose of the study was to explore the collective efficacy and resilience of teacher teams when working collaboratively. The researchers concluded that teachers' overall well-being was tied to their sense of collective efficacy as they embrace their role in a community, build a sense of mastery, and respond to the needs of students and colleagues. This study is relevant to my study because it reveals that self-efficacy and collective efficacy are intertwined. While self-efficacy protects the individual teacher, collective efficacy protects the organization. Healthy school communities create powerful networks around relationships, and these relationships protect the group from adversity. Dense networks nurture teachers' collective efficacy, which prevents burnout and fosters long-term teacher retention.

Angelle and Teague (2014), conducted a quantitative study using descriptive statistics to examine the relationship between collective efficacy and teacher leadership in three school districts. The researchers discovered a clear and strong relationship between collective efficacy and teacher leadership, with the informal aspects of teacher leadership being most important. This study affirmed the link between self-efficacy and collective efficacy, providing evidence of a symbiotic relationship. Furthermore, this study posited that teacher leaders passionately work toward change, participate in a multidirectional

flow of influence with school leadership, and have a stronger commitment to the organization. This information relates to my study because it explores aspects of meaningful work and its relationship to teacher retention.

Collaboration. According to a decade of research in a North Carolina district, student achievement improves when school environments are collaborative (Teacher Collaboration in Perspective: A Guide to Research, 2017). Specifically, teachers who work in professional environments with leadership support, positive school culture, and opportunities to collaborate with peers, had students who increased their performance on standardized tests. Moreover, teachers in schools with less support and collaboration did not have students who increased their academic achievement. The authors of this guide recommend that principals foster shared leadership with teachers. When principals establish trust and lead by example, teachers learn how to trust and form strong collaborative networks.

Hammonds (2017) corroborated the need for collaborative environments for teachers. The researcher used a phenomenological, qualitative approach to investigate the reasons for high turnover rates in urban elementary schools. In using open-ended interview and field notes to examine the work experiences of six school-based leaders in elementary schools, Hammonds found that school leaders must provide opportunities for collaboration through PD time. Furthermore, leaders must construct meaningful feedback and allow teachers time to collaborate with their colleagues. Hammonds noted that when leaders offer these provisions, there is a greater likelihood that effective teachers will be retained.

School-based Leadership. The relationship between school leadership and teacher retention is clearly established in the research. Hughes, Matt, and O'Reilly (2015) examined the relationship between principal behavior and the retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. The researchers discovered that principals who provided emotional and environmental support had a strong, positive impact on teachers' intentions to remain teaching. Those leaders who provide such support not only have positive learning environments, but they increase students and teacher learning (Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2016; Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Given that strong school leadership is tied to retaining the best teachers, high quality training and PD for school leaders is essential (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

While teacher retention is important, what's even more important is retention across the career trajectory. Webb (2018) found that teachers who feel connected to the school mission, have an opportunity to collaborate with administrators and colleagues, and who participate in collective action are more likely to remain teaching for the long-term. Such supportive environments are created and nurtured by skilled, caring leaders who create the necessary environment for meaningful work. Further confirmation that high-quality school leaders are essential for retaining the best teachers can be found in the literature (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015; Espinoza et al., 2018; Heidmets & Liik, 2014; Krasnoff, 2014; Mehdinezhad & Mansouri; 2016; O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017).

In examining the school leadership research, the need for transformational leadership emerges. Heidmets and Liik (2014) used descriptive statistics to analyze survey results from 305 teachers working in 12 public schools. The purpose was to

examine the relationship between the principal's leadership style and teacher's sense of well-being, to include issues of teacher burnout and intention to remain teaching. The researchers discovered that transformational leadership styles reduce teacher burnout and increase teacher retention. This study further corroborated the notion that there is a relationship between school leadership, teachers' wellbeing, organizational commitment, bonding within the workplace, and turnover intentions.

Allen, Grigsby, and Peters (2015) furthered the research on transformational leadership. These researchers chose correlational methodology using six elementary school principals and 55 teachers working across the six schools. The purpose of their study was to explore the relationship amongst transformational leadership, school climate, and student achievement. The findings revealed that there was a significant, positive relationship between inspirational motivation of the school leader and the creation of a healthy school climate. The researchers articulated that PD opportunities can strengthen transformational leadership and build the efficacy of the teachers. Teachers with a strong sense of individual and collective efficacy are more enthusiastic and dedicated to the school mission.

Mehdinezhad and Mansouri (2016) affirmed the need for transformational leadership amongst school leaders. The authors used a descriptive and correlational approach with a sample size of 254 teachers, selected through proportional sampling. The purpose of the study was to examine the connection between the leadership behaviors of school principals and self-efficacy beliefs of teachers. The researchers discovered that

there is a strong relationship between the transformational behaviors of trust, commitment, and team building, and teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

When principals develop and support teacher efficacy, teachers feel a greater sense of connectedness and they are more likely to remain teaching. O'Brennan, Pas, and Bradshaw (2017) conducted a large-scale, quantitative study of 3,225 high school staff using a school climate survey. The purpose was to examine high school staff members' level of burnout and its relationship to feelings of self-efficacy and connectedness. The researchers discovered that staff who feel a sense of belonging within their school community and a sense of connectedness to their principal and students experienced lower levels of professional burnout. This study affirmed the importance of teacher efficacy, connectedness to others, and the role of the school leader in fostering the conditions which lower the incidences of burnout and turnover.

While teacher efficacy is an important individual characteristic in the literature on teacher retention (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018; Van Wingerden & Van Der Stoep, 2018), principal efficacy is not. Dahlkamp, Peters, and Schumacher (2017), conducted a multi-level analysis using a purposeful sample of 11 principals and sample of 233 current and former teachers. Their purpose was to investigate the relationship among principal self-efficacy, school climate, and teacher retention. The researchers discovered that there is no relationship between principal self-efficacy and teacher retention or school climate. Therefore, when examining efficacy, the focus should be on teachers and not principals, thus narrowing the scope of the kinds of guidance and training needed to assist principals in retaining teachers.

When schools have poor leaders, many teachers become dissatisfied and leave teaching. In examining the effect of poor leaders on teachers, Akman (2016) discovered that there is a direct relationship between destructive leaders and teacher burnout. Akman (2016) used a mixed research method to study 423 teachers and their reaction to leaders who are characterized as thoughtless, insensitive, and inadequate. These destructive behaviors decreased teacher satisfaction, increased their likelihood of quitting, diminished the effectiveness of their teaching, and decreased student learning.

Wronowski (2018) furthered the research on the negative effects that destructive leaders have on teachers. Wronowski (2018) discovered that many teachers feel as if they do not have a voice, and in some cases feel psychologically abused, because they are managed by those who lead through coercion. Furthermore, these teachers feel frustrated particularly by PD that has little connection to students. The author emphasized that it is vital for teachers to feel empowered as individuals and supported in participating in a collaborative culture. Wronowski (2018) concluded that principals must be trained in shared leadership and provided with the skills necessary to create better positive work environments for teachers.

Sutcher et al. (2016) also established the link between ineffective school leaders and workplace conditions. Poor school leaders allow little time for collaboration and planning amongst teachers, interfere with healthy collegial relationships, create negative experiences with regard to professional development, allow little opportunity for teacher autonomy, decision making and influence, and fail to provide adequate resources. The National Center for Education Statistics (2017) reported that there is a declining trend in

teacher autonomy across all areas of teacher planning and instruction: selecting textbooks, selecting course content, choosing the skills to be taught and the appropriate teaching techniques, evaluating and grading students, disciplining students, and determining homework. When leaders diminish teacher autonomy, teachers report higher levels of dissatisfaction which contributes to the likelihood they will exit the profession.

State and District Leadership. Castro, Quinn, Fuller, and Barnes (2018) discovered that many states are dealing with the problem of teacher turnover by reducing the expectations for becoming a teacher. The result is that teachers in many classrooms are not teaching in their areas of certification and do not meet the standards of a highly effective teacher. Another problem is that some schools and districts have created teacher leadership initiatives without fully understanding the purpose or impact relevant to these initiatives. Wixom (2016) found that many teacher leadership programs are lacking in clarity, yield limited compensation for the work, remove the best teachers from the classroom, are funded by short-term grants, provide little time for collaboration, and fail to provide time for the increased clerical duties relevant to the extra work. While teacher leadership initiatives are designed to elevate and retain teachers; in fact, they often fail, resulting in more dissatisfaction for our best teachers. Any teacher leader efforts must align to teacher leader standards, provide coaching for teachers as their responsibilities expand, and be strongly supported by local and district leaders (Wixom, 2016).

Castro et al. (2018) posited that districts must prioritize school leadership and allow leaders to participate in districtwide strategies focused on teacher retention. Such inclusivity and collaboration at the district level will decrease negative work

environments and diminish teacher dissatisfaction. District leaders should create mentorship programs for principals, provide training on equitable leadership practice, share information on the impact of negative working conditions on teachers, and offer specific guidance on how to create meaningful and supportive working conditions for teachers (Castro et al., 2018). Additional researchers (Henry & Redding, 2018; Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, Linda Darling-Hammond, 2016; Sorensen & Ladd, 2018) emphasized the need for policy reform to create stable, supportive work environments for teachers.

Beyond district-level policy reform, Kraft et al. (2016) emphasized the need for reform at the national and state levels as well. Kraft et al. (2016) cited prior research relevant to the role that quality principals play in strengthening an organization through opportunities for collaboration and meaningful feedback. Kraft et al. (2016) posited the need for national and state reform initiatives to prioritize the organizational contexts of schools and further emphasized the importance of district leadership playing a key role in creating school leadership teams, using data, assessing school contexts, supporting principals, and providing ongoing training. Wronowski (2018) also identified the importance of district-wide systemic professional development for school leaders. School leaders who are well trained improve the organizational context and subsequently are more likely to retain quality teachers.

Middle School Focus

The Association for Middle Level Education (formerly National Middle School Association) special issue entitled *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 2010), emphasized that middle-level educators must be fully prepared with

knowledge of the developmental nature of this age group, appropriate curriculum, pedagogical strategies, and methods for assessment of learning. Unique to the middle-level child is the need for inquiry, problem-based learning, cross-curricular opportunities to process information, and real-life application. Furthermore, teachers who are uniquely qualified and experienced in providing the necessary education to middle-schoolers are the single most important factor in their achievement and long-term success (NMSA, 2010).

In their overview of attrition in middle school education, Van Overscheld, Saunders, and Ash (2017) confirmed that many new teachers separate from teaching in their first five years, which is unfortunate because these same teachers need five years to develop the level of self-efficacy needed to remain in the profession (Raue, Gray, & O'Rear, 2015). Furthermore, teachers continue to develop effectiveness as they gain experience, and their effectiveness deepens over the course of 10 years, if they are in schools with high levels of support (Kraft & Papay, 2014). As they develop effectiveness, quality teachers are more like to remain teaching so it is essential that school leaders understand the conditions that will retain our best teachers, and in this case, our best middle school teachers (Van Overschelde et al., 2017).

Kraft et al. (2016) focused on middle school because of its importance in student growth, both from an academic and social-emotional perspective. Furthermore, the authors noted that middle schools may be experiencing the greatest crisis in terms of teacher turnover, given that middle school can be perceived as a more difficult placement than elementary or high school. Finally, the authors noted, that middle school teacher

preparation is often ignored as a specific category with unique needs; and therefore, middle school teachers are more vulnerable to the variety of demands and challenges they face in this age group.

Cappella et al. (2017) affirmed that middle grade educators are often not well supported or equipped to handle the challenges of teaching middle school students. The researchers indicated that middle schools often have more students in each grade level, negative teacher perceptions about student performance, a decrease in student autonomy, and poor student-teacher relationships. Most importantly, the researchers noted that there is a great need to strengthen the middle school environment and increase the skills of middle school teachers, both in terms of the academic and social needs of their students (Cappella et al., 2017).

Ladd and Sorenson (2016) affirmed the prior observation that middle school is often overlooked in the research on teacher effectiveness, experience, and retention. These researchers used a longitudinal study to measure differential effectiveness of teachers by their total years of teaching. The researchers discovered that there are significant benefits for students when they are taught by experienced teachers. Not only do their test scores improve, but students showed marked improvement in behavior, attendance, homework completion, and time spent reading outside of school. Sorenson and Ladd (2016) noted that these improved behaviors were connected to students' increase in motivation, determination, and self-mastery. The researchers emphasized a need for policy that promotes the retention of experienced quality middle school teachers.

Implications

Teacher turnover is a problem at the national, state, and local levels and is expected to increase in the coming years. To retain our best teachers, it is necessary to understand how to support and provide PD within a meaningful work environment. This project study was designed to uncover what is needed to create such environments conducive to retention. Guided by my research findings, I created a program which includes a 3 ½ hour orientation for facilitators, five 3 ½ -hour modules designed for experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers, and a Showcase Day to share the teachers' work with other middle school teachers, school-based leaders, and district leaders.

This project has the potential to make a difference in my district by retaining our experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers. In doing so, our district will improve the educational experience for our middle school students, a group that is vulnerable given the rigorous demands of the curriculum and the challenges of adolescence. Such an effort will contribute to positive social change because middle school students need to be well-prepared for high school, the last segment of their K-12 experience before post-secondary school and career.

Summary

In Section 1, I thoroughly defined the problem of teacher turnover, articulated the rationale for the research, and defined the necessary terms connected to the problem. Furthermore, I explored the significant nature of the problem and delineated the research questions that guided the study. From that point, I explained the conceptual framework,

provided a literature review relevant to the problem, and described implications. In

Sections 2-4, I presented my methodology, project study, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

This project study was qualitative in nature. I chose the qualitative approach to gather teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding their school experiences in order to understand the issues relevant to teacher retention. Qualitative inquiry includes many methods such as case studies, participatory inquiry, interviewing, questionnaires, observation, and interpretive analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013), and I chose the interviewing method as it was most appropriate for my research problem. I used qualitative methods to interpret and report the interview data, thereby contributing to the research on human behavior in the educational setting. The qualitative approach was the most appropriate in discovering how best to meet teachers' needs and diminish attrition.

Constructivism underpins the epistemological stance of this study. A key ontological assumption associated with constructivism is that reality is subjective, uncovered only through dialogue and interpretation amongst the individuals involved (Burkholder et al., 2016). In choosing the qualitative research approach, I was able to construct a deeper understanding by co-creating meaning through conversation to better understand what experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching.

In examining my constructivist orientation and the associated epistemological and ontological assumptions, it was important for me to acknowledge some challenges. One of these challenges was overgeneralization (Babbie, 2016). I was conscious of this challenge as it could affect the codification and interpretation of the responses to my

interview questions. Another challenge was illogical reasoning (Babbie, 2017).

Overgeneralization and poor reasoning can lead to flawed conclusions. To mitigate these challenges, I was reflexive throughout the research process.

I rejected quantitative and mixed methods designs because neither were the most appropriate for my research question. From a pragmatic standpoint, the qualitative approach is flexible, allowing me to more feasibly research the problem in the local context. Given that my research did not require me to prove or disprove a hypothesis, it was primarily inductive and qualitative. The qualitative approach was most appropriate because I could explore the rich narrative data that gave me answers to my overarching research questions and the subquestions relevant to creating a school environment conducive to the retention of quality, highly effective, experienced, middle school teachers, who have completed at least five years of teaching.

In summary, qualitative research was appropriate to this study because it illuminated meaningful work and how school and district leaders can better create environments that retain our best, most experienced middle school teachers. I used purposeful sampling as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016) to select cases which supported and deepened my understanding of the themes and patterns relevant to retaining our best middle school teachers. With support from the district office, I identified nine experienced, quality, highly effective teachers, one from each of the district's nine middle schools, to complete the interviews for this study.

The Participants

According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), researchers gain meaningful insights and deeper understandings from the research sample when they use purposeful sampling. Therefore, I used purposeful sampling to understand the themes and patterns relevant to retaining experienced quality, highly effective middle school teachers in my district. For my study, I identified nine teachers who represented all three geographic regions in the district (rural, suburban, and proximity to the military base).

Each region represented a range of socioeconomic levels, from affluence to poverty. Selecting nine teachers from all parts of the district ensured diversity and inclusivity of perspectives, resulting in a collection of the rich, thick data needed to get a true sense of the phenomenon. In choosing these nine teachers, I was able to achieve data saturation. As Merriam and Grenier (2019) attested, saturation occurs when no new information emerges from the data. Furthermore, I was able to explore more nuanced, deeper understandings of human behavior, an important component of qualitative study according to Burkholder et al. (2016).

Each of these nine teachers was experienced (5 or more years of teaching), quality (teaching in their certification area), and highly effective. To determine highly effective middle school teachers, the supervisor of accountability gave me permission to reach out to the principals of the nine middle schools in my district. In turn, these principals identified an experienced, quality, highly effective teacher. Principals identified highly effective teachers using the Danielson (Griffin, 2013) framework, the observation tool used in the CSD district. The Danielson framework (Danielson, 2007) includes 22

indicators organized into four domains that represent the most important aspects of teaching: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. The purpose of Danielson's framework (Danielson, 2007) is to provide teachers and administrators an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation about the specific indicators that represent excellence in teaching. CSD district leaders hoped that by using the Danielson framework, highly effective, quality teaching was promoted.

I aligned the problem and research questions to the interview data collection instruments. Through these qualitative methods I gained insights on retaining our best middle school teachers.

Participant Access and Protection

The supervisor of the CSD Office of Accountability approved this research study, allowing me to conduct interviews with the teachers who fit the research criteria. To prepare, I took the human subjects protection training sponsored by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) as required by Walden University. This training provided me with the necessary information for assessing risk, receiving informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality, and preparing for unanticipated problems. My data collection began after receiving the official approval from Walden's IRB.

To begin data collection, I submitted an email request (Appendix H) to the principals at each of the nine middle schools, asking them to identify a teacher who fit the research criteria (quality, highly effective, and completed at least 5 years of teaching). After the teachers were identified, I sent them each an email invitation (Appendix I). An

ethical researcher must acquire informed consent; therefore, I attached the IRB-approved informed consent form, which included information about the interview process and the rationale for my study.

To ensure the safety of the participants, I included the option to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Each teacher emailed me with a response about his/her intention to participate in the study, by responding with “I consent.” The participants were instructed to print and keep a copy of the consent form. As a matter of scientific duty and ethics, I ensured the privacy of all teachers by keeping their identifies confidential on all data collection materials. To further ensure the confidentiality of the teacher participants, I assigned the following codes to each teacher: Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, etc. I indexed the transcripts and interview notes by the teacher codes and removed all other identifying information from the data

I have stored all papers (interview transcripts and notes, fieldwork journal, and researcher memos) in a locked filing cabinet in my home. All electronic files have been stored on a password protected computer. As required by Walden University, I will encrypt and store all research for 5 years, and then destroy all data including electronic files, raw data, documents, and any other materials relevant to my study.

Data Collection

My use of interviewing as a data collection instrument was justified because of its adequacy to collect the needed data. I used semistructured interviews to gather data from the nine middle school teachers identified for this project study. I created interview questions (Appendix B), a research instrument designed to collect and organize my data.

I aligned the instrument to my research questions by asking my teacher participants specifically about satisfaction, meaningful work, dissatisfaction, support, and professional development. I used Ravitch and Carl's (2016) guidelines to construct the instrument to include experience and behavior questions, opinions and values questions, feeling questions, and knowledge questions. I created an interview protocol (Appendix C) to ensure consistency and validity within and across the nine interviews. I designed probing questions (Appendix D) and follow up questions (Appendix E) to ensure the detail necessary to fully answer the interview questions (Appendix B).

The qualitative approach is naturalistic, allowing for the researcher and participants to construct a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. In the researcher role, I used researcher memos and a fieldwork research journal to record my thoughts, beliefs, and reflections throughout the process. I also used these instruments to monitor my emerging understandings and challenge any biases or preconceptions. I used the interview process to identify themes relevant to the support and PD that experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching. By using the qualitative I approach, I was able to create a project that incorporated my analysis from all from research instruments.

Field Testing

I field tested the research instruments before the full study in the following manner. As suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016), I vetted the research instruments with two colleagues who have attained doctorates in the field of education. I sent my instruments along with the proposal via email for initial feedback and overall

impressions. I followed-up in a face-to-face setting where I asked questions, took notes, and clarified anything problematic in the instruments, methods suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016). After considering the patterns in feedback, I revised the research instruments accordingly. Furthermore, I field tested the research instruments with two teachers who fit the research criteria which is the recommendation of Ravitch and Carl (2016). I recorded and transcribed these interviews to help me practice the process and revise the research instruments as needed.

Interviews

After field testing, I conducted nine semistructured interviews, using the instruments previously described to gather the data necessary for understanding the phenomenon of teacher turnover amongst middle school teachers in my district. In terms of the interview setting, I planned to conduct the individual interviews at each of the nine teachers' schools for the convenience of the participants. However, because of COVID-19, I was only able to conduct three of the interviews face-to-face, while the remaining six were conducted by phone, a provision I identified in my proposal.

I planned 45 minutes for each interview, but they each took approximately 30 minutes, face-to-face and by phone. To ensure a relaxed approach to the interview, I managed my fatigue and stress by taking deep breaths as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012). For the face-to-face interviews, I arrived at each school 20 minutes early, took a brief walk, and observed some details about the school environment. I used my observations to have a conversational style when beginning the interview by positively commenting on school initiatives. For the face-to-face interviews, I conducted them in

the teachers' classrooms with the doors closed to maintain confidentiality. I conducted the phone interviews in a room at my house with the door closed. As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012), I honored all promises by making sure confidentiality was maintained and all deadlines were met.

During the interview, I continued to maintain a relaxed and conversational style. As recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012), I avoided academic jargon, was cautious about imposing my understandings, and was cognizant of wording that results in "yes" or "no" responses. I used simple verbal utterances that demonstrated that I was paying attention. I framed the open-ended questions by considering the academic literature regarding teacher turnover. To be specific, I used the conceptual framework of my study as a basis to ask participants about their associated behaviors, viewpoints, beliefs, and experiences, another method suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012). To assist me with the interview process, I used self-designed resources such as my probing questions (Appendix D) and follow-up questions (Appendix E). I practiced with these interviewing tools beforehand, thus ensuring they were used in a naturalistic manner. I maintained a relaxed, conversational style while attaining authentic, valid, and detailed answers to my research questions.

I recorded and took detailed notes as I listened to each of the respondents' answers. Ravitch and Carl (2016) emphasized that it is important to take careful notes during the interview and then attend to the notes as quickly as possible after the interview. After I typed my notes and transcribed the interviews, I proofread for spelling, punctuation, and grammar, specifically editing for an accurate understanding of the

teachers' responses. Using Ravitch and Carl's (2016) suggestions, I created an intentional and practical system for indexing each interview. Each set of interview notes and transcriptions corresponded to the teacher codes (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, etc.) previously described in the heading entitled, Participant Access and Protection. I ensured that the interview notes and transcriptions had page numbers and line numbers so that I could easily access specific quotes and/or passages during the coding process.

Within 2 days of each interview, I provided teacher participants with the transcriptions for review and feedback. I asked the teachers to read specifically for accuracy and return their commentary within 1 week. I included a series of questions for them to consider as they reviewed the transcripts (Appendix F), thus ensuring a thorough and consistent member checking process. I encouraged the teachers to edit by deleting, adding, or changing any part of the transcript which did not accurately represent their intent. In this manner, I ensured the validity of the data which also protected each research participant as is required by the IRB process.

Researcher Memos

To ensure the validity and quality of my research as recommended by Yin (2014), I created memos to document my thinking and promote reflexivity throughout the process. As encouraged by Ravitch and Carl (2016), I created researcher identity and positionality memos. I used these memos to reflect on how my experiences, both internal and external were affecting my ability to make meaning and understand the potential influence of my research. As I engaged in this memo writing process, I continued using the methods of Ravitch and Carl (2016) by considering my interest in teacher turnover

and retention, the goals that were motivating my research, the assumptions that were shaping my topic, the assumptions that I had about the participants, and any biases, ideologies, or beliefs that were impacting my research.

As the data collection process unfolded, I wrote self-reflection memos immediately following each interview. I recorded details about the interview itself, as well as any thoughts, feelings, or reactions I had. As the coding process unfolded, I created memos for the initial coding process, as well as during the second round of coding, pattern coding. I used these memos during the data collection and analysis process for additional data sources from which to gather themes and evolving understandings relevant to the phenomenon of teacher turnover.

Fieldwork Research Journal

To fulfill my obligation to be reflexive, I kept a fieldwork research journal throughout the data collection process. Researchers make meaning of data while being reflexive, or, aware of their own subjectivities, biases, and preconceived notions and thus avoid drawing flawed conclusions. According to Morrow (2005), the concept of *researcher as instrument* requires that the researcher engage in explicit reflexivity activities including an examination of biases, assumptions, and prior experience with the topic and/or participants in the study. I used the fieldwork research journal to foster my humility and truthfulness as I approached the phenomenon of teacher turnover and explored the ways in which leaders can retain our best middle school teachers.

Researcher Role

As I engaged in the data gathering process, I needed to be aware of my role as a researcher. One of the most powerful things I learned through my Walden coursework is that the qualitative researcher becomes the main instrument of the research, making the process truly unique (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As such, the involvement of the researcher in the data collection shapes the data and the findings. Furthermore, a qualitative researcher situates him/herself in the environment where the subjects work and using a naturalistic perspective, makes meaning and draw conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

By situating themselves in the environment, qualitative researchers are able to discover the stories, perspectives, and deep descriptions relevant to the participants' lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). In understanding my role as a researcher, I gathered data from the nine teachers regarding their perspectives on meaningful work and effective PD based on their lived experiences. While my role had an impact on shaping the data and the findings, it was imperative that I mitigate my biases, and focus on answering the research question with authentic data from the participants. I considered my biases as a school system employee, as a graduate student, and as a researcher/interviewer associated with the phenomenon.

To focus on the participants' lived experiences, I used the following researcher instruments to gather my data: interviews, researcher memos, and a fieldwork research journal. Once I collected the data, I used a narrative reporting style to share my findings. According to Erikson (2011), researchers use narrative reporting to discover what a certain group of people think about an issue and what the associated meaning is for that

group of people. It was in this manner, that was best able to share my findings about how to retain experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers.

Researcher Bias

To explore my biases, I wrote a positionality memo (Saldana, 2016). I am passionate about the topic of teacher retention and used the memo to mitigate biases, beliefs, interpretations, and perceptions I have in relation to this topic. Given that I used semistructured interviews to gather my data, I employed one of Shelton's (2004) strategies to mitigate my bias. Shelton (2004) recommends that the researcher conduct interviews to ensure that each participant experiences the questions in a consistent manner so that biases from the interviewer are diminished. Such consistency requires planning and practice with the semistructured interview questions, interview protocol, probing questions, and follow-up questions (Appendices B -E).

Developing quality research instruments and protocols ensured measurement reliability and validity in my study. Measurement reliability deals with the level at which the measurements in a study can be replicated. Another way to describe reliability is the consistency of the measurement no matter the persons conducting the study, the timing, or the conditions (Drost, 2011). Validity deals with whether or not the measurement truly measures what was intended to be measured (Drost, 2011). In my efforts to research teacher retention, I focused on both measurement reliability and measurement validity. In terms of reliability, I needed to make sure that the interview protocol was designed so as to gather valid data, such that it wouldn't matter who was asking the questions or what the conditions were when the teachers were participating in the interview. In terms of

validity, I needed to ensure that the tools I used were truly measuring teacher retention and not other peripheral issues, secondary or irrelevant to the true intent of the study.

Finally, it was important to question my ethical stance toward my researcher efforts. Therefore, I used the Professional Dispositions (Laureate Education, 2015) resource to guide me. In these dispositions, there are four categories imperative to ethical research: professional conduct, professional qualities, communication, and collaboration. I used these categories as a framework to align my behaviors and values as a researcher. Using the Professional Dispositions (Laureate Education, 2015) allowed me to focus and strengthen my ethical stance as a researcher. I was equipped to diminish my biases, strengthen my measurement reliability and validity, and ensure a quality project study relevant to retaining our best middle school teachers.

Data Analysis

Member Checking

After the interviews were conducted, it was paramount for me to utilize appropriate participant validation strategies, also known as member checks. Member checks are essential for establishing credibility and ensuring validity because through this process, the researcher invites the participants to assess and challenge, if necessary, the researcher's interpretations and analysis of the data. As noted in the Interview portion of Section 3, I provided the participants with transcripts within two days of the interview and asked participants to provide commentary within one week after they reviewed the transcripts. I made sure to adhere to timelines as recommended by Rubin and Rubin

(2012). I used the participant validation form (Appendix F) to give the participants ways to provide feedback through the member checking process.

I incorporated the participant validation process into my research timeline to ensure that all aspects of participants' reactions to the initial data were acknowledged and honored. Making time to reflect on alternative perspectives ensured that I did not simply check participant validation off a prescribed list, a fault of some researchers as noted by Rubin and Rubin (2012). I adhered to this ethical and intentional approach throughout the data collection process, ensuring the rigor and validity of my qualitative research on the phenomenon of teacher turnover.

Triangulation

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), triangulation enhances the validity of a study because it allows the researcher to examine conclusions from additional vantage points. Given that there are multiple kinds of triangulation, it was important for me to explore each one to determine the ones best suited for my study. I used methodological triangulation (between-methods) to use different methods such as interviews, researcher memos, and a fieldwork researcher journal to generate the overall data set. As stated by Ravitch and Carl (2016), the goal of these triangulation methods was to have a level of quality and depth to my data to help me answer my research question confidently.

Coding

I used the initial coding process to determine the discrete parts of the data, examine the data closely, and ascertain similarities and differences (Saldana, 2016). Initial coding was appropriate for my qualitative study because I was able to review the

interview data in a line-by-line fashion. As affirmed by Ravitch and Carl (2016), the coding process includes reading and rereading the entire data set, refining and revising the codes, and checking and rechecking my interpretations. Ravitch and Carl (2016) also advised looking for repetition within and across the data, emotional language, similarity of information between participants, and disagreement between participants.

My second cycle coding method was pattern coding (Saldana, 2016), and through this process, I grouped my initial codes into themes or concepts. By using this explanatory and inferential method, I was able to get closer to finding the true meaning in the data. In analyzing the second cycle coding data, I was able to discover shared ways of knowing, orientations, perspectives, and beliefs amongst the participants in my study. Given that my research questions were designed to explore what teachers need in terms of support and PD, I was able to use pattern coding to ascertain what was useful and accurate when answering the research question.

As mentioned earlier under the Researcher Memo section of Section 3, I engaged in memo writing, and this occurred throughout the coding process. As stated by Ravitch and Carl (2016), the memo writing process includes the opportunity for researchers to document their thinking as the codes are developed, defined, and revised. During the initial coding process, I summarized the process by describing how I read the participant data and used inductive methods to derive my initial codes. Using these memos ensured transparency, assisted me in the writing process, and allowed me to articulate any limitations to the study. When I engaged in the second round of coding, pattern coding, I created memos to document how the codes related to each other so that I could reduce

them to themes. Creating memos helped me refine the codes as I considered the following: the meaning of the codes, how they related to other codes and the data itself, how they related to the research questions, and any emerging questions I had about the data, all methods recommended by Ravitch and Carl (2016).

Data Analysis

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the data analysis process is recursive and iterative. By understanding the broad methodology, the researcher is able to see layers of data and how they relate to the research questions, the research instruments, and the findings of the study. Given that qualitative analysis focuses on the participants' lived experiences, I used the process to examine what the participants said, how they said it, and any additional nuances of their thoughts and experiences. Such intentional analysis was critical as I gathered information from the teacher participants about meaningful work environments and effective PD that is conducive to their retention.

Furthermore, the data analysis process is formative and summative (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). From the formative standpoint, I examined and re-examined the methodology, participants, and focus of the study. I continued the formative process by refining my interview questions and ensuring the best alignment with the research questions. As I wrote researcher memos, I engaged in a reflexive and formative data analysis process to clarify my understandings and prevent bias. I used summative analysis when I wrote the final results for this project study in Section 2.

I used analytical data triangulation to interact with theory and data in such a way as to inform my emerging understanding of retaining experienced, quality, highly

effective middle school teachers in my district. I grounded the study in Herzberg's (1966) theory of meaningful work, formulated research questions aligned to the theory, and generated data gathering instruments to answer the research questions. However, as emphasized by Ravitch and Carl (2016), analytical data triangulation is not a linear process and requires the researcher to engage in the interplay amongst these elements. As recommended by Ravitch and Carol (2016), I used the conceptual framework to notice, work with, and analyze the data in a focused manner. I used this approach to generate an analysis representing rich and robust findings.

In further ensuring a quality analysis of my data, I considered power asymmetries as described by Ravitch and Carl (2016). To address this ethical and methodological concern, I reflected on my interpretive authority in my fieldwork research journal. As a researcher, it was imperative to understand that interpreting the teacher participants' responses and telling their stories was an act of power. As I wrote about my findings, I needed to be cognizant that I was co-constructing the data and therefore account for my role and its limitations. As recommended by Ravitch and Carl (2016), I engaged in the following processes to mitigate the power differential: participated in structured reflexivity activities, used a participant validation strategy, stayed close to the data, and kept a fieldwork research journal in which I logged the dates and times of my processes.

Finally, I increased my reflexivity by seeking alternative perspectives from colleagues. Ravitch and Carl (2016) recommended finding colleagues with whom to have discussion about the data collection and analysis. I have several colleagues in my district who have earned doctorate degrees and with whom I discussed my research. As the data

analysis process unfolded, I invited these colleagues to engage in critical conversations about my fieldnotes, the coding process, and the ways in which my theory related to the data. I took notes about these conversations in my fieldwork research journal which served as another way to hold myself accountable to a rich, generative, and authentic data collection and analysis process.

Discrepant Cases

Another method for ensuring validity was the process of searching for discrepant cases, or cases that did not appear to fit the norm (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Before looking for negative cases or outliers, Ravitch and Carl (2016) encourage researchers to think about what this term means in the context of the study. To engage in this process, I looked for cases that challenged any preconceived notions through the coding process. Furthermore, I maintained ongoing engagement with the data to consider alternative explanations. I used the researcher memos and fieldwork research journal to record my engagement, an iterative process of determining whether or not there were discrepant cases in the data.

Data Analysis Results

I designed this qualitative study to answer the following two questions: RQ1: What kinds of support do experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching? RQ2: What kinds of PD do experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching? This section provides the interview analysis, teacher demographics, coding process, trustworthiness of the data, discrepant cases, summary, and information about the project deliverable.

Interview Analysis

Once I received IRB approval, I emailed each of the nine middle school principals in my school district. Within five days, each of them had given me the name of one middle school teacher who fit the research criteria: experienced, quality, and highly effective. After I received the names of these teachers, I emailed each of them with the IRB-approved Informed Consent Form. They each replied with “I consent” as required in response to the Informed Consent Form email. I began the interview process after I received the emailed consent from all nine teachers, and within one week, I had all nine teachers’ interviews completed.

I conducted three of the interviews face-to-face and six of the interviews by phone due to the COVID-19 outbreak. All teachers consented to be recorded and all teachers answered every question in the interview. I used the Otter app to record and transcribe the interviews which resulted in thirty-seven pages of data. I selected the Otter service because of its efficiency, accuracy, and reasonable cost. I also took detailed notes during the interviews, typed my notes, created self-reflection memos, and recorded my observations in my fieldwork researcher journal. My typewritten notes, memos, and journal comprised an additional forty-two pages of data.

Demographics of Teacher Participants

I constructed the initial four questions of the interview to confirm that all nine teachers were middle school, teaching in their area of certification (quality), experienced (more than five years of teaching), and highly effective. Principals use the Danielson framework (2007) to observe teachers throughout the professional setting and evaluate

their effectiveness; therefore, I used a principal recommendation to determine the highly effective teachers for this study.

Table 3

Demographics of Teacher Participants

Teacher	Middle School (Current Grade Level)	Quality (Certification Area)	Experienced (Years of Teaching)	Highly Effective (Principal Recommendation)
A	8	English	30	Yes
B	8	English	11	Yes
C	6	English	19	Yes
D	7	Science	8	Yes
E	6	Math	13	Yes
F	8	Math	7	Yes
G	8	English	5	Yes
H	8	Science	12	Yes
I	8	Special Ed	11	Yes

Initial Coding

Questions 4-7 of the semistructured portion of the interview were constructed to gather data to answer the research questions. I thoroughly read each of the transcripts and my associated notes several times. Then, I highlighted the raw data and determined an initial code for each teacher's response to each of these open-ended questions.

Table 4

Teacher Participants and Initial Codes for RQ1 and RQ2

Teacher	RQ1	RQ2
A	Recognition from administration Co-teachers, Esteemed colleagues	Self-guided Relevant and specific
B	More staffing Grade-level team	Leadership Collaborative
C	Team, Co-teacher	Sustained Relevant and specific
D	Appreciation from administration	Self-guided/Leadership Relevant and specific Collaborative
E	Grade-level team, schoolwide content team Increased pay	Relevant and specific Collaborative
F	More staffing Instructional coach	Relevant and specific Self-guided
G	Praise from administration Academic team	Relevant and specific
H	Belief from administration Academic team, School/family	Sustained Leadership/Collaborative
I	Collaboration with administration Co-teacher	Relevant and specific

Pattern Coding

After determining initial codes, I began the process of pattern coding. I looked for similarities, patterns, relationships, and repeated concepts to determine the themes (Saldana, 2012). This inductive process was iterative as I read and reread the data to make sure the themes accurately represented the concepts in the raw data. I aligned the

themes with my research questions and my information from my literature review. Identifying these themes allowed me to gain insights into what experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to continue teaching.

I discovered two themes in the responses to RQ1. In terms of support, teachers need to be valued by their administration and supported by their colleagues. Within the theme of support from colleagues, there are two subthemes. Teachers need adequate and stable staffing, and they need colleagues who are skilled and helpful. I discovered three themes in the responses to RQ2. Teachers need PD that has meaningful content, honors their experience, and allows them to collaborate. Within the theme of meaningful content, there are two subthemes. Teachers need material that is sustained over time, and they need material that is relevant and specific to their curriculum and student needs. Within the theme of honoring teachers' experience, teachers need PD that is self-guided and provides opportunities for leadership. What follows is a detailed analysis of the themes and subthemes relevant to my study findings.

Theme 1: Teachers need to be valued by administrators

Five of the nine teachers spoke of their need to be valued by their administrators. I induced this theme by noting in the raw data that teachers need to be recognized, respected, and praised specifically by administrators. They need their administrators to believe in them and collaborate with them. Administrator support is fundamental to teacher retention and this assertion is well-supported in the literature.

Kraft, Marinell, and Yee (2016) and Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) affirmed that when teachers have administrator support, there is a greater

likelihood they will continue teaching. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) asserted that a lack of administrator support makes it twice as likely that teachers will leave teaching. Teacher I provided further evidence of these assertions from Section 1, “Administrative support is a big part of sustaining me. If you do not feel supported, then there’s not a lot making you feel committed to the work.”

Table 5

Theme 1: Teachers need to be valued by their administrators

Subthemes	Examples of Raw Data
None	<p>Being recognized. Just the idea of being noticed, I think more than anything else in these late years. (Teacher A)</p> <p>I also think teachers in general need to feel like their role in the school is respected and needed. And I think that happens by just expressing appreciation frequently. (Teacher D)</p> <p>My administrator praises me a lot which makes me feel better about what I'm doing. (Teacher G)</p> <p>His belief in me just made me want to continue and do more for my students. (Teacher H)</p> <p>Prior to teaching, I had to present the lesson plan and they gave me feedback. After the observation, there was a conference. I felt that to be so incredibly helpful. Yeah, it was collaborative. (Teacher I)</p>

Theme 2: Teachers need the support of their colleagues

Within this theme, there are two subthemes. Teachers need adequate and stable staffing in their buildings to assist with student needs, and they need a variety of formal and informal kinds support from a network of skilled and helpful colleagues.

Adequate and Stable Staffing. Teachers need an adequate number of colleagues to fill necessary positions to support students. These positions include roles such as psychologists and support staff. Teacher B stated:

We've talked a lot about trauma, ACES, and the adverse effects of childhood trauma. We talked about how it impacts kids' behavior, but we aren't getting the support for it. We have a psychologist that's split between three buildings.

Furthermore, teachers need stability in staffing. Teacher F stated, "It becomes difficult to really manage a school when you have so much new staff coming in. When that older support system with more years of experience disappears, it just makes the whole process more difficult." Sorensen & Ladd (2018) affirmed that dissatisfied teachers are often replaced with less experienced and inadequately qualified teachers. This turnover has a negative effect on the students, teacher and staff morale, and the overall school environment.

Skilled and Helpful Colleagues. The second subtheme is that teachers need skilled and helpful colleagues to meet the needs of their students and maintain their satisfaction as a teacher. In examining my interview data, I discovered that eight out of nine teachers need varying kinds of help, support, and guidance from co-teachers, team teachers, department members, grade-level teams, instructional coaches, or teachers in proximity to them in their schools. They spoke of formal kinds of skilled support such as team teaching, content planning, and co-teaching. But they also spoke of informal kinds of helpful support such as encouragement, listening, dealing with student behaviors, handling parents, and general decision-making that occurs during the school day.

These findings connect to the literature review in Section 1. Kunnari, Ilomaki, and Toom (2018) found that when teachers form close-knit networks, it nurtures their collective efficacy, prevents them from burning out, and helps to retain them. Collective efficacy involves powerful networks of teachers who care deeply about students and their work as teachers. Participating in powerful networks helps protect the group from the challenges of teaching, thus fostering their long-term retention.

Table 6

Theme 2: Teachers need the support of their colleagues

Subthemes	Examples Raw Data
Adequate and Stable Staffing	<p>We need more human resources and more people in our buildings. (Teacher B)</p> <p>The biggest thing that comes to mind is staffing. We need people who can do the job and do it well. (Teacher F)</p>
Skilled and Helpful Colleagues	<p>I've been blessed to work with amazing colleagues, and we do team teaching. For me, my team of grade-level teachers have always been my biggest supporters. (Teacher B)</p> <p>I think support is daily on my team. When I am having a difficult time with a student, I call the teacher down the hall. She can take the student or think of a better way to help. My team is there for everything. (Teacher C)</p> <p>I feel very supported by my math team. Before we make any kind of changes or major decisions, we do it as a grade-level or schoolwide math team. (Teacher E).</p> <p>If I have questions about content, I go to the other language arts teacher on my team. If I am upset, I go to the math teacher on my team who is my mama bear. She is always there. (Teacher G)</p> <p>Your team is your family where everyone collaborates. (Teacher H)</p> <p>It starts with me feeling like I'm in a really good co-teaching situation. (Teacher I)</p>

Theme 3: Teachers need PD that has meaningful content

Within this theme, there are two subthemes. Teachers need PD that is sustained over time, and they need specific material relevant to their curriculum and students.

Sustained. Teachers need PD that is sustained. Teacher C stated, “We get a lot of the broad-based theory that’s one month this, and one month that. There’s not a lot of continuity to it. The content (of PD) needs to be introduced, reinforced, and integrated into opportunities for staff learning throughout the school year.” This need for sustained learning is confirmed by the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), which defines PD as ongoing learning that is sustained over time. Teachers want meaningful content that is revisited so that they can “learn, practice, and review” (Teacher H) what they learned.

Relevant and Specific. Teachers need content that is relevant and specific to their teaching situation. PD must help teachers better understand their curriculum, provide the best teaching strategies for their students, and give them ways to support their students’ social, emotional, psychological, and behavioral needs. Teacher D stated, “I find that for me the best PDs are specific to life science, classroom management, or classroom management specifically for middle school.” In terms of academic content, teachers need to know the expectations of their increasingly rigorous curriculum which is in many cases is derived from the CCSS (Common Core State Standards Initiative Report, 2014) intended to prepare them for their post-secondary education and careers. As identified in *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 2010), middle school students need learning experiences that include inquiry, problem-based learning, cross-

content opportunities, and real-world applications. Teachers need this level of relevancy and specificity in their curriculum-related PD.

Teachers also need to know more about adolescence, a critical time for students' psychological and social growth (Capella, Schwartz, Hill, Yeon Kim, & Seidman, 2017). Ladd and Sorenson (2016) found that this growth happens at different times and at different rates in children. Given the unique learning needs of their students, middle school teachers need to know how to best support them. Teacher F described a relevant and meaningful faculty book study, "It was good to have the same message reiterated about compassion, understanding, and setting expectations for middle school students."

Table 7

Theme 3: Teachers need PD that has meaningful content

Subthemes	Examples of Raw Data
Sustained	<p>Good PD is when you start with something and you introduce it and then a couple weeks later you build on it. Then you build on it again. (Teacher C)</p> <p>She broke everything down for us. We could see where our implicit biases were. We learned to check ourselves and apply it to our teaching. We left with good feedback, good knowledge, and ways to change. We revisited it later. (Teacher H)</p>
Relevant and Specific	<p>I appreciate specific content related to how to teach an essay or how to teach a short story. I also appreciate PD that is specific to student needs, such as how to help special education students. (Teacher C)</p> <p>I think the most meaningful is specific. The more specified for the targeted audience, the more useful and applicable the PD. (Teacher D)</p> <p>I think professional development that really makes good use of my time where I leave with something that I can use in my classroom. (Teacher E)</p> <p>Any types of new technology tools are helpful to me in implementing the curriculum. (Teacher G)</p>

Theme 4: Teachers need PD that honors their experience

This theme includes two subthemes. Experienced teachers have a great amount of knowledge and skill related to their content and the needs of students. They need that experience to be honored through opportunities to design their own learning. Furthermore, they need the opportunity to lead in the context of useful PD.

Self-guided. Teachers need to be able to design their own PD. As Teacher A said, “I want to design my own approach to my learning.” She further described her efforts to pursue learning in the summer, attend conferences, talk to respected colleagues, participate in social media (Twitter), and read everything she can “get her hands on” relevant to an area of student need. Teacher B stated, “Whoever is in charge of professional development really just needs to ask for teacher input. What do you need? I mean, just like we do with our own students, someone needs to differentiate for our needs as well.” These findings connect to the literature review in Section 1. Wronowski (2018) found that is vital for teachers to feel empowered as individuals and Ladd and Sorenson (2016) discovered that experienced teachers think deeply about their needs and seek mastery over time. They are able to draw on their prior knowledge to manage the challenges they face. Given these skills, experienced teachers need opportunities to design their own learning and find answers to their own problems.

Leadership. It is important for teachers to have opportunities to lead in the context of PD. However, this is a concept that is often misunderstood. As Wixom (2016) found, many teacher leadership programs are ill-defined, require a lot of extra work, and remove our best teachers from the classroom. When teacher leadership is mismanaged, it

can overburden our best teachers, resulting in teacher burnout and greater teacher attrition. The teachers in this project study provided insights into the best kinds of teacher leadership which include opportunities to lead within the context of collaboration, problem-solving, and responding to students' needs.

As Teacher B stated:

Teacher led PD is so important. I do not want to just sit there and have people who aren't teachers tell me about a strategy. Teacher leaders will ask, 'What do you see as a problem? Ok, now talk to these other amazing teachers and see what they're doing about the problem.' When teachers have the ownership to lead, it is so important. Having the time to sit and talk to other dedicated professionals is so important.

This data affirmed the need for teacher leadership opportunities embedded into discussions designed to solve specific problems related to student, classroom, and school needs. Reaves and Cozzens (2018) found that teachers need opportunities to use their intrinsic motivation and increase their efficacy. When teachers are motivated, they will seek out their own learning, set their own goals, solve their own problems, create collaborative networks, and lead within the context of meaningful PD.

Table 8

Theme 4: Teacher need PD that honors their experience

Subtheme	Examples of Raw Data
Self-Guided	<p>I'm a reader and I really want to read authors who write about topics I've chosen for myself. I wanted to design my approach to my learning. I want to choose people that are around me for ideas. (Teacher A)</p> <p>The element of choice meant that we were going to explore topics that specifically interested in and applied to us. (Teacher D)</p> <p>Allow us to make our own choices instead of a whole school sitting through the same professional development. (Teacher F)</p>
Leadership	<p>Teacher LED and having the ownership is so important. (Teacher B)</p> <p>I need freedom as a teacher leader. The freedom and support to implement new ideas, projects or initiatives that my colleagues and I collaborate on and create. (Teacher D)</p> <p>My administrator said, "I'm going to put you in some leadership roles and see how you do." (Teacher H)</p>

Theme 5: Teachers need PD that is collaborative

I learned that teachers need PD that is collaborative. They want to have open-ended discussions, explore new initiatives together, examine and reflect upon student data together, and share in the creation and implementation of their lessons. Teacher H stated, "We collaborated to put an option into place and then one of us taught the lesson while the others were able to reflect and take notes on how the students were responding." This desire to work collaboratively is supported in the literature.

As stated in Section 1, Hammonds (2017) found that school leaders must provide opportunities for collaboration through PD time. Sutcher et al. (2016) emphasized the

negative effects of school leaders who do not provide time for collaboration, interfere with healthy collegiality, and create negative PD experiences. Such leadership results in teacher dissatisfaction, thus increasing the likelihood of teacher attrition.

Table 9

Theme 5: Teachers need PD that is collaborative

Subtheme	Examples of Raw Data
None	<p>I like PD that is a little open ended, where you put me in a room with teachers, and we discuss a problem and talk about solving it. (Teacher B)</p> <p>The freedom and support to implement new ideas, projects or initiatives that my colleagues and I collaborate on and create. (Teacher D)</p> <p>Good professional development would include everyone coming in and scoring student work together. Then we'd talk about the scores and how we're going to use them. (Teacher E)</p>

Trustworthiness of Data

To improve the trustworthiness of this study, I analyzed the data using some of the considerations presented by Ravitch and Carl (2016) with regards to triangulation. I wrote researcher memos about the alignment of the data to the problem and research questions. I also revisited and challenged my interpretations related to the data and connections to the conceptual framework. In one researcher memo, I wrote, "In examining the data on Theme 2, I am not sure about the theme. I believe that the actions that the teachers are describing regarding co-teaching, teaming, and other work with colleagues relates to collective efficacy. I will reread all of the teacher data, research about collective efficacy, and info about pattern coding tomorrow to be sure."

Another way that I validated the trustworthiness of this study was through member checking. Creswell (2010) emphasized the importance of this process. Within two days of the interview, I sent each participant a transcription via email. I asked participants to review the transcript, make any necessary additions, deletions, or corrections. I invited teachers to download and directly comment on the transcript if needed. Teacher A downloaded the transcript and made some minimal changes and clarifications. Teacher F offered some additional commentary and clarification via email. I incorporated the changes from the member checking process as appropriate. I also spent time reviewing my notes and comparing them to the transcripts to ensure that the information that I gained from the interviews was complete and accurate.

Discrepant Cases

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), it is necessary to read and reread the entire set of data to make sure that the themes and subthemes accurately reflect the data. I did code, read, recode, reread, and recode the data through this process. I also refined the themes and subthemes several times by scrutinizing each theme to check and recheck my interpretations. I looked for divergent information and made sure not to force codes, themes, or subthemes into any biases or preconceived ideas about the data. I was able to keep my focus on validity by writing researcher memos and writing in my fieldwork research journal. This process helped me be open-minded about discrepant cases, including any data that did not fit the patterns, themes, and subthemes I was uncovering. Through this process, I did not find any discrepant cases.

Connection to the Problem, Research Questions, and Conceptual Framework

The problem is teacher attrition and how it negatively affects middle school students. The research questions of this study focused on what experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching. Herzberg's (1966) conceptual framework postulates that people are satisfied at work if their work is meaningful. Furthermore, if people are satisfied by meaningful work, they will remain doing their jobs despite dissatisfying factors such as lack of resources and inadequate pay. Frase (2001) found that teachers are indeed motivated by the idea that they are making a difference in students' lives, in other words doing meaningful work. They are satisfied by seeing students grow and helping them learn.

In reviewing the data through the lens of the conceptual framework, I discovered that all of the teachers are satisfied by student growth and student success. Teacher A stated, "When I can see movement in kids around some of those more discrete skills, that is rewarding to me." Teacher B said:

I love working with the kids. I love building relationships with them. I love when they get something. I love when they see themselves grow. Middle school can be a very turbulent time with kids finding themselves and so I love when they are starting to discover who they really are and seeing that journey.

Teacher E affirmed, "I get to see them grow from little kids to independent people." Teacher G said, "I love seeing them reach the goals they have in their lives. This is why I entered the teaching field." When students are successful, quality teachers feel fulfilled professionally (Towers & Maguire, 2017) and are more likely to be retained.

All teachers in this study described their work as meaningful and expressed an intent to remain teaching. This connection between meaningful work and intent to remain is consistent with Herzberg's (1966) theory. Furthermore, Chiong, Menziesb, and Parameshwaranc (2017) found that experienced teachers believe that they positively impact students and therefore are contributing to the common good and the success of future generations. This research is consistent with the data gathered from the teachers in this study. Teacher A said, "Teaching middle school is critical work because it is setting them up for the final four public school years of their lives." Several of the teachers believe their work is meaningful because they are helping students beyond the curriculum. Teacher C said, "Middle school is about helping students find their way and find themselves. It's less about the content and more about helping them become independent, think for themselves, think critically, be creative, and become confident."

Four of the teachers believed their work is meaningful beyond its impact on students. This is consistent with Kraft (2018) who articulated that many teachers see their work as an opportunity to serve the common good. The findings in this study support Kraft's assertion. Teacher B stated, "I really love the community I'm in and being a part of that community is very special to me too." Teacher E said, "I feel like I am a good model in my community, for my own daughters, and my students." Teacher G articulated, "What is so meaningful to me is that I am giving back to my society by helping to develop students and prepare them for the workforce."

The most common dissatisfying element for teachers in this study is lack of time. I discovered that five of the nine teachers were dissatisfied about time. Teacher B said:

We just do not have enough time in our scheduled workday, so I tend to say at school late or bring work home with me a lot. That can be frustrating, to constantly feel like schoolwork is at odds with my own family.

More specifically, four of the teachers were concerned about wasted time.

Teacher A stated, “I think utilizing our time within the building to the best of our ability and not asking us to do things that are not meaningful for kids.” Four teachers specifically mentioned unnecessary paperwork, testing, and district dictated data collection. If school leaders waste teachers’ time, they will be dissatisfied and become more likely to leave the profession (Sutcher et al., 2016).

In examining the teachers’ intent to remain, I found that all intend to remain teaching, at least for now. Four of the teachers intend to remain for the rest of the careers. The other five want to remain in education but may go into administration at some point in the future. Three teachers work in high poverty schools and two of them spoke specifically about the conditions at their school and its effect on them. The data from these teachers about intent to remain highlights the urgency for finding out what experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching, particularly in challenging schools. Teacher C stated:

This is what I need to do. I do not know that I will do it as long as I originally thought, though, because it’s so difficult. I mean I still love my job. I love being inside my classroom. I love that part of it. It’s just some of the stuff outside the classroom that gets to you. I think that the right kind of professional development

and making teachers feel as if they are doing meaningful work is important. It could make a difference for a lot of people.

Teacher D also spoke about the obstacles when teaching in a challenging school and the negative impact on her when she stated:

I do not feel like teaching in a high-poverty school is sustainable right now. Even for me personally as 110% as I am about education in general and teaching in particular. I love teaching, but it's so taxing at times. To be in a school with extreme challenges and high classroom sizes is too difficult. It's not sustainable.

This data revealed the need to provide meaningful support and PD to teachers, particularly in challenging schools to improve the chance of retaining them.

Table 10

Teacher Participants and Initial Codes Related to Conceptual Framework

Teacher	Satisfying	Meaningful	Dissatisfying	Remain
A	Student success	Preparing students	Wasted time	Yes
B	Student growth	Preparing students	Lack of time	Yes
C	Student growth	Preparing students	Student behavior	Yes
D	Student growth	Preparing students	Wasted time	Yes
E	Student growth	Preparing students	Negative colleagues	Yes
F	Student growth	Student success	Inflexible curriculum	Yes
G	Student growth	Student success	Wasted time	Yes
H	Student growth	Preparing students	Wasted time	Yes
I	Student growth	Student success	Lack of student success	Yes

The Project

Creating PD for administrators and teachers is the most appropriate project to address the findings of this study. I created the Facilitator Overview to share the study outcomes and give administrators a chance to collaborate in implementing PD that provides teachers with what they need to continue teaching. In Module 1, teachers and administrators build their relationships with each other, thus addressing Themes 1 and 2. In Modules 2–5, teachers have an opportunity for self-guided learning and leadership. They will identify their own meaningful content that is specific, relevant, and sustained over time. Teachers and administrators will engage in these modules in collaborative ways. Modules 2–5 will address Themes 3-5. During the Showcase Day, teachers will celebrate meaningful work by highlighting their efforts to find solutions to their own problems. This PD project is intended to increase teacher satisfaction, thus promoting teacher retention from the most experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers in the district.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to discover what specific support and PD experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching. Based on my findings, I created a program that provides a structured way to meet teachers' needs. In this section, I included a rationale for why the project genre was selected, a comprehensive review of the literature associated with my findings and project development, and a detailed description of project, including a timetable for implementation. Furthermore, this section includes resources and existing supports, potential barriers and solutions, roles and responsibilities, evaluation plan, and information relevant to stakeholders. Finally, this section discusses the implications for social change.

The project includes an hour-by-hour level of detail throughout the Facilitator Overview, Modules 1–5, and the Showcase Day. The program is anchored in a Learning Forward Professional Learning Standard (*Through the Lens of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning*, 2018) as recommended by the local district's PD office. Appendix A includes the agendas, Power Points, and handouts necessary for full implementation of this project at the district level. Each module follows the same structure to provide a cohesiveness throughout this PD experience. I used the research of Wiggins and McTighe (2005) to create enduring understandings for each of the modules and then aligned the goals, independent activities, collaborative experiences, and closure to the enduring understandings. I also incorporated evaluation tools (both formative and

summative). This project is designed to fulfill the teachers' needs as revealed in the study findings.

Rationale

The problem that I addressed in this study was teacher turnover, which negatively influences students and schools. My data analysis and research findings, as described in Section 2, revealed that teachers need their administrators to value them and they need support from their colleagues. Teachers also need PD that has meaningful content, honors their experience, and is collaborative. Meeting these needs may increase teacher satisfaction and therefore, better retain them. To that end, I designed the Ignite Program, a comprehensive way to inspire teachers and administrators to work together to create a meaningful work environment that motivates experienced, quality, and highly effective teachers to remain teaching. The overarching goal of the Ignite Program is for teachers to work together in a self-guided manner to create solutions to real problems in order to positively impact their students, schools, and communities. By participating in this program, teachers' satisfaction may increase, and there will be a greater likelihood for them to be retained.

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Middle school teachers have a wide range of challenges as they strive to educate emerging adolescents. To meet these challenges, school leaders must provide the support and PD teachers need to create a meaningful work environment conducive to their long-term retention. I used the following key words to guide my search: *collaboration*,

colleague support, middle school teacher retention, professional learning, professional development, self-guided, teacher leadership, teacher support, teacher decision-making, and valuing teachers. Using these key words allowed me to reach a saturation in my literature review related to my research findings and the development of my project study.

Valued by Administrators

The first theme that emerged in my study findings was the need that teachers have for their administrators to value them. Support from administrators was also a key finding in a review of the literature. Support is a construct tied to what administrators can do to help teachers do their best in the classroom and school community (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). In schools, an administrator is someone who holds a position of power over teachers to evaluate them, provide resources, and discipline students who misbehave in their classrooms. Administrators may be principals, assistant principals, department chairs, and supervisors. Depending on their experiences, skill level, and desire to learn, administrators may adopt and display behaviors of leadership. Through their analysis of Herzberg's theory, Holliman and Daniels (2018) clarified that administration falls into the hygiene category; whereas leadership is neither a motivating nor a hygiene factor. However, leaders increase motivation by focusing on meaningful work, the psychological state upon which Herzberg's theory is built. The importance of school leadership emerges strongly in the research literature, and connections between leadership, support, meaningful professional development, and teacher satisfaction are evident.

Cansoy's research (2019) identified the specific leadership behaviors which evoke the greatest commitment from teachers. When leaders maintain lines of communication and exhibit a genuine interest in teachers, teachers thrive. McKinney, Labat, and Labat (2015) affirmed that leaders must listen to and treat teachers with respect, focusing on the happiness and fulfillment of the members of their organization. Such leadership creates a positive school climate which leads to better teaching (Lee & Li, 2015) and improved student learning (McKinney et al., 2015). Türkmen and Gül (2017), identified that leaders who are committed to achieving organizational goals do so by listening, empathizing, using foresight, developing awareness, and building a sense of community. Kouni, Koutsoukos, and Panta, (2018) determined that the best school leaders exhibit an orientation focused on the individualized support of teachers whereby intellectual stimulation and growth mindset approaches to learning are promoted. Kraft and Papay (in press) found that such professional environments increase teachers' effectiveness over time and plays a role in teacher retention.

Supported by Colleagues

The second theme to emerge from my study findings was the need that teachers have to be supported by their colleagues. This theme was supported in the research literature, particularly in so far as school leaders creating a supportive environment dedicated to student success. Sutchter, Podolsky, and Espinoza, (2017) affirmed the need for principals to establish a clear vision for learning that drives a school culture devoted to continuous improvement. Such leaders empowered teachers through shared decision-making, the encouragement of growth, and the use of data to reflect on progress.

Ultimately, principals with a clear, strategic vision contribute to student success, personally, socially, and academically. Kouni, Koutsoukos, and Panta, (2018) determined that great leaders have an orientation toward creating a shared vision of values, goals, and expectations.

Louis (2016) discovered that school leaders must foster informal opportunities to interact so that teachers are more likely to support each other. In creating such networks, the author proposed that school leaders must be story tellers in that they paint a picture of teacher differences, school challenges, and possible innovations. Such stories need to be open-ended and allow for teachers to discuss their own story and for the group to create its own story. Such storytelling has the power to strengthen the vision, create reflection, encourage discussion, solidify group norms, and create shared knowledge and purpose.

Meaningful Content in PD

The third theme discovered in my study was the need that teachers have for meaningful content. Particularly, teachers need meaningful content that is presented in an ongoing and sustained manner over time instead of participating in a single or short-term learning session. Such an approach to teacher learning is valuable in that it allows for reflection and inquiry (Greenleaf, Litman, & Marple, 2018; Charteris & Smith, 2017). Bates and Morgan (2017) affirmed that ongoing, job-embedded professional learning is important for teachers. The authors presented many venues for learning to take place: professional learning communities, structured settings for PD, and coaching scenarios. When PD is sustained, teachers see the connection to their daily efforts to do meaningful work.

Sustained learning can be created through a professional learning plan and calendar aligned to the school vision (Desravines, Aquino, Fenton, & New Leaders, 2016). In their work on transformative PD practices that are sustained and coherent, teachers have opportunities to lead sessions or actively participate, explore best practices to meet student needs, and monitor their own growth. As the year unfolds, teachers work together to align efforts to the school vision. School leaders create protected time for professional learning to occur and work collaboratively with teachers to design protocols for examining growth in systemic ways that enhance organizational health. By creating a professional learning calendar, there are regular opportunities for collective awareness as teachers focus on their ultimate goal, an increase in student achievement (Desravines et al., 2016). The PD program I created to meet the teachers' needs identified in my findings includes a school-year plan that embeds learning experiences over time to maximize sustained teacher learning.

My findings also revealed that teachers need PD that is specific and relevant to student needs. At the middle school level, sometimes these needs relate to students learning curriculum, but often these needs relate to the social, emotional, and psychological needs of their students. In their research, Battle and Looney (2016) investigated the relationship between teachers' knowledge of adolescents and their intentions to remain teaching. The researchers reported that many teachers report that they are overwhelmed by the needs of students and their responsibility to meet those needs. The researchers discovered that when teachers have knowledge of their students' development (social cognitive, emotional, and moral), they feel as if they are making a

difference in their teaching. The associated feelings of self-worth make it more likely they will remain teaching. The researchers posited that more work needs to be done to understand the nature of teacher preparation with regard to adolescent development and their desire to remain teaching.

Honoring Teachers' Experience in PD

The fourth theme that I found through my data analysis was that teachers need PD that honors their experience. This theme is supported in the literature, although the concepts of decision-making, self-guided, and design-thinking, and teacher satisfaction are interwoven. Natale, Gaddis, Bassett, and McKnight (2016) posited that school leaders must create strategic and intentional opportunities for teachers to be involved in decision-making. School leaders should disseminate surveys and ensure that teachers give input during the brainstorming, development, and the implementation stages of school initiatives. Such an opportunity for decision-making will ensure that teachers and school leaders share their expertise, adapt to change, and transform school culture (Natale, et al., 2016). Grigsby, and Peters (2015) affirmed that the best school leaders allow teachers to make decisions and work collaboratively with them to impact student achievement. Such leadership creates a positive school climate which leads to better teaching (Lee & Li, 2015) and improved student learning (McKinney, Labat, & Labat, 2015). Sun and Xia (2018) and Garcia-Torres (2019) affirmed that when school-based leaders share decision-making opportunities with teachers, there is a significant, positive, direct and indirect impact on a teacher's job satisfaction and levels of efficacy.

Strahan (2016) discovered that mid-career teachers benefit greatly from self-guided PD in which they design their own learning projects. The teachers in this study identified their own goals for improving instruction, created plans of action, and collected data to assess progress toward their goals. The teachers who had the most growth were those who demonstrated more collaboration with colleagues and analyzed data in sophisticated ways. Furthermore, these teachers made meaningful changes to their teaching through dialogue sessions in which they deepened their relationships with colleagues as they discussed comprehensive resources to improve their practice. These teachers sought to better understand their content and their students' performance as they set shared goals to improve their instruction. This study emphasizes the importance of teacher autonomy and collaboration during professional learning opportunities.

Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2016) discussed the powerful and positive effect that teacher autonomy has on mitigating negative working conditions. Specifically, teachers appreciate making decisions about textbooks and other resource materials; the content, skills, or processes they teach; grading and evaluating students; teaching methodology; amount of homework they assign, and the methods they choose to discipline students. Such autonomy increases job satisfaction which in turn diminishes teacher turnover. Kouni, Koutsoukos, and Panta (2018) and Wieczorek and Lear (2018) affirmed the importance of teacher autonomy and how giving teachers the opportunities to be involved in decision making is critical to the success of a school.

Teachers need structured ways to be involved school-based decision-making. Calvert (2016) and Holladay, Sergi, Olson, and Tytel (2015) emphasized the need for

teachers to design their own problems of practice and/or methods of inquiry to make true changes in their teaching. Such an approach is highly engaging and motivating for teachers, thereby contributing to work satisfaction. Vedder-Weiss, Ehrenfeld, Ram-Menashe, and Pollak (2018) posited that failures in teaching are opportunities for reflection and growth if teachers learn to productively evaluate their shortcomings. Furthermore, the authors proposed that teachers frame failures through productive collaborative analysis. Such framing allows for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, but also requires a great deal of pedagogical awareness and sensitivity.

Henriksen and Richardson (2017) affirmed the value of a design thinking approach for teachers when addressing the challenges they face. The researchers posited that when teachers think like designers, they are better able to look at how students learn concepts, engage in class activities, complete assessments, and experience school life. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that the process should include defining the problem, exploring root causes to the problem, and brainstorming as many solutions as possible. After some solutions have been identified, they should be implemented but with an iterative mindset that includes what worked, what didn't work, what needs to be revised, and next steps. The researchers also recommended that design thinking can be applied to other aspects of school life such as classroom management, school discipline, student motivation, and community/parent engagement. When problems of practice are approached in a design thinking format, teachers are engaged in the process which enhances their beliefs about meaningful work and increases their likelihood of retention.

Toll (2017) offered a specific problem-solving approach for resolving issues of classroom practice. The first step is for teachers to identify a problem, one that is highly motivating and engaging. The second step is to make every effort to fully understand the problem before starting the problem-solving process. This step may include data collection and research. The third step is to formulate a solution including how to collect further data to measure the effectiveness of the solution. Toll's approach (2017) to problem-solving was incorporated into this project study.

In analyzing the findings of my study, I also determined that teachers need opportunities to lead. In the literature, teacher leadership is essential to meaningful work, job satisfaction, and teacher retention. Natale, et al. (2016) reported that teacher leaders are those who have the ability to influence others. Teacher leaders are approachable, able to form relationships, and have the ability to solve problems. True teacher leaders have power and authority, but not necessarily formal teacher leadership positions with delegated responsibilities. Conyers and Wilson (2016) reference influence in their work, stating that teacher leaders make an impact through their daily actions focused on each student and colleague with whom they interact. Teacher leaders understand that they have the power to influence the members of their school community to improve learning and increase student achievement (Conyers & Wilson, 2016).

Such findings are affirmed by Wieczorek and Lear (2018) who reviewed and analyzed 39 studies written over the last fifteen years regarding the construct of teacher leadership. These researchers confirmed that teacher leaders have social and relational strengths that create a sense of collective efficacy. Furthermore, they found that teacher

leaders create and sustain networks, develop professional learning communities, and encourage their colleagues to grow professionally, thereby contributing positively to the organization and instructional improvement (Wieczorek and Lear, 2018).

However, teacher leaders are limited in their influence if they are not supported by purposeful, systemic, structural opportunities provided by school leaders (Natale, Gaddis, Bassett, McKnight, 2016). Teacher leaders cannot shape school culture organically on their own without the necessary support from school leaders; therefore, the relationship between school leaders and teacher leaders is critical. Wieczorek and Lear (2018) affirmed that teachers who are given opportunities to lead emerge as instructional coaches, leaders of supportive networks which use collegial dialogue, and facilitators of formal or informal professional learning communities.

The impact of teacher leadership on the organization and the creation of a meaningful work environment is evident in the research. In their quantitative study, the Flood and Angelle (2017) focused on organizational variables to investigate the relationship amongst trust, collective efficacy, teacher leadership and teacher demographics. The researchers used three surveys with 443 teachers across 25 students to gather their data and discovered that schools with high levels of collective efficacy and trust created a work environment conducive to teacher leadership. The researchers also discovered that teacher leadership is not about an individual but rather about individuals working collaboratively toward a collective goal enhanced by a trusting relationship with school leadership.

Collaborative PD

The fifth theme in my study findings was that teachers need PD that is collaborative. Teachers' needs for collaboration was also a thread in the teacher retention literature. Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016) recommended collegial work settings with embedded professional learning to include at least 10-20 hours of meaningful collaboration and planning. Furthermore, they suggested that experienced teachers be co-planners and leaders in sharing curriculum, facilitating PD, and coaching their colleagues. Durksen, Klassen, and Daniels (2017) used structural equation modeling to analyze survey data from 253 teachers. The authors discovered that teachers are highly motivated to learn when they have an opportunity to learn collaboratively. Furthermore, their levels of engagement and feelings of efficacy increase when they have a chance to learn together. These findings held true across teachers' professional lives. The researchers proposed further research on creating a development framework to better understand teacher motivation and its relationship to professional learning.

Meister and Blitz (2016) recommended communities of practice as an approach to collaborative learning in which a group of individual practitioners assembles to examine a shared problem and exchange ideas, strategies, information, and experiences to tackle the problem. The group may include experts and/or a variety of stakeholders. The community of practice is often self-selecting and may include experts and/or a variety of stakeholders within the organization. After problem-framing, the community of practice may decide on a course of action such as creating a program, a tool, a strategy, or a

protocol to meet the shared need. The sense of collaboration toward the greater good is the essence of a community of practice (Meister & Blitz, 2016). Allen et al. (2015) emphasized that the principal is key to creating the conditions necessary for teachers to make collaborative decisions that impact the school.

Teachers report that principals who create a positive school culture and collaborative opportunities for colleagues to learn have a greater likelihood of inspiring them to remain committed to teaching (Espinoza, & Cardichon, 2017; Sutchter, Podolsky, & Espinoza, 2017). Olsen and Huang (2019) affirmed this research when they posited that school principals who create supportive school climates have more satisfied teachers. Olsen and Huang (2019) further identified that such climates include recognition, appreciation, meaningful learning, access to mentors, and opportunities for personal growth. Furthermore, the researchers posited that satisfied teachers are retained at higher rates when they work in environments with highly skilled school leaders.

By fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouraging collaboration amongst teachers, school leaders improve student success. Wieczorek and Lear (2018) posited that school leaders who create time, space, and trust for teachers to foster collaborative, cohesive networks of colleagues working together toward the common good increase student achievement and allow students to thrive. Conyers and Wilson (2016) shared similar observations when they described collaborative environments where teachers implemented strategies, found solutions to complex problems, and scaled those ideas to have maximum impact on the organization. Conyers and Wilson (2016) affirmed that collaborative environments improved student performance. The result was

that teacher job satisfaction and retention improved because teachers felt a sense of belonging and a growing level of collective expertise as they worked together to create student success.

Project Description

Project Connections to District Expectations

Learning Forward Standards. Each of the five 3 ½ hour modules for middle school teachers incorporates elements of professional learning adopted by the local district. CDS has adopted the *Learning Forward Standards* (Through the Lens of Learning Forward’s Standards for Professional Learning, 2018), which includes seven standards designed to inform all professional learning in the district. These standards are useful in showing school leaders and teachers how to plan, implement, and evaluate PD efforts to ensure that teachers are working toward common goals for student growth and achievement.

According to their vision statement, the leaders of Learning Forward are committed to creating equity and excellence in teaching and learning and in this manner, are dedicated to affecting positive and lasting change in the field of education. The leaders of Learning Forward believe that professional learning improves educator effectiveness, is the collective responsibility of all educators, and requires successful leaders to create and sustain a culture focused on learning. Such beliefs are in alignment with the goals of this study when examining the ways to create a meaningful work environment conducive to the retention of the best middle school teachers.

The Learning Forward Standards are also aligned to the most current research on adult learning theory which stresses the role of self-determination, examination of assumptions, and critical self-reflection in the learning process (Cox, 2015). Conyers and Wilson (2016) emphasized that these metacognitive practices help teachers understand how to plan a course of action, acquire new skills, and develop confidence and competence over time. The specific standard that underpins the project created for this study is #5, which states, “Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.” This standard is included in the Facilitator Overview and in Module 1 as it is the underpinning for the entire project study.

Understanding by Design. All curriculum in CDS incorporates Understanding by Design (UbD) principles created by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). Yurtseven and Altun (2017) affirmed that professional learning using UbD principles is focused, beneficial, and meaningful for teachers. More importantly, Yurtseven, and Altun, (2017) discovered that using UbD principles to design PD had a positive impact on student achievement. Through an action research approach with 10 teachers and 436 students, the researchers discovered a significant and positive relationship between the areas under investigation. When teachers are engaged in professional learning using UbD principles, they acquired the information better and therefore are better teachers resulting in increased student achievement; therefore, the modules incorporate these principles.

Facilitator Overview

This PD program will be presented to all middle school principals in the district or the principal's leadership designee. A designee might be an assistant principal, instructional coach, department chair, or teacher leader. The purpose of this orientation session will be to share the findings of my research study which will include the problem, the conceptual framework, the specific study findings, and the alignment between the study findings and the five PD modules for teachers. Principals will receive an overview of each module and have an opportunity to participate in interactive, collaborative groups to practice the modules, explore presentation techniques, and ask questions. The orientation will include with the social change implications for this project study along with information about the evaluation process, logistics, and next steps.

Five Professional Development Modules for Teachers

In Module 1, the principal or facilitator engages the teachers in a series of relationship-building activities. Of importance, all educators revisit why they became a teacher and why they remain a teacher. The purpose of this first module is to allow facilitators to build the relationships between administrators and colleagues. This module will reinforce teachers' sense of purpose and commitment to the profession and unify all school personnel in their shared vision to positively impact students' lives through meaningful work.

In Module 2, the facilitator will guide teachers in reflecting on themselves as teachers and leaders. They will specifically identify their leadership strengths and reflect on how those strengths will enhance the work they do as a teacher and the impact these

strengths could have on their school. Teachers will have opportunities to share with other teachers and reflect on the happiness and personal fulfillment that comes from being a teacher leader. This Module specifically addresses the need that teachers have to be leaders in the context of PD.

In Module 3, teachers will identify a question, need, or concern relevant to teaching middle school. Through a process of inquiry, the facilitators will guide them to research middle school students from a variety of viewpoints: socially, emotionally, psychologically, physically, and academically. Teachers may also choose to explore middle level education issues relevant to the larger context to include policy and advocacy. Teaching middle school is unique and given the need that teachers have for meaningful content in PD, this learning experience will ensure that their learning is needs-based.

In Module 4, teachers focus on a particular problem related to being an educator. They may choose to focus on the classroom, school, district, or the profession. To clearly define their problem, they engage in a series of activities exploring the core beliefs that underpin the problem. This PD approach allows teachers to be self-guided, empowering them to identify areas of need and professional growth.

Module 5 allows teachers to create an action plan to address the problem they identified in Module 4. The activities in this module allow teachers to engage in solution-oriented optimism as they make a plan to address the problem. They may choose to do further research on teachers, schools, or districts who have designed solutions to the same or similar problem. They may choose to interview colleagues who have found solutions

to the same problems. They may decide to collaborate with other educators to design solutions that involve a wide range of stakeholders. During the action planning process, they will identify timelines, barriers to success, resources they will need, and personnel involved.

After the Modules 1-5, teachers will have time to implement their action plan and begin to generate solutions. During this time, they will have online access to each other, the principals, and other school leaders involved in the Ignite Program. Our district uses Microsoft Teams to encourage collaboration which may be a valuable tool during this time period. This independent work time will allow for inquiry, data collection, collaboration, and reflection. Teachers will also prepare for the Showcase Day which will occur at the end of the school year.

Showcase Day

The Showcase Day will take place at one of the local high schools, big enough to host several hundred teachers, administrators, and district leaders. Teachers who participated in Modules 1–5 will share their 10-minute Showcase which will include the following components: their teaching story, core-beliefs about teaching middle school, a problem, and action-plan designed to address the problem. I envision approximately 45 teachers sharing their Showcases, divided into 4 venues in the school, each with 11–12 teachers. All of the middle school teachers, administrators, school leaders, administrators, and district leaders will be invited as audience members. Given that the teachers who participated in Modules 1–5 are experienced, high quality, and highly effective, I am hopeful that their Showcases are inspiring and filled with unique approaches that give

audience members ideas for solving classroom, school-based, district, and advocacy-for-the-profession problems.

Resources and Existing Supports

Several resources and supports are necessary to implement this PD program. First, this program will require physical spaces for the Facilitator Overview, Modules 1–5 for Teachers, and the Showcase Day. There are three high schools in the district that fit the criteria for the amount of people involved. These high schools have large auditoriums for the opening and closing sessions of the Showcase Day with four large spaces appropriate for the venues needed to host 11–12 Showcases with seating for audience members. Additionally, money will be needed to buy the books for Modules 1–5. Historically, the district PD Office has had the funds available for PD, and I am hopeful that will be the case in this instance. The principals of each of the middle schools are also a valuable resource for this PD program. It is my hope that they will have a strong desire to retain the most experienced, high quality, highly effective teachers.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

The time needed to implement the PD is a potential barrier. For the Facilitator Overview, principals or other school-based leaders will need to allot 3 ½ hours in September after the school day to receive the training. One solution is to provide this training during the Back-to-School training for principals that occurs before the school year begins. The district supervisors of elementary, middle, and high school differentiate their sessions, and the session for middle school principals could be devoted to this training. Another option is for there to be an online training to share the information from

the Facilitator Overview. This training could be embedded into the principals' workday through video conferencing tools such as Microsoft Teams, Skype, or Zoom.

For Modules 1–5, teachers will need to devote 5 3 ½ hour sessions once a month from October 2020 through February 2021 for the PD sessions. For the Showcase Day in June of 2021, these teachers will be giving 7 hours of time to share their Showcases and facilitate the small-group discussion sessions. In between February and June of 2021, teachers will be working to gather data and resources, implement their action plans, and develop their Showcases. Participating in Ignite will require a significant time commitment from teachers, a potential barrier to the program.

One solution is to pay teachers for their time. In our district, teachers are paid \$20 an hour for professional development time beyond the school day. However, these funds are limited, requiring various layers of approval and typically managed by curriculum supervisors. I am hopeful that I could work with the grant manager for the district to utilize Title II funds to pay teachers and buy the books for the Ignite Program. Given that Title II is a federally funded program, intended to improve teacher and leader quality through evidence-based PD, I believe that Ignite will qualify. Further examination of Title II expectations reveals that the PD must be sustained, job-embedded, use data, and collaborative. The Ignite Program fulfills these criteria.

Another solution is to give teachers credits to renew their certification. In our state, teachers are required to renew their certificate every five years and need 6 credits to do so. Teachers receive 1 credit for 15 hours of work. Participating in this PD program will require 17 ½ hours for Modules 1-5, approximately 20 ½ hours for the interim work

to prepare for their Showcase, and 7 hours for the Showcase Day. By working with the Certification Office in my district, I am hopeful that these teachers can earn 3 credit hours for their successful completion of the PD program, Ignite. In our district, nothing prohibits teachers from getting paid for their time and receiving recertification credits. I am hopeful that I can provide both methods to teachers as ways to compensate them for their time.

Proposal for Implementation and Timeline

With district approval, I hope to begin implementation of the Ignite Program with the Facilitator Overview in September of 2020. The remainder of the program will occur throughout the school year, with implementation of Modules 1–5 occurring from October 2020 through February 2021, 4:15 p.m. to 7:45 p.m., at one of the local high schools. The online support for teachers and their data collection, action planning and Showcase development will occur from March 2021–May 2021. The Showcase Day will be held at the end of the school year in June of 2020. Historically, the two days after the last day for students are PD days for teachers. I am hopeful that one of these days can be used for the Ignite Program Showcase Day.

Each year, I hope to continue implementing the program. As new teachers become experienced teachers, they will be eligible to go through the program if they are quality highly effective. Furthermore, if experienced, quality, highly effective teachers share their Showcases with other experienced teachers, they will hopefully inspire them to become highly effective teachers. The formative evaluation will occur at the end of each school year to determine the effectiveness and next steps for the program.

Roles and Responsibilities

There are many roles and responsibilities associated with implementing the Ignite Program including: program coordinator, principal or other school-based leaders, teachers, PD office supervisor, grant manager, use and facilities personnel, certification office personnel, and district leaders. As the program coordinator, I will be responsible for sharing the Facilitator Overview with the principals. I will also be responsible for collaborating with the grant manager for potential Title II funds, the PD office to order books and materials, use and facilities to schedule the locations, and the certification office to potentially award recertification credits to teacher participants in the program. I will also be responsible for coordinating the Showcase Day to include schedules, invitations, and distribution of resources.

The principals will be responsible for identifying the teachers who qualify for the program, implementing Modules 1–5, and supporting the teachers through mentorship as they collect data, implement their action plan, and prepare for their Showcase. Not all principals need to be present at every Module, so they could create a schedule so that they share this responsibility. Additionally, the principal may assign a leadership designee to be a facilitator for the Modules. These designees might include assistant principal, mentor, instructional coach, department chair, or another teacher leader.

I anticipate each of the nine principals recommending and inviting five teachers from their schools who fit the criteria for the Ignite Program. These 45 teachers will have the following responsibilities: attend Modules 1–5, read and engage with all resources and materials, create an action plan to solve a problem, gather data and relevant research,

and create a 10-minute Showcase with follows the structure outlined in the Appendix A materials. These teachers will also deliver their Showcases, serve as discussion facilitators on the Showcase Day, and complete all evaluation forms.

All middle school teachers will be expected to attend the Showcase Day as it will be a district PD day at the end of the school year. These teachers will represent a range of experience levels, may or may not be teaching in their areas of certification, and will have classroom evaluations ranging from ineffective to highly effective. Their responsibility on Showcase Day is to actively listen to all of the Showcase in their assigned venue, take notes, and participate in the three discussions throughout the day. My hope is that they will also consider ways that they can use the ideas shared to improve their teaching practices and the experiences they provide for middle school students both within their classrooms and throughout the school.

I plan to invite all district leaders to Showcase Day. This will include curriculum supervisors, coordinators and personnel associated with various offices, and the leadership team to include the superintendent. My hope is that these leaders will offer encouragement to the teachers, gain insights for how to improve experiences for teachers, and ask questions to further understand the best ways to support teachers in their efforts to make a difference in kids' lives.

Project Evaluation Plan

I used Guskey's (2016) five-level model to create summative and formative evaluations for the Ignite Program. I incorporated Levels 1–3 into the formative evaluation of Modules 1–5 and the Showcase Day so that the facilitators can gather

ongoing feedback to measure the effectiveness of this job-embedded approach to PD. I used Levels 4–5 to construct a summative evaluation for the district to gather data about teachers' job satisfaction, teacher retention, and the potential impact on students as a result of teacher participation in the Ignite Program. This method of evaluation was most appropriate because it will allow me to gather data about whether this PD program can meet the needs of the teacher (support and PD) and the needs of the organization (teacher retention of experienced, quality, highly effective teachers).

For the first level of evaluation, I incorporated Levels 1–3 of Guskey's model to create a formative evaluation. As suggested by Guskey (2016), I incorporated a Likert scale assessment at the end of each module to measure participants' reactions and feelings regarding their experiences. In Level 1, I asked participants about the usefulness of the material shared and whether or not their time was well spent. In Level 2, I asked participants about their new knowledge, skills, and beliefs and how the new learning applies to their teaching context.

In Level 3, I asked participants about the impact of the new learning on the organization and whether it may have a positive impact on the advocacy, support, and change. As recommended by Guskey (2016), I included an opportunity for teachers to respond to a few open-ended questions to gain richer information about their experience. For the Showcase evaluation, I also included summative, Likert-scale questions and formative, open-ended questions. I will use the formative questions to revise and modify the Ignite Program for the following year.

As aforementioned, I created a summative evaluation for principals to use and incorporated Levels 4 and 5 of Guskey's model. At level 4, Guskey suggested gathering data about whether or not the teachers' experiences made a difference in their professional practice. Guskey emphasized the need to understand the degree and quality of participant implementation. This level requires time for teachers to adapt the new ideas and practices to their classrooms and schools. The most important goal of PD, according to Guskey (2016), is impact on students, which is measured by Level 5 questions. In using this summative evaluation tool, principals may need to attach data that shows teacher retention trends, teacher evaluation data, and student data such as attendance records, survey results, achievement and standardized test scores, guidance office, and trends in discipline referrals. The overall goal of this evaluation tool is to determine effectiveness of the Ignite Program in retaining experienced, quality, highly effective teachers. Furthermore, this tool also measures how the retention of the best middle school teachers affects student success and achievement.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders associated with this study include: Board of Education members, district leaders, principals, and other school-based leaders. The Board of Education members have an interest in retaining the best teachers because of improved student achievement, one of their most important responsibilities. The best middle school teachers have a stake in the findings of this study because if their needs are met, they will remain teaching which they find satisfying and meaningful. All middle school teachers have a stake in the findings because retaining the best teachers has a ripple effect on the

school, impacting the quality of experience for all staff and personnel (Geiger and Pivovarova 2018).

Students have a stake in the findings of this study because if the best middle school teachers are retained, they will have higher achievement scores (Fisk, Bassett, Gaddis, & McKnight, 2014; Young, 2018) and they will thrive socially, emotionally, and psychologically because their teachers will understand the challenges associated with the developing adolescent brain (Ladd and Sorenson, 2016). Parents and community members have a stake in the findings of the study because if middle school students are well prepared for school and life, they will do better in high school, college, and beyond. Parents desire their students to thrive and the community needs well-educated, stable human beings to participate in a civilized society.

Project Implications

Teacher turnover is a problem at the national, state, and local levels. This trend is expected to grow in the next ten years and the problem of teacher turnover will be further exacerbated by expected increase in student enrollment during the same time period (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Furthermore, the need for quality teachers is critical at the middle school level. Students in middle school go through tremendous physical, emotional, social, and psychological changes during this time period (Ladd & Sorenson, 2016), requiring experienced, quality, highly effective teachers. My goal is that the Ignite Program will retain our best middle school teachers by meeting their needs in terms of support and PD.

When their needs are met, our best middle school teachers will choose to remain teaching which will increase student achievement and contribute to overall student success and the stabilization of the community. Therefore, retaining our best middle school teachers is critical to positive social change. If the best middle school teachers are retained, parents and families will be less stressed because their children will be meeting with success in school. Retaining our best middle school teachers will stabilize our communities. When students are taught by good teachers, they attend school, participate productively in the middle school culture, and go on to high school, ready to participate productively in that culture.

Furthermore, if the best teachers are retained, there will be less transiency in the community. These teachers will buy houses, raise families, and send their children to the schools in which they teach. Such stability is good for the local housing market and economy. Many of the teachers in this study see themselves as role models in the community, support for their students' families, essential to society, and critical to the common good. Their investment in their students, schools, and communities has great potential for positive social change, which is why they must be retained.

Conclusion

Our best teachers believe that their work is meaningful and that their efforts are contributing to the betterment of society. Through this lens of meaningful work, such teachers develop their skills, display determination, and work together to help students and support their schools. However, these teachers have critical needs. They need a high level of quality support and PD. This project study makes it clear what they require to

remain teaching. Our best teachers are motivated to do their best and seek job satisfaction through the meaningful work they do with students. It is up to the district to meet these needs in structured, research-based, inspiration ways. Such is the hope of this project. I have created Modules 1–5 to give school leaders the resources, tools, and materials necessary to retain our best middle school teachers.

As the modules unfold, teachers will have opportunities to work together to design action plans that solve the professional problems they encounter in their school settings. They will have an opportunity to select classroom, school-based, district, or advocacy-based problems. Through their participation in the Ignite Program, they will grow their skills, strengthen their bonds, and recommit to their purpose for teaching. They will be inspired to remain teaching, helping middle school students learn and thrive.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The Ignite Program has many strengths that will assist school leaders in retaining the best middle school teachers. The program is highly structured, providing specific support and guidance for principals and other school leaders to meet teachers' needs with regard to support and professional development. School leaders can use Modules 1–5 to value their teachers, improve colleague support, and provide PD that has meaningful content, honors teachers' experience, and is collaborative. The program is systematic in that it builds on the research relevant to the individual and organizational components of motivation and meaningful work. The modules interweave the needs of the individual with the needs of the organization as the teachers move in and out of problem solving, action planning, and self-reflection.

The Ignite Program is aligned to district expectations for PD. The five modules for teachers use a Learning Forward Standard to ensure that the experience is coherent, focused, and meaningful for adult learners. The Ignite Program also incorporates principles of UbD by including enduring understandings in the modules.

According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), enduring understandings represent the most essential skills and concepts that the learner should acquire from the instruction. The local district uses UbD to construct units and lessons across the content areas. By using UbD principles in this project study, school leaders model the foundation of good instruction to their teachers. When such modeling occurs, teachers improve their own instruction which in turn positively impacts student learning (Yurtseven, & Altun, 2017).

Another strength of this project study is that it is flexible. School leaders can use these modules as an entire series, in a segmented group of modules, or as stand-alone learning opportunities for teachers. The specific designs for flexibility are further discussed in the Recommendations for Alternative Approaches heading of this section. It is important for school leaders to have flexible professional learning materials given the variety of school environments and teaching cultures they encounter. In some cases, a school leader may have a highly experienced faculty that will require a certain approach to using the modules to meet their needs. In other cases, a school leader may have a faculty with many early and mid-career teachers who have a different set of needs. Additionally, school leaders face different challenges in student populations, which will affect the teachers' problems of practice and action plans. By having modules that can be used flexibly, school leaders will be better able to meet teacher needs.

One of the limitations of the project is its dependence on strong leaders to serve as facilitators for the teacher modules. While the Ignite Program is structured and systematic, it will require some planning and adjustments on the part of the facilitator. Some parts of the program may need to be modified to better meet the needs of the teachers. If the principal is too busy or does not have the needed skill set, it will be incumbent on that principal to choose a facilitator who has the time and the leadership skills to be an effective leader throughout the Ignite process. The facilitator will need to review and practice the modules, work collaboratively with the other facilitators, and review the formative assessment evaluations at the end of each module. Reviewing these evaluations will allow the facilitators to adjust as needed for the next module. After the

teachers have progressed through the modules, the facilitators will need to be available and responsive to the teachers as they implement their action plans and prepare for their Showcases.

A way to overcome this limitation is for the facilitators to continue to collaborate with each other throughout the Ignite process. Facilitators can determine their strengths and weaknesses with the various problems and action plans that the teachers may choose. Sample categories for problems may include: student engagement, student integrity, student behavior, teacher engagement, curriculum issues, parent involvement, leadership challenges, work-life balance, and homework/project completion. Once the facilitators know the teachers' problems, they can offer support in their areas of expertise, thereby ensuring that the teachers in the Ignite Program get the support they need throughout the process.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The project is currently designed to be a series extended over the course of the school year (Appendix A). However, there are several different ways that school leaders can use the modules. They could be used as a: 3-day workshop series, a segmented group of modules, or as stand-alone modules. In each case the school leader will need to consider the learning needs of the teachers and the students whom they serve, the content of the modules and how they align to the teachers' needs and the allotted PD time. What follows is a description of each of these alternative approaches.

In our district, there are 3–5 full days of PD before the start of school. These modules could be used as a three-day PD workshop at the beginning of the school year.

On day one, school leaders could use Modules 1–2 to have teachers write their teaching stories, engage in shared vision-setting, and reflect on their leadership virtues. On Day 2, school leaders could use Module 3 to have teachers research information about middle level education. The whole day could be used for this module. On Day 3, school leaders could use Modules 4–5 to have teachers brainstorm their problems of practice, collect data about their problem, and create action plans. At the end of the day, teachers could share their showcases in small groups.

Another approach would be for school leaders to simply choose a segmented group of modules based on a need that the teachers have. For example, the school leader may decide to only use Modules 1–3, in which teachers engage in shared vision setting, share their teaching stories, and learn about the needs of adolescents. The school leader may choose this approach if the school already has a plan in place for solving problems and discussing solutions, but the teachers need extended time to recommit to the school vision, revisit the reasons why they teach, and learn about the unique needs of middle schoolers. Another example would be for the school leader to use Modules 4–5 to guide the teachers through the problem solving and action planning stages. The school leader may choose this approach if other vision setting and opportunities for learning about middle school needs have already been provided to teachers.

A further option would be for the school leader to use the modules as stand-alone opportunities for teachers to engage in various aspects of vision setting, inquiry, reflection, and collaboration. Perhaps, a small group of teachers is concerned about a particular unit that does not seem to be meeting the students learning needs. The school

leader could use the Module 4 to help the teachers fully define the problem, gather some data, look at student work samples, and discuss the implications. In another scenario, a grade level may be concerned about hallway behavior. These teachers have clearly defined the problem and gathered the needed data, but they are struggling to create a plan to solve the problem. The school leader could use Module 5 to help the teachers to structure a plan that is coherent and actionable.

Beyond the flexible use of the modules to create a meaningful work environment conducive to teacher retention, school leaders could engage in a whole-school book study organized by teams, departments, or grade levels. School leaders could use the findings of this study to select books relevant to collegial support, problem-solving, collaboration, teacher leadership, and/or action planning. In grade-level, team, or department groupings, teachers could designate a teacher facilitator and work together to create a calendar of reading goals and discussion questions for each chapter.

After reading the book, teachers could write reflections and generate questions and share them with the principal or school leadership. From there, a smaller group of teachers and school leaders could generate an action-plan to meet school needs. Throughout the process, the school leader could incorporate the principles of this project study by listening to teacher concerns as they emerge in the discussions, fostering teacher autonomy and efficacy throughout the process, and developing collective efficacy during the action planning process. Elements of the modules could be infused throughout this book study approach, allowing for greater adaptability in using these materials.

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

From the beginning of my teaching career, I have been fascinated by issues related to teacher motivation, satisfaction, and retention. I am in my 29th year as a teacher and have consciously chosen to remain in the profession despite many dissatisfiers, such as poor pay, limited opportunities for growth and advancement, and a lack of supplies and materials. Truthfully, I am motivated to remain teaching because I love it. In my gut, I feel that sense that I am making a difference in this world, affecting our youth, and positively impacting my community and my world. But gut instincts are not enough to affect change or impact policy. One requires so much more than gut instincts to be a scholar.

Through the process of conducting my research and writing this project study, I have learned the powerful nature of evidence. Many school leaders, teachers, politicians, and community members make statements about education based on their gut instinct. Such instincts can be a motivator to learn more, but they are not a basis to make decisions about school policy and reform. I learned that diligent research is essential if one is to be a scholar who is truly intent on affecting change. Through my scholarship, I learned how to search for relevant literature, read widely, collect citations, write annotations, categorize research articles by themes and concepts. This process was time consuming, overwhelming, frustrating, and rewarding. As I engaged in the process, I learned that carving out the time needed was essential. By making time to do research, I made space for the negative feelings of frustration and doubt, but persisted through the process, and

experienced the rewards of finding important, relevant information. Sometimes the research presented a brand-new concept, affirmed or contradicted prior concepts, or was a complete dead-end. Such is the nature of learning to be a scholar.

However, being a scholar does not end at the literature review stage. From there, scholarship requires further insight and synthesis. These processes require persistence, diligence, and tenacity. In constructing my research questions, I looked forward to interviewing the teacher participants. Knowing that I would be engage with other teachers and add to the field of knowledge about teacher retention, enhanced my beliefs as an emerging scholar. However, in analyzing the findings and making connections to the research, I once again had to tackle feelings of frustration and discouragement. The scholar mindset helped me to forge ahead, knowing that my work would be important in the area of teacher retention.

Throughout this humbling process, I gained empathy for my ninth grade students. Today's standards-based age of education requires students to be evidence-based in their thinking and in their writing. As they engage in research, they need to carefully form their questions, gather their evidence, and write a coherent research paper. I shared my own research process with the students, I firmly believe that it enhanced my impact as a teacher, helped me connect my research to the classroom, and helped me grow as a scholar, intent on using my findings to make a difference in the world.

Finally, my work as a developing scholar revealed the importance of colleagues. Scholars do not operate on their own; they interact within their context, reflect, learn, and grow. As a scholar, I had to learn to be patient and wait for the feedback from my advisor

and the committee members. I sought out other colleagues who had their doctorate for emotional support and reassurance. Because my project included a huge piece devoted to collaboration, I made note of my own feelings and beliefs regarding collaboration in my own school culture. I believe that scholarship requires an integrated life. It changes you forever. It requires you to seek the truth in all situations: reading the research, examining yourself in the context, observing others who will be able to add to your understanding, collaborating with others, and constantly reflecting on the entire process.

Project Development

As I researched the phenomenon of teacher retention and explored the theoretical framework of meaningful work, I began to conceive of a project focused on PD. As I worked through the reflexivity activities in my data collection and analysis, I noted my perceptions about PD at the school level. I discovered that I had negative feelings and associations about PD. In all three of the schools in which I have worked, many of the PD experiences have not been positive and/or useful to my work. I frequently found myself in one-size-fits-all, sit-and-get situations. These poorly conceived PD opportunities did not help me better serve my students, my school, or the teaching profession. My feelings and associations regarding PD contributed to an early inclination that this may be the format for my project.

When I generated the research questions, I knew that I wanted to focus on PD and how it can best serve the needs of experienced, quality, highly effective teachers. As I listened to the teachers' needs regarding PD through the interview process of this study, I noted that these needs were similar to my own. The coding and theme generation process

helped me to stay focused on what kinds of support and PD would best serve the teachers' needs. It is upon these needs that I built the PD modules for this study.

Leadership and Change

When I began the doctoral course work with Walden in the fall of 2015, I had some very specific concepts about leadership in the school setting based on my experiences. From fall of 1991 to the fall of 2013, I worked as a middle school teacher, and during that time period, I had taken on several formal teacher leadership roles in my school: English Department chair, PD coordinator, school improvement team facilitator, and literacy specialist. These leadership roles became part of my identity as a teacher. I was well-respected, sought after for my guidance, and intimately involved in many aspects of the school, both instructional and operational. To be frank, I was also completely exhausted and becoming disillusioned with the concept of teacher leadership.

During the late fall of 2013, I accepted a job in the district PD office as a teacher specialist. My responsibilities included: supporting teachers who were striving to seek National Board Certification, facilitating a district-wide conference for 3,000 teachers, planning professional learning opportunities for other teacher specialists, assisting teachers in career advancement pathways, designing the PD Office website, creating brochures and other promotional materials for graduate programming and cohort groups, and implementing initiatives to inspire teacher leaders in the district. I retained this position until the spring of 2018, at which time it was cut, and I was reassigned to teach ninth grade English at a high school.

For the school year of 2018–2019, I have spent my time learning the curriculum for ninth grade, researching the best teaching strategies for high school students, and understanding assessment and evaluation methods for measuring student growth. I do not have any formalized roles or responsibilities at the high school other than working at the late desk every four days, assisting the school secretary with tardy students. I am working to form relationships with my colleagues in the English Department; attend school functions such as football games, dances, and plays, and perform other duties as assigned.

Over my 29 years of teaching, I have learned much about leadership and change from my experiences, my Walden coursework, and my doctoral project study. When I began teaching, I thought that leadership was about having a specific role, such as a department chair, assistant principal, or teacher specialist. I thought that acquiring a leadership role meant that you read the job posting, applied, interviewed, and were offered the job. Once you began in the role of your new job, you would make decisions and implement them. I associated leadership with a job title.

However, in the last five years, I have learned that true leadership is not necessarily associated with a job title. True leadership is about influence, and it happens through relationship-building and trust. I have learned about teacher efficacy, collective efficacy, collaboration, and professional learning designs that create meaningful work environments. Even though I do not currently hold a formal leadership title at my current school, it does not mean that I am not a leader. As appropriate, I support colleagues, offer my knowledge and skills in the context of PD, and collaborate with others to find solutions to authentic classroom and school-based problems.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

I believe that my project will have an influence on the middle schools in my district and create positive social change as a result. Teacher turnover is a problem in my district, and the retention of experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers is a great need. During my research study, I discovered that teachers need to be valued by administrators, receive support from colleagues, and participate in PD that has meaningful content, honors their experience, and is collaborative. These findings are the basis for my project which is designed to assist school leaders in creating meaningful learning experiences for teachers.

These modules include professional learning standards and UbD principles to align to the PD design and curriculum design recommended in the district. Such alignment to district needs contributes to the coherence that is so necessary for organizational health. Furthermore, these modules incorporate learning designs that allow teachers to strengthen their individual levels of efficacy as leaders and learners, as well as build their capacity to work collaboratively and build collective efficacy in their schools.

When teachers are provided with what they need, their level of job satisfaction increases. They dive into the meaningful work of making a difference in the lives of students, exploring solutions to their own instructional and pedagogical problems and engaging in design thinking to solve those problems. These modules give school-based leaders the necessary support to encourage teachers, allowing them to design, redesign, gather data, share, collaborate, grow, and learn. In this way, teachers will feel more

committed to the work they do, better recognize the positive effect they have on students, and remain satisfied in their school environments.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

When school leaders create meaningful work environments, experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers are more likely to remain teaching. The area of meaningful work is one that is receiving increase attention (Steger, 2016) as leaders in all industries work to better understand the individual and organizational factors associated with motivation and commitment. When school leaders create conditions for teachers to grow in resilience and individual efficacy, the organizational health of the school improves. When teachers collaborate to help students to achieve academically, forge stronger social bonds, increase their psychological well-being, and envision their post-secondary school futures, then all members feel connected in a network of collective efficacy. Teachers can improve their collective efficacy by framing problems and design solutions together. School leaders create these conditions when PD is strategic and planned. Further research is needed on self-guided and collaborative approaches to PD that enhance teachers' dedication to meaningful work.

A commitment to meaningful work has a profound effect on the members of the school organization. According to Steger (2016), meaningful work is tied to greater sense of physical and emotional well-being, more satisfaction and happiness, deeper dedication to the community, stronger engagement, more positive relationships, better support and mentoring, greater citizenship behavior, and higher performance levels. Meaningful work environments engender a greater investment from the community and increased parent

involvement. Given these comprehensive benefits for meaningful work, this theoretical lens is useful in creating a project that will influence social change.

Conclusion

My hope for this project is that it will help school leaders create such environments so that outstanding middle school teachers will choose to remain teaching. Middle school teachers provide the essential learning for students to go on to high school and become successful academically, socially, emotionally, and psychologically. Therefore, it is essential to retain the most experienced, quality, and highly effective middle school teachers. I created the five modules in this project study to help middle school teachers develop and grow the individual and collaborative skills necessary to make a difference at the organizational level. Participating in these modules will help them feel energized, focused, and productive. As teachers move forward through this process, they can continue designing their own professional learning to meet the needs of their students. As the years unfold, if the project continues in the district, these teachers will gain greater competence and confidence as they continue to invest their efforts in enhancing the lives of their students, schools, and communities.

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[Ilom%3%A4ki/6e3138c946f501c6511e385d4d5def58a1e37a30](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Successful-Teacher-Teams-in-Change%3A-The-Role-of-and-Kunnari-Ilom%3%A4ki/6e3138c946f501c6511e385d4d5def58a1e37a30)

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Appendix A: The Project

Ignite Overview: A Job-Embedded Professional Development Program**Professional Development Standard from *Learning Forward*:**

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Enduring Understandings:*Support:*

- When teachers have support from administrators and colleagues, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.

Professional Development:

- When teachers have PD that has meaningful content, honors their experience, and is collaborative, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.

End Goal:

Middle school teachers who are experienced, high-quality, and highly effective will engage in five modules of learning in order to create a 10-minute Showcase which includes their teaching story, a core belief, a problem, and a plan of action. The Showcases will be shared with all middle school teachers and administrators in the district on Showcase Day. When teachers' needs are met in the areas of support and PD, their job satisfaction increases, along with the likelihood of their retention. Retaining our best teachers increases student achievement, strengthens our schools and communities, and contributes to positive social change.

Module Titles:

- Facilitator Overview – How to Use Modules 1–5
- Module 1 – Strengthening Relationships
- Module 2 – Examining What it Means to Lead
- Module 3 – Researching the Middle Level Student
- Module 4 – Identifying a Meaningful Problem
- Module 5 – Designing an Action Plan
- Showcase Day

Ignite Overview – Facilitator and Modules 1–5 Timeline

Facilitator Overview: Facilitators can be principals, assistant principals, mentors, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders. Ideally, facilitators will be school-based administrators who work in a collaborative capacity with the teachers participating in the modules.

Date and Time	Module	Purpose/Topics
Thursday, September 10, 2020 4:15 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.	Facilitator Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Learning Forward Standard • The Research Study • Overview of Each Module • Collaborative Groups • Social Change Implications • Evaluation, Logistics, and Next Steps

Modules 1–5 Timeline (Schedule for 2020 – 2021 School Year): All middle school teachers who are experienced, quality, and highly effective in the district will be invited to the Ignite Program. The modules will be hosted at a central location in the district. Anticipated teacher amount is 50 teachers. Depending on the size of the group, several facilitators may be necessary.

Date and Time	Module	Purpose/Topics
Thursday, October 1, 2020 4:15 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.	1 - Strengthening Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, Learning Forward Standard, Enduring Understanding, and Goals • Getting to Know You Activity • Teacher Story Writing • Collaboration Time • Inspirational Quotes and Take-Aways • Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps
Thursday, November 5, 2020 4:15 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.	2 - Examining What it Means to Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, Enduring Understanding, Goals • Motivational Experience • Leadership Survey • Expert Group and Jigsaw • Gallery Walk – Green Light Observations • Happiness/Passion Connection • Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps
Thursday, December 3, 2020	3 - Researching the Middle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, Enduring Understanding, Goals • KWLQ – The K and W • Middle Education Research • KWLQ – The L

4:15 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.	School Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed Dating • KWLQ – The Q • Core Belief • Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps
Thursday, January 7, 2021 4:15 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.	4 - Identifying Meaningful Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, Enduring Understanding, Goals • Problem Brainstorming • Choose the Problem • “Why Should We Weep?” • Discussion • Instructions for Final Showcase • Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps
Thursday, February 11, 2021*** 4:15 p.m.– 7:45 p.m.	5 – Designing an Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome, Enduring Understanding, Goals • Motivational Experience • Solution-Oriented Optimism • Action Planning • The Art of Storytelling • Partner-Alike Groups • Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps
Friday, June 11, 2021 (Last Day for Teachers) 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Showcase Day	Invite all middle school teachers and administrators. Each of the teachers in the Ignite Program will create a 10 minute-talk which will feature: 1) his/her teaching story; 2) a core belief; 3) a problem; and 4) an action plan to solve the problem. Depending on the amount of teachers in the program, multiple venues may be necessary to share all of the Showcases.

***March – May 2021 – Teachers will email their facilitator who will provide support as they do research, gather data, and implement their action plans.

Resources:

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Conyers, M. & Wilson, D. (2016). *Smarter Teacher Leadership: Neuroscience and the Power of Purposeful Collaboration*. Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

Kanold, T. (2017). *Heart! Fully Forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and a Leader*. Solution Tree Press, Bloomington, TN.

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Ignite Detailed Agendas: Facilitator Overview

4:15 – 4:30 Welcome and Sign-In

4:35 – 4:40 Learning Forward Standard

4:40 – 5:15 The Research Study

- Background
- Research Problem
- Conceptual Framework
- The Research Participants and Design
- Alignment Between Findings and Modules
- Findings and Enduring Understanding for Support
- Findings and Enduring Understanding for Professional Development

5:15 – 5:45 Overview of Each Module

5:45 – 6:00 Break

6:00 – 7:00 Collaborative Groups

- Discuss talking points
- Practice methods and techniques of presenting
- Answer questions as needed

7:00 – 7:15 Social Change Implications

7:15 – 7:45 Logistics and Next Steps

Module 1: Strengthening Relationships

- 4:15 – 4:30 Welcome and Sign-In
- 4:30 – 4:35 Learning Forward Standard – Focus for all five modules.
- Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
- 4:35 – 4:38 Enduring Understanding
- When teachers have support from administrators and colleagues, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.
- 4:38 – 4:40 Goal
- Teachers will write and share their teacher stories to strengthen their relationships and deepen their support systems.
- 4:40 – 5:15 Getting to Know You Activity
- Teachers use 8 ½ x 11 paper to finish the sentence starter...Teachers are... (one word)
 - Teachers create a circle around the room arranged by years of experience.
 - Teachers flip their word starting from least years to most years.
 - Teachers introduce themselves: Name, School, Years of Experience.
 - Facilitator explains the metaphor of fire (Ignite!) and how it ties to this activity and the six modules.
- 5:15 – 5:45 Teacher Story Writing
- Teachers use Module 1: My Teacher Story (Worksheet 1) to write their teacher stories. Respond to prompts:
 - Why do you teach?
 - What satisfies you most as a teacher?
 - What is most meaningful about the work you do?
 - Why do you remain in this profession?
- 5:45 – 6:00 Break
- 6:00 – 6:45 Collaboration Time
- Teachers are reorganized by grade levels and content areas to share their stories and affirm their reasons for teaching. Teachers use Module 1: Colleague Stories Notetaking (Worksheet 2) to record their observations. Respond to prompts:

- Name of Colleague
 - List of Ideas that Resonate with You
 - Questions
 - Teachers and the facilitator use Module 1: Ignite Praise Notes (Worksheet 3) to give positive feedback.
- 6:45 – 7:15 Discussion – “Building a Sense of Community”
- 7:15 – 7:30 Closing – Module 1: Inspirational Quotes and Take Aways (Worksheet 4)
- 7:30 – 7:45 Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps

Module 2: Examining What it Means to Lead

- 4:15 – 4:30 Welcome – As teachers arrive, they receive their books for the Ignite Program. See the References section of the Facilitator Overview.
- 4:30 – 4:35 Enduring Understanding
- When teachers have opportunities for leadership embedded in their PD, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.
- 4:35 – 4:40 Goals
- Teachers will learn about various ways to lead in the profession.
 - Teachers will reflect on their strengths as leaders and the purpose of leadership.
- 4:40 – 5:00 Motivational Experience
- Teachers watch the short video from the Teaching Channel that features Sarah Brown Wessling telling her teacher story.
<https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/why-we-teach-tch-laureate-emeritus-sarah-brown-wessling>
 - Purpose for watching: What inspired Sarah to become a teacher? After viewing the video, teachers discuss this question and how it relates to their teaching story.
- 5:00 – 5:30 Leadership Survey
- Teachers take the “Assessing Your Natural Leadership Virtues” survey in *Finding Your Leadership Style: A Guide for Educators*
 - Teachers score their surveys using the Answer Sheet on page 203.
 - Teachers identify their dominant leadership virtue.
 - Teachers discuss how their dominant leadership trait relates to their teaching story and their purpose for teaching.
- 5:30 – 5:45 Break
- 5:45 – 6:30 Collaborative Work – Jigsaw Activity
- Teachers become “experts” in grade-level groups and then regroup to content groups to teach what they learned to their new group.
 - As teachers read from *Everyday Teacher Leadership: Taking Action Where You Are* by Michelle Collay, they record their answers on Module 2: Teacher Leadership Jigsaw (Worksheet 1). Then teachers move into breakout groups to share key points from each expert.

Group 1:

- Read Chapter 1, pages 1–4, the “Introduction.” Think about the quote “Many (teachers) are drawn by a deeply human desire to serve their communities, to engage in work that is meaningful, to “make a difference.” How does this statement resonate with you?

Group 2:

- Read Chapter 1, pages 8–9, the “Purpose of the Book.” How does this section help further define your ideas about “teacher-leadership?”

Group 3:

- Read Chapter 2, pages 49–57, beginning with “Teaching as a Vocation.” What images come to mind from your own schooling, the media, your family history, and or your childhood community? How did these images shape your idea about what it means to be a teacher?

Group 4:

- Read Chapter 2, pages 62–68, beginning with “Teaching as a Profession.” What are your thoughts about sociologists believing that teaching is a “semi-profession?” What are your thoughts about ethical decision-making and our ability as a profession to advocate for what is “right?” How might this passion come through in your story?

6:30 – 7:00 Poster Activity – Green Light Observations

- In their content groups, teachers create a poster that represents the most important concepts learned.
- After the posters are constructed, all teachers are given three green dots. The posters are hung Gallery Style and teachers circulate to read the ideas. Teachers place their green dots next to ideas that resonate with them. The facilitator makes note of the ideas with the most dots and shares those ideas with the group.

7:00 – 7:35 The Happiness/Passion Connection

- Read Chapter 2 in *Heart! Fully Forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader* by Timothy D. Kanold.
- Complete the creative activity on page 17 and share with a partner.

7:35 – 7:45 Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps

Module 3: Researching the Middle School Student

- 4:15 – 4:30 Welcome
- 4:30 – 4:35 Enduring Understanding
- When teacher have professional development that contains meaningful content related to the specific needs of their students, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.
- 4:35 – 4:40 Goal
- Teachers will research needs-based information on early adolescent learners and use this meaningful content to inform the work they do as educators.
- 4:40 – 5:00 KWLQ – The K and W
- Complete the K and W of the Module 3: KWLQ (Worksheet 1). Teachers reflect on what they know and what they want to know regarding teaching the middle school student.
- 5:00 – 5:45 Middle Education Research
- Teachers find one article related to their “W.” Teachers may choose to research the following aspects of middle level education:
 - Psychological and mental health issues prevalent in early adolescence
 - Best curriculum design for middle level students
 - Motivation and the middle school student
 - Parents and early adolescence concerns
 - Peer relationships and the middle level student
 - Best learning strategies and the middle level student
- 5:45 – 6:00 Break
- 6:00 – 6:15 KWLQ – The L
- Teachers read their article and find three meaningful things to record in the “L” portion of their KWLQ chart.
- 6:15 – 7:00 Speed Dating
- In five-minute increments, teachers will share what they learned with a partner. Teachers will record ideas from colleagues on Module 3: Speed Dating (Worksheet 2).

7:15 – 7:30 KWLQ – The Q

- Teachers will brainstorm further questions regarding teaching middle schoolers.

7:30 – 7:40 Core Belief

- In a peek ahead at the next session, teachers will learn that they are identifying a problem related to their experience as a teacher and what they have learned about early adolescent learners. To prepare, they will write a core belief statement about middle level learners.

7:40 – 7:45 Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps

Module 4: Identifying a Meaningful Problem

- 4:15 – 4:30 Welcome
- 4:30 – 4:35 Enduring Understanding
- When teachers have opportunities for self-guided learning, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.
- 4:35 – 4:40 Goal
- Teachers will identify a problem related to their work as a teacher (classroom, school, district, or profession).
- 4:40 – 5:15 Problem Brainstorming
- In content-alike groups, teachers will brainstorm problems on large poster paper. Divide the poster paper into four quadrants:
 - Classroom teacher: student engagement, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, technology, and parent involvement.
 - School community member: School Improvement Team, Instructional Leadership Team, and/or informal roles.
 - District member: County-level committees and informal roles.
 - Member of the teaching profession: local, state, national levels.
- 5:15 – 5:45 Choose the Problem
- Teachers use Module 4: My Problem (Worksheet 1) to analyze the problem.
 - What is my problem? What category of problem is this?
Classroom, School, District, Profession
 - How is my core belief about teaching middle level students?
 - What is my hope for the future?
 - What is my action plan? What are potential barriers?
- 5:45 – 6:00 Break
- 6:00 – 6:30 Read “Why Should We Weep?”
- Teachers will read pages 43 – 47, Chapter 7, of *Heart: Fully Forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader* by Michelle Collay. Teachers complete the reflection activity on page 46.
- 6:30 – 7:45 Small group discussion, Instructions for Showcase, Evaluation

Module 5: Designing an Action Plan

- 4:15 – 4:30 Welcome
- 4:30 – 4:35 Enduring Understanding
- When teachers have opportunities for self-guided learning, leadership, and collaboration, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.
- 4:35 – 4:40 Goals
- Teachers will create an action plan to solve their identified problem.
 - Teachers will work collaboratively to design a Showcase to share their story, core belief, problem, and solution to other middle school teachers and administrators.
- 4:40 – 5:00 Motivational Experience
- Teachers will meet a science teacher from the Teaching Channel who shares his concerns over the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).
 - <https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/collaborate-on-ngss>
 - How does this teacher’s mindset relate to yours? How does this teacher’s approach relate to the Ignite program?
- 5:00 – 5:15 Solution-Oriented Optimism
- Teachers will read a selection in *Smarter Teacher Leadership: Neuroscience and the Power of Purposeful Collaboration* by Marcus Conyers and Donna Wilson about action planning that is focused on solutions and how this approach changes the health of the institution.
 - Consider: What does research on neuroscience teach us about solution-oriented optimism.
- 5:15 – 6:00 Action Planning
- Teachers will make a plan to solve the problem they have previously identified. Teachers will use Module 5: Action Planning Tool (Worksheet 1) to construct a timeline, gather data and resources, and identify people who could assist them.
 - Over the next few months, teachers will work to implement their plans. Teachers may choose to use Module 5: Interview (Worksheet 2) or do additional research.

- 6:00 – 6:45 The Art of Storytelling
- Watch the following TED talk about the narrative structure of all great speeches.
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/nancy_duarte_the_secret_structure_of_great_talks
 - Teachers will create a compelling Showcase including the following elements:
 - Their teaching story
 - A core belief about middle school students and/or education
 - A meaningful problem
 - An action plan
- 6:45 – 7:30 Partner-Alike Groups
- Teachers should consider the following:
Think about the elements of GREAT storytelling. What *ignites* your interest when listening to a riveting storyteller? As an enthusiastic, dedicated educator, you carry the torch that leads others to the campfire of collaboration and support.
 - Teachers share their ideas with “like” partners (content or grade—level) and use the Praise/Question feedback approach. Teachers make a detailed plan for their Showcase including content and visuals.
- 7:30 – 7:45 Evaluation, Questions, and Next Steps

Showcase Day

8:00–8:20 Welcome and Enduring Understandings of Ignite Program
Logistics – Distribute and Explain the Facilitator’s Guide
(Worksheet 1) and the Participant Reflection Log (Worksheet 2).

Collection #1

8:30–8:40 Showcase #1:
8:45–8:55 Showcase #2:
9:00–9:10 Showcase #3:

Participant Experience #1 in Small Groups (See below) 9:15–9:40: *Telling Our Stories* Discussion Prompts: Why did you become a teacher? Why do you stay a teacher?

9:45–9:55 Break

Collection #2

10:00–10:10 Showcase #4:
10:15–10:25 Showcase #5:
10:30–10:40 Showcase #6:

Participant Experience #2 in Small Groups (See below) 10:45–11:10 *Problems* Discussion Prompts: What is a problem related to your teaching? Why is the problem important to you and other teachers? What is a core belief associated with this problem?

Collection #3

11:20–11:30 Showcase #7:
11:35–11:45 Showcase #8:
11:45–1:15 Lunch – On Your Own

Collection #4


1:20–1:30 Showcase #9:
1:35–1:45 Showcase #10:

Participant Experience #3 in Small Groups (See below) 1:50–2:25 *Hope for the Future* Discussion Prompts: What is a solution to your problem? What action steps can you take to make this solution a reality? What resources do you need?

Collection #5

2:30 – 2:40 Showcase #11:
2:45 – 2:55 Showcase #12:

2:55 – 3:30 Closure and Showcase Evaluation (Worksheet 3) - Auditorium

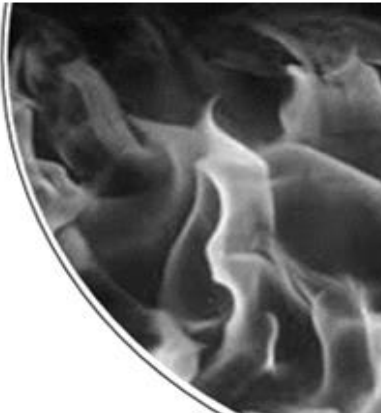


**Facilitator
Overview:**

**The Why and
How of
Modules 1-5**

**Learning Forward
Standard:**

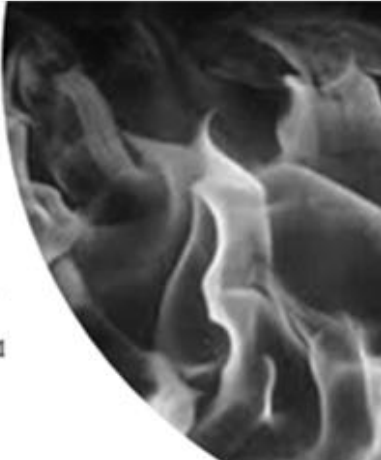
Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

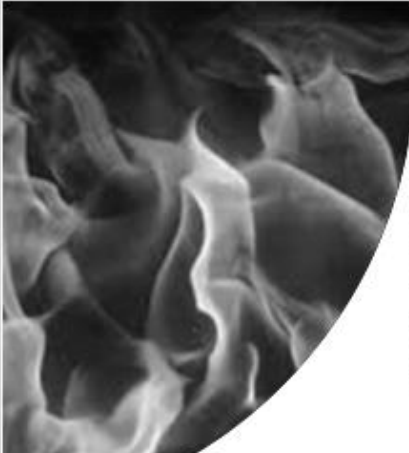


Background:

The retention of quality, highly effective teachers positively and significantly impacts student achievement (Fisk, Bassett, Gaddis, & McKnight, 2014; Young, 2018).

The phenomenon of teacher turnover is complex, involving an interplay amongst individual and organizational factors (Smith & Ulvik, 2017).





Conceptual Framework


The conceptual framework which grounds this study is Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory of motivation.

The study focuses on a psychological state which underpins Herzberg's theory, known as meaningfulness in the work itself.

Meaningfulness relates to a state of being in which the individual seeks to serve the needs of the organization, the needs of the community, and the needs of mankind.


Research Questions

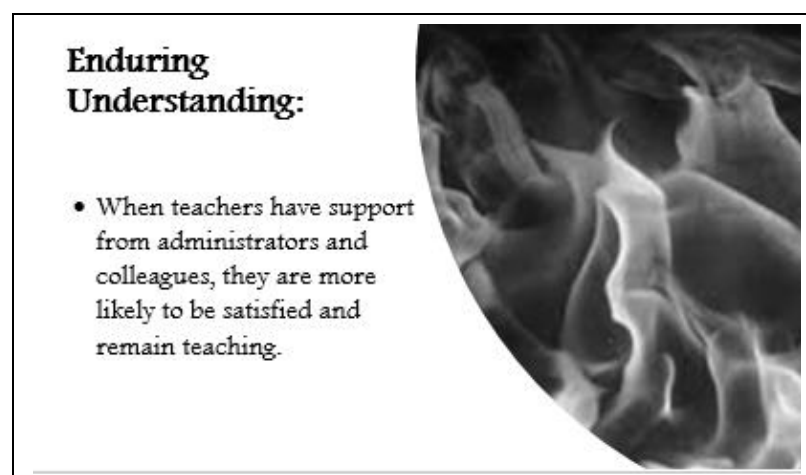
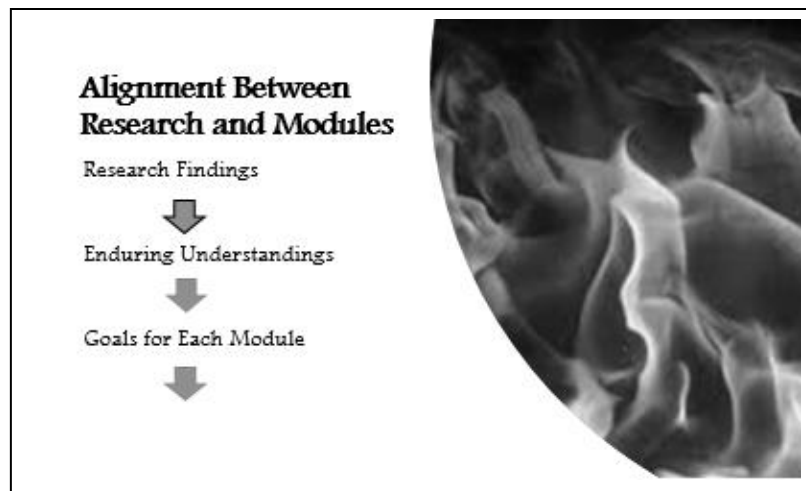
- RQ1: What kinds of support do experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching?
- RQ2: What kinds of professional development do experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers need to remain teaching?



The Research Participants and Design

- Nine teachers who represent all three geographic regions in the district (rural, suburban, and proximity to the military base.) Each of these regions represents a range of socioeconomic levels.
- A qualitative method using a structured interview and two levels of coding to identify themes that answered the research questions.





Social Change Implications

- This study will promote positive social change by offering specific ways to support and provide useful professional development to middle school teachers, which in turn will increase job satisfaction and foster their retention.
- Such retention will increase student achievement, improve the overall school environment, and create stability in the surrounding community.



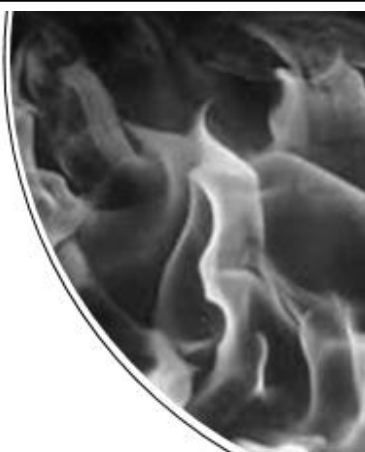
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Module 1:

Creating a
Shared Vision

Learning Forward Standard:

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.



Review of Each Module

- Review the content of Modules 1-5 (Agendas, Power Points, and Materials).

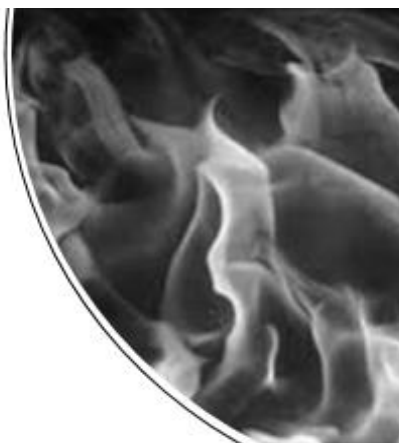
In Collaborative Groups...

- Discuss talking points.
- Practice methods and techniques of presenting.
- Answer questions as needed.



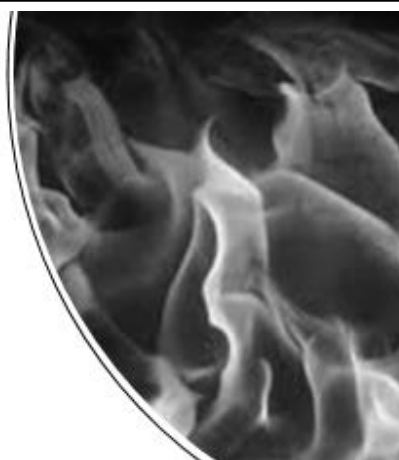
Enduring Understanding:

- When teachers have support from administrators and colleagues, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.



Goal:

- Teachers will write and share their teacher stories to strengthen their relationships and deepen their support systems.



Getting to Know You

Finish the following sentence starter...

Teachers are...

Write your word on the paper at your seat.

Form a circle around the room by years of teaching.



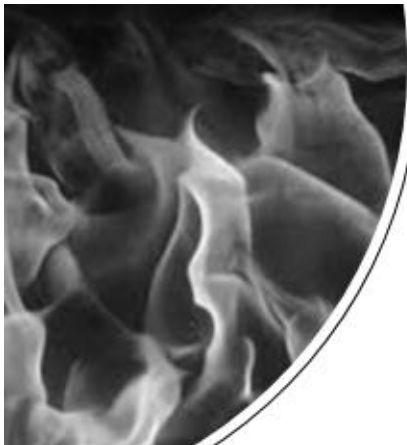
Teachers Are...

fun-loving, informative, curious, awesome, entertaining, necessary, goofy, foundational, **passionate**, amazing, rap-loving, actors, inspiring, fundamental, wonderful, graceful, game-changers, rockstars, learners, artists, confidence-builders, magicians, fun, hilarious, entertaining, inspire

Tch Teaching Channel



Keep the Flame Alive!


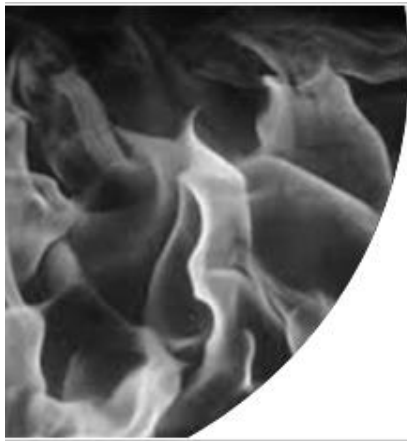


Write Your Teacher Story:

- Why do you teach?
- What satisfies you most as a teacher?
- What is most meaningful about the work you do?
- Why do you remain in this profession?

Collaboration Time

Name of Teacher	Ideas that Resonate	Question

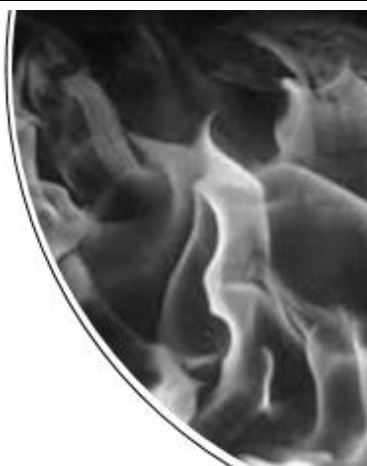



Consensus Building:

- What themes emerged as you listened to each other's stories?
- How does sharing your story help you strengthen your relationships and build your support network?

Closure:

- Choose the quote that resonates the most with you.
- Discuss with colleagues what drew you to this quote.
- What is your take-away from Module 1?
- Evaluation, Questions, Next Steps



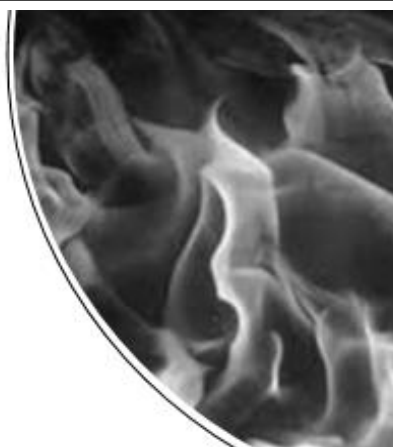
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Module 2:

Examining
What it Means
to Lead

Enduring Understanding:

- When teachers have opportunities for leadership embedded in their professional development, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.



Goals

- Teachers will learn about various ways to lead in the profession.
- Teachers will reflect on their strengths as leaders and the purpose of leadership.

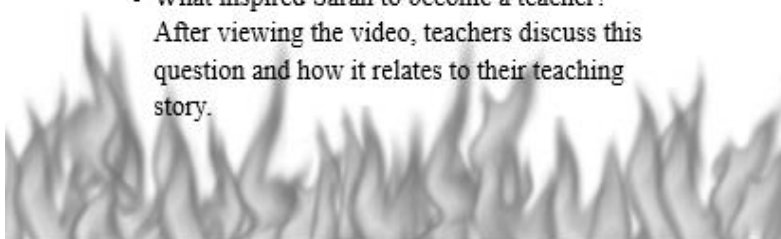


Get Inspired

Watch Sarah Wessling Brown talk about what inspired her to become a teacher.

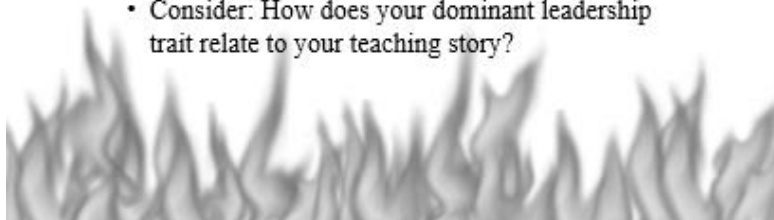
Think about...

- What inspired Sarah to become a teacher?
After viewing the video, teachers discuss this question and how it relates to their teaching story.



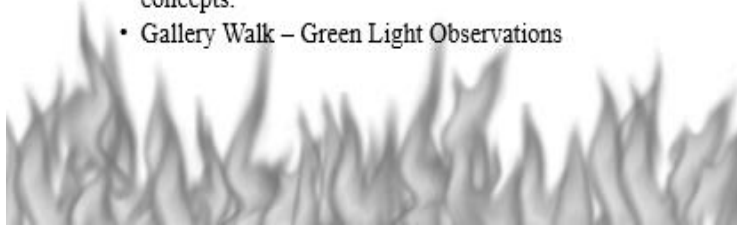
Leadership Survey

- Take the “Assessing Your Natural Leadership Virtues” survey.
- Score your survey.
- Identify your dominant leadership virtue.
- Consider: How does your dominant leadership trait relate to your teaching story?



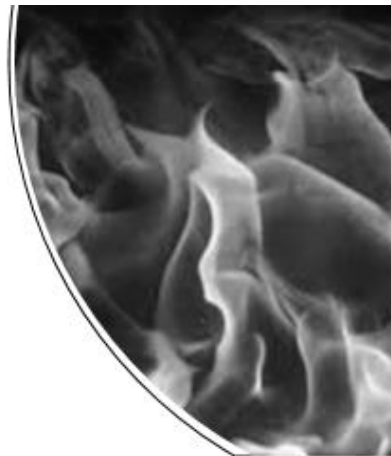
Collaborative Work

- Read you assigned text and take notes in expert groups.
- Share what you learned in break-out groups.
- Create a poster representing the most important concepts.
- Gallery Walk – Green Light Observations



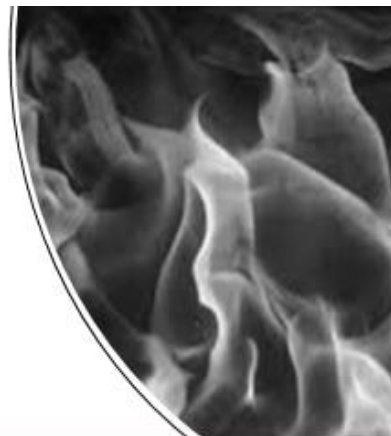
The Happiness/Passion Connection:

- Read about the connection between passion in the profession and the resulting happiness.
- Reflect individually and then share with a partner.



Closure:

- Evaluation
- Questions
- Next Steps

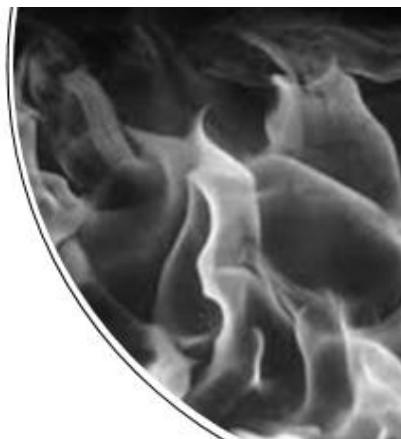




Module 3: Researching the Middle School Student

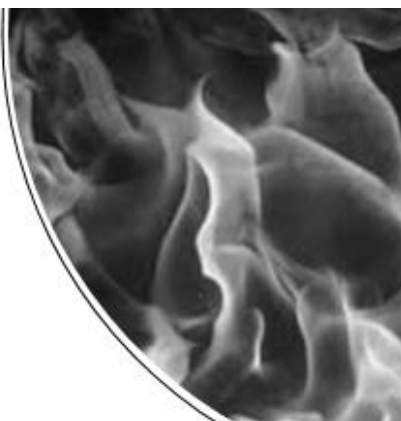
Enduring Understanding:

- When teachers have professional development that contains meaningful content related to the specific needs of their students, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.



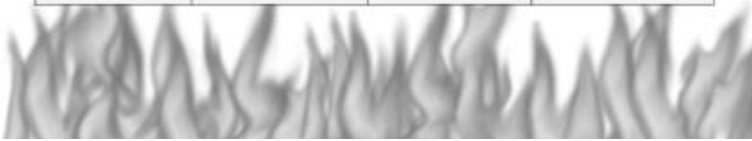
Goal:

- Teachers will research needs-based information on the early adolescent learners and use this content to inform the work they do as educators.



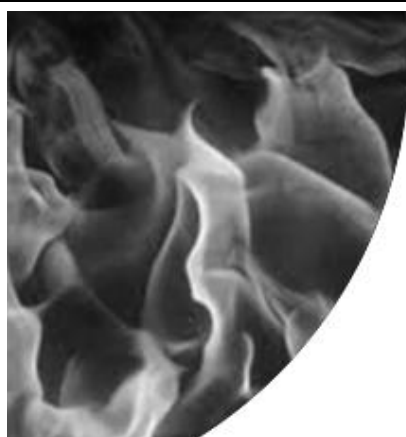
KWLQ

What do you know?	What do you want to know?	What did you learn?	What further questions do you have?




Middle School Research:

- Psychological and mental health issues prevalent in early adolescence
- Best curriculum design for middle level students
- Motivation and the middle school student
- Parents and early adolescence concerns
- Peer relationships and the middle level student
- Best learning strategies and the middle level student



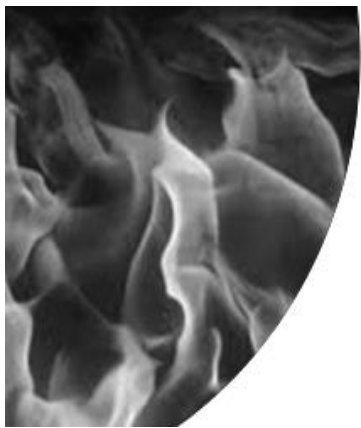
Speed Dating:

- In 5 minutes or less, share what you learned about middle school education with your partner.
- Switch roles.
- Record what you learn from each partner on your Speed Dating worksheet.




Core Belief:

- Considering all that you have learned this evening about middle school education, what is your core belief about the meaningful work you do?
- Think about how this core belief might guide your identification of a problem and creation of an action plan.



Closure:

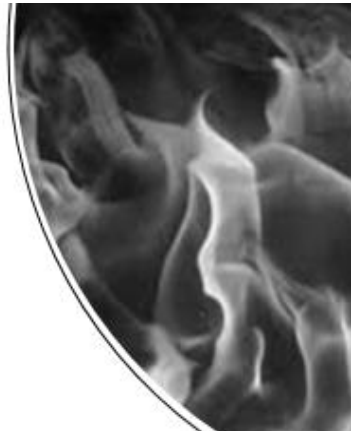
- Evaluation
- Questions
- Next Steps



Module 4:
Identifying a
Meaningful
Problem

Enduring Understanding:

- When teachers have opportunities for self-guided learning, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.



Goal:

- Teachers will identify a problem related to their work as a teacher (classroom, school, district, or profession).



Problem Brainstorming:

Consider the following roles:

- Classroom teacher
- School community member
- District member
- Member of the teaching profession



Choose the Problem

- What is my problem?
- What category of problem is this? Classroom, School, District, Profession
- How is my core belief about teaching middle level students?
- What is my hope for the future?
- What is my action plan?
- What are potential barriers?



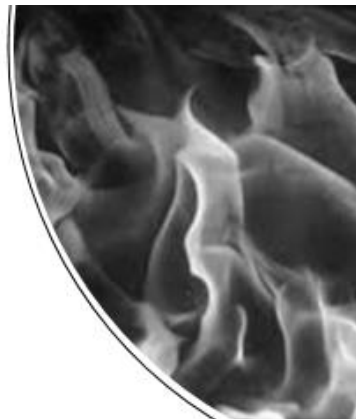
Why We Should Weep ~ Discussion

- Read the assigned text.
- Discuss with a partner:
 - How does this relate to my core belief?
 - How does this relate to my identified problem?
 - Why are middle school teachers important?



Closure:

- . Final Showcase
- . Instructions
- . Evaluation
- . Questions
- . Next Steps



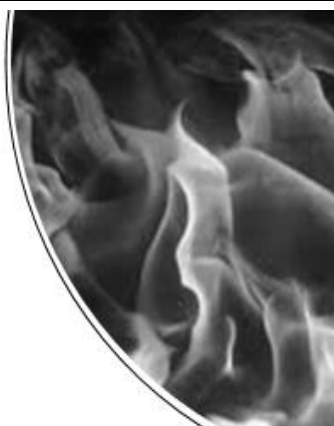
The slide features a dark grey background on the right and a white background on the left, separated by a curved white line. The word "ignite" is written in a stylized font with a flame above the 'i' on the white background. On the dark grey background, the text "Module 5: Designing an Action Plan" is displayed in a white serif font.

ignite

Module 5:
**Designing an
Action Plan**

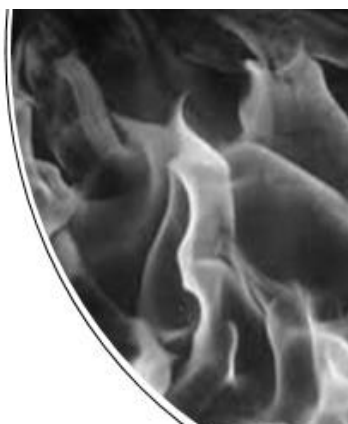
Enduring Understanding:

- When teachers have opportunities for self-guided learning, leadership, and collaboration, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.



Goals

- Teachers will create an action plan to solve their identified problem.
- Teachers will work collaboratively to design a Showcase to share their story, core belief, problem, and solution to other middle school teachers and administrators.



Motivational Experience

- Watch the Teaching Channel video highlighting a science teacher.
- How does this teacher's mindset relate to yours? How does this teacher's approach relate to the Ignite program?



Solution-Oriented Optimism

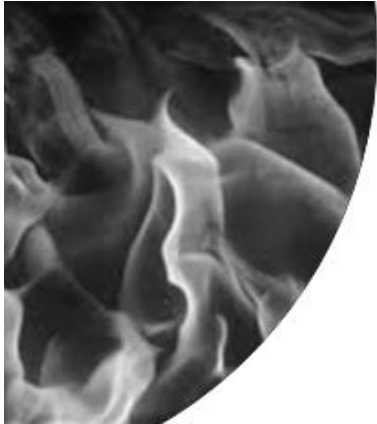
- Read a selection in *Smarter Teacher Leadership: Neuroscience and the Power of Purposeful Collaboration*.
- What does research on neuroscience teach us about solution-oriented optimism?



Action Planning

Strategies	Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicators of Success





The Art of Storytelling:

- Your teaching story
- A core belief about middle school students and/or education
- A meaningful problem
- An action plan



Partner-Alike Groups:


Discuss: What *ignites* your interest when listening to a riveting storyteller?

Share Showcase ideas.

Give praise and ask questions of your group members.

Closure:

- Evaluation
- Questions
- Next Steps





 A black and white microscopic image showing the intricate, cellular-like structure of a flame, with various ridges and valleys.

Welcome!

- The Metaphor of the Flame
- The Research Project
- Enduring Understandings

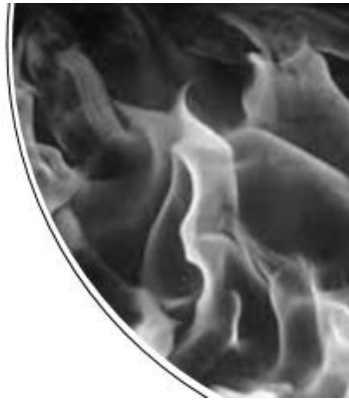
Enduring Understanding:

- When teachers have support from administrators and colleagues, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.


 A black and white microscopic image showing the intricate, cellular-like structure of a flame, with various ridges and valleys.

Enduring Understanding:

- When teachers have PD that has meaningful content, honors their experience, and is collaborative, they are more likely to be satisfied and remain teaching.



Logistics

- Room Numbers
- Schedule
- Facilitator Guidelines
- Participation Log
- Evaluation



Closing

- The task of leading begins from within. It begins in a dream, a sense of what's possible, a commitment to a cause, a yearning to solve a problem, or a restless need to express one's creativity in service to the world.



Module 1: My Teacher Story (Worksheet 1)

Why do I teach? (Consider why you became a teacher.)	What is most satisfying about the work I do as a teacher?
What is most meaningful about the work I do? An example is...	I remain teaching because...

Module 1: Colleague Stories Notetaking (Worksheet 2)

Name of Colleague	List of Ideas that Resonate with You	Questions

Module 1: Praise Notes (Worksheet 3)

ignite	ignite
ignite	ignite
ignite	ignite
ignite	ignite
ignite	ignite

Module 1: Inspirational Quotes and Take-Aways (Worksheet 4)

1) The task of leading begins from within. It begins in a dream, a sense of what's possible, a commitment to a cause, a yearning to solve a problem, or a restless need to express one's creativity in service to the world.

2) The journey of leadership is marked by defining moments and crucible experiences. These events shape one's personal and professional trajectory. They are episodes that challenge us to find out who we are and what we stand for in our beliefs and values.

3) Great leaders are not defined by technique or process but by a way of being in and with the world animated by the crucial qualities of heart, passion, and connectedness. Their leadership hinges on their capacity to maintain and continuously renew their connections to self and others, even while "leaning against the wind."

Which quote resonates with you?

List three take aways from Module 1:

1.

2.

3.

Quotes are from the book, *Leading from Within: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Lead*, by Sam M. Intrator and Megan Scribner

Module 2: Teacher Leadership Jigsaw (Worksheet 1)

<p>Group 1: Read Chapter 1, pages 1–4, the “Introduction.” Think about the quote “Many (teachers) are drawn by a deeply human desire to serve their communities, to engage in work that is meaningful, to “make a difference.” How does this statement resonate with you?</p>	<p>Group 2: Read Chapter 1, pages 8–9, the “Purpose of the Book.” How does this section help further define your ideas about “teacher-leadership?”</p>
<p>Group 3: Read Chapter 2, pages 49–57, beginning with “Teaching as a Vocation.” What images come to mind from your own schooling, the media, your family history, and or your childhood community? How did these images shape your idea about what it means to be a teacher?</p>	<p>Group 4: Read Chapter 2, pages 62–68, beginning with “Teaching as a Profession.” What are your thoughts about sociologists believing that teaching is a “semi-profession?” What are your thoughts about ethical decision-making and our ability as a profession to advocate for what is “right?” How might this passion come through in your story?</p>

Module 3: KWLQ (Worksheet 1)

What do you Know?	What do you Want to know?	What did you Learn?	What further Questions do you have?

Module 3: Speed Dating (Worksheet 2)

Partner 1:	Partner 2:	Partner 3:	Partner 4:
Partner 5:	Partner 6:	Partner 7:	Partner 8:

Module 4: My Problem (Worksheet 1)

Problem	Hope for the Future
Action Steps	

Core Belief:

Module 5: Action Planning Tool (Worksheet 1)

Strategies to Solve the Problem	Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicators of Success

Module 5: Interview (Worksheet 2)

Name of Interviewee:

School of Interviewee:

Role of Interviewee:

Category of Problem:

- Classroom-based
- School-based
- District-based
- Profession-based

Purpose of Interview (what do you hope to gain and how does it connect to your envisioned solution):

Types of Solutions You Might Gain:

- Classroom-based: pedagogy, curriculum, management, inspiration, intervention, enrichment, assessment
- School-based: professional development, intervention, motivation/morale, communication, collaboration (Department, School Improvement Team, Instructional Leadership Team, PBIS)
- District-based: curriculum, assessment, advocacy, association, morale
- Profession-based: messaging, branding, advocacy, recruitment, retention, roles and responsibilities

Questions:

- What is your role? What is the context for the work that you do?
- What are some challenges you have faced?
- What are some successful ways that you have tackled these challenges? Please provide as many examples as possible!
- What were the challenges and barriers that you faced as you implemented solutions?
- How would you advise me to proceed forward as I envision my hope for the future?
- Who else should I talk to gain insights into my vision for the future?
- What book recommendations do you have to help guide my vision for the future?

Modules 1–5 – Summative Evaluation for Teachers

Thank you for your participation in this module. To assist the facilitator in creating the best experience possible, please complete the following evaluation.

For the following questions, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement:

Strongly Agree -5 Agree - 4 Neutral - 3 Disagree - 2 Strongly Disagree - 1

	5	4	3	2	1
My time was well spent. (Guskey Level 1)					
My new knowledge applies to my teaching context. (Guskey Level 2)					
My new knowledge, skills, or beliefs will make a positive impact on my school. (Guskey Level 3)					

Please provide additional feedback for our future work by answering the following questions:

How does your new knowledge apply to your teaching context?

How will your new knowledge, skills, or beliefs make a positive impact on your school?

Showcase Day: Facilitator Guidelines (Worksheet 1)

Facilitators during the Showcase Day will listen, validate, and notice trends. The questions below are simply a guide to prompt discussion.

There will be one facilitator for each group and discussions will be approximately 25 minutes. Allow each teacher guest to talk for approximately 3 minutes and allot time to process trends or implications if possible.

Telling Our Stories

Discussion Prompts:

- What resonated with you about the Showcases you heard?
- What connected with your own story about being a teacher?
- Why did you decide to become a teacher?
- Who was your favorite teacher?
- What do you enjoy most about teaching?
- Why do you stay a teacher?

Problems

Discussion Prompts:

- What resonated with you about the problems shared during the Showcases?
- What is a particular problem that worries you related to your work as a teacher?
- Why is the problem important to you and to other teachers?
- What is a core belief that is associated with this problem?

Hope for the Future

Discussion Prompts:

- What solutions from the Showcases resonated with your situation?
- What is a solution you can envision related to a problem you have identified?
- What exact action steps can you take to make this solution a reality?
- What resources might you need?
- Who could you talk to about your action steps and resources?

Showcase Day: Participant Reflection Log (Worksheet 2)

Showcase Collection #1 - Notes	Showcase Collection #1 - Reflection
What details are resonating with you?	What is your story? Why did you decide to be a teacher? Why do you remain a teacher?
Showcase Collection #2 - Notes	Showcase Collection #2 - Reflection
What details are resonating with you?	What is a problem for you related to your professional practice? What is a core belief that connects to this problem?
Showcase Collections #3 and 4 - Notes	Showcase Collections #3 and 4 - Reflection
What details are resonating with you?	What is your hope for the future? What is a solution you can envision related to a problem you have identified? What action steps can you take to make this solution a reality?
Showcase Collection #5 - Notes	Showcase Collection #5 - Reflection
What details are resonating with you?	What final thoughts do you have? What did you enjoy most about today's experience? What further questions do you have? Use these thoughts to complete your final evaluation.

Showcase Day - Summative and Formative Evaluation for Teachers (Worksheet 3)

Thank you for your participation in the Ignite experience! This evaluation is intended for the teachers who participated in Modules 1–5 and presented their Showcases to teachers and administrators on Showcase Day.

For the following questions, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement:

Strongly Agree -5 Agree -4 Neutral -3 Disagree - 2 Strongly Disagree - 1

	5	4	3	2	1
Sharing my teaching story helped me feel understood as a professional.					
Creating a shared vision ensures focus on actions that matter most in making a difference in students' lives.					
Having an opportunity to lead through my Showcase was a meaningful professional experience for me.					
I learned meaningful content through the Ignite Program.					
I had an opportunity for autonomous decision-making through Ignite.					
I collaborated in meaningful ways with colleagues through the Modules.					

Please provide additional feedback for our future work by answering the following questions:

What did you enjoy most about this experience?

What suggestions do you have?

What kinds of professional learning opportunities would you like to see in the future?

Other thoughts?

**Impact of Ignite
Summative Evaluation for Principals**

This evaluation should be distributed at the end of each school year to principals. For the following questions, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement:

Strongly Agree - 5 Agree - 4 Neutral - 3 Disagree -2 Strongly Disagree - 1

	5	4	3	2	1
I was able to provide the kinds of support that experienced, quality, highly effective teachers need by facilitating the Ignite Program.					
I was able to provide the kinds of professional development that experienced, quality, highly effective teachers need by facilitating the Ignite Program.					
Participating in Ignite increases the job satisfaction of the experienced, quality, highly effective teachers in my school.					
Participating in Ignite contributes to the retention of the experienced, quality, highly effective teachers in my school.					
Participating in Ignite positively contributes to the professional practice of the experienced, quality, highly effective teachers in my school. (Guskey Level 4).					
By participating in Ignite, experienced, quality, highly effective teachers have increased their ability to positively affect students (Guskey Level 5)					
Participating in Ignite helps experienced, quality, highly effective teachers in their efforts to do meaningful work.					

What is the teacher retention data for experienced, quality, highly effective teachers?

What kinds of student data provide evidence that Ignite positively affects them? (attendance records, achievement data, anecdotal data, discipline data, referrals to administration or guidance).

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What grade level do you teach?

- a. 6
- b. 7
- c. 8
- d. All of the above
- e. Another combination of grades _____

2. Are you teaching in your area of certification?

- a. Yes
- b. No

What is your area of certification? _____.

3. How many years have you been teaching?

- a. 6–10
- b. 11–20
- c. 21+

4. How many years have you been at your current school?

- a. 6–10
- b. 11–20
- c. 21+

Open-ended questions:

1. What's the most satisfying part of the work you do as a middle school teacher?
2. Would you describe your work as a middle school teacher as meaningful?
Explain.
3. What's the most dissatisfying part of the work you do as a middle school teacher?
4. What kinds of support do you need to sustain you as a teacher?
5. Give one example of a time that you felt supported in your work as a middle school teacher. Who provided the support? When did it happen? Where? What were the circumstances? Why did you feel supported in this instance?
6. What kinds of professional development are most useful to you as a teacher?
7. Give one example of a time that you participated in professional development that supported your work as a middle school teacher? Who provided the professional development? When did it happen? Where? What was the content? Why was this professional development useful to you?
8. Do you intend to remain a teacher for the remainder of your career? Why or why not?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

- I. Opening
 - A. Positive Commentary on Elements of School Culture
 - B. Researcher Introduction
 - C. Project Study Discussion
 - a. Background information
 - b. Data collection procedures
 - c. Voluntary nature of the study
 - d. Risks and benefits
 - e. Confidentiality and security of data
 - f. Informed consent
- II. The Interview
 - A. Main questions
 - B. Probing questions
 - C. Follow-up questions
- III. Closing
 - A. Share member-checking procedure
 - B. Thank teacher for participating

Appendix D: Probing Questions and Statements

A Resource Tool Based on the Work of Rubin and Rubin (2012)

Attention Probes:	“Can I quote you on that?”
Steering Probes:	“Okay, could you go back to the point where...?”
Confirmation Probes:	“So, what you are saying is...”
Clarification Probes:	“Could you repeat that for me?”
Sequence Probes:	“Can you tell me what happened step-by-step?”
	“What happened before...?”
	“What happened after...?”
Continuation Probes:	“So...”
	“And...”
	“Then what...”
	“So, what was your reaction?”
Elaboration Probes:	“Can you tell me more about that...?”
Evidence Probes:	“Can you give me an example?”
	“What happened that made you think that...?”
Slant Probes	“What do you think about...?”
	“What’s your opinion on...?”
	“What’s your beliefs about...?”

Appendix E: Follow-Up Questions:

A Resource Tool Based on the Work of Rubin and Rubin (2012)

Asking How:	“Can you walk me through what happened? I need some more background.”
Asking for Comparisons:	“How is _____ similar to...?” “How is _____ different from...?”
Echo Wording:	Repeat the word, followed by, “Such as?”
What is the Alternative:	“Well then, how did it happen?” “Well then, who did...?”
Ask About Components:	“Which (components, parts, elements, characteristics, factors) contributed to...?”
Exceptions:	“What is the exception?”
Devil’s Advocate:	“Allow me to play devil’s advocate here...”
Posing Your Puzzle:	“I’m a little confused. How does that work?” “That seems contradictory. Help me understand.”
Generalizing:	“Is that common?” “Is that the way it usually happens?”
Using Hypotheticals:	“If you were to be in this situation again, what might you do the same or differently?”
What Does it Mean?	“What does _____ mean?”

Appendix F: Participant Validation Form

A Resource Tool Based on the Work of Ravitch and Carl (2016)

Thank you once again for participating in the interview which is a part of my study through Walden University. As a reminder, the purpose for the study is to find out what school and district leaders can do to retain experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers.

Attached you will find my transcript which reflects your responses to the interview questions. As you read through the transcript, consider the following questions:

1. What are your thoughts about your responses in the transcript?
2. Is there anything problematic in the transcript?
3. Do you have any concerns? How can I address those concerns?
4. Is there anything that was misunderstood? Explain, please.
5. Did I miss anything? Explain, please.
6. Do you have any further suggestions to improve the accuracy of these transcripts?

Thank you so much for your time and attention in reviewing this transcript and sending it back to me through the courier, attention to Rebecca Gault, BAHS.

Appendix G: Email to Principals of Teacher Study Participants

Hello,

My name is Rebecca Gault, and I am currently enrolled in Walden University's EdD program for Educational Administration and Leadership. I am conducting a research study about how to retain experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers. My research has been approved by Phil Snyder from the Office of Accountability, and the approval letter is attached to this email.

I am emailing you to ask for the name of one teacher from your school who fits the following criteria: quality, highly effective, and experienced. Please use the following definitions to identify the teacher:

Quality: teaching in the area of his/her certification.

Highly Effective: consistently performs in the highly effective category of all four domains of the Danielson Framework.

Experienced: completed five or more years of teaching in a middle school.

All information gained from this research will be extremely confidential.

Teachers' names, school names, and our district will not be identified anywhere in my research. Once identified by you, the teacher will be contacted via email and have the opportunity to accept or decline the invitation to participate in the study. To conduct the interview, I will visit the school, at a mutually agreed upon time with the teacher to conduct an interview which will take no more than 45-minutes. This interview will be conducted at the end of the school day after school hours. The results of the data will be

used to create professional development modules that will support our middle school teachers in their desire to remain teaching in the classroom.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Rebecca Gault

Edd Candidate

Walden University

Appendix H: Email Invitation for Participants

Hello,

My name is Rebecca Gault, and I am currently enrolled in Walden University's EdD program for Educational Administration and Leadership. I am conducting a research study about how to retain experienced, quality, highly effective middle school teachers. I am emailing to ask if you would be willing to participate in the study. Participation is completely voluntary, and your answers will be kept confidential.

If you agree to participate, I will need 45 minutes of your time to participate in an interview. I am grateful for your consideration and believe that your ideas will greatly assist me in understanding how to better retain high quality teachers. Your feedback will help me create support and professional development that may assist with teacher retention.

Please respond to this email accepting or declining the invitation. If you accept, let me know which day of the week is best for you for the interview: Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. I will come to your school at dismissal to conduct the 45-minute interview.

I want to emphasize that your participation is strictly confidential. You may withdraw from the study at any time. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Rebecca Gault

EdD Candidate

Walden University