Action Research Project Proposal

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Problem Statement

There is a problem in the field of education related to teacher attrition rates. Despite the national teacher shortage, teacher attrition accounts for close to 90% of the annual teacher demand (Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Since 1992, the teacher turnover rate has risen from 5.1% to 8% (Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). The problem has negatively impacted teacher quality and student achievement alike, particularly in high-poverty schools. Related research in the field of education shows that these high turnover rates take a toll on students in these communities. Replacing a high-performing teacher in a high-poverty school is more difficult and is estimated to result in a decrease of 80% of a standard deviation of teacher quality in math and 40% of a standard deviation in teacher quality in reading (Adnot et. al, 2016). The response to teacher turnover often includes the hiring of inexperienced teachers or the increase of class sizes, which can negatively impact student achievement (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver, 2019). Both teacher inexperience and rates of turnover negatively impact student learning (Kini & Podolsky, 2016), which means that students in schools with high turnover rates and less experienced teachers are at a bigger disadvantage.

If the problem related to teacher turnover is not addressed, it may amplify inequities present in our education system which are already pronounced. There have been a multitude of other studies that have looked at this issue. Having a better understanding as to why teachers are leaving can help address the teacher shortage, and other programs have been implemented in certain parts of the country to address the need for more high quality educators. For example, in California, certain districts are responding to teacher shortage by increasing compensation for teachers and hiring more support staff (Carver-Thomas et. al, 2022).

This project will research the following question:

1. How is teacher training connected to teacher turnover?
2. How does the rate of teacher turnover vary from region to region?
3. Why is teacher turnover occurring, and what can be done about teacher turnover?

Introduction

Teacher turnover rates have been steadily increasing over the years, evidenced by the fact that the rate of teacher turnover in the United States has risen from 5.1% to 8% since 1992 (Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). This problem has been a topic of discussion with increasing frequency since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as working conditions have changed for teachers considerably. Investigating the problem of teacher turnover is important, as there is a connection between high turnover rates and student achievement, indicating that schools with higher turnover rates yield lower performance scores (Kini & Padolsky, 2016; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver, 2019; Etim, Etim, & Blizzard, 2020). It is within the best interest of the educational community to learn more about the problem of teacher attrition due to the implications it has in regards to student performance and the success of schools in general.

The existing literature indicates that the reasons behind why teachers leave the profession are far ranging and vary from region to region. There is also research into the topic of teacher turnover and how that might impact student performance. In order to fully understand how teacher turnover and student outcomes vary from region to region and how that can impact student performance, a literature review will be conducted.

First, the review will take a close look at how teacher preparation is related to teacher turnover. Next, the review will take a close look at how teacher turnover rates vary between

urban, rural, and suburban educational settings. Finally, the review will look at the reasons behind teacher turnover, to shed light on why teachers leave the profession so the problem can be addressed. This literature should serve as more evidence contributing to the fact that teacher turnover is a problem that should be investigated further.

The Connection Between Teacher Preparation and Teacher Turnover

In order to address the problem of teacher turnover, it is important to recognize that turnover rates vary in different districts due to a variety of factors. One of those factors is teacher preparation. There is data that points to a connection between the preparation level/ type of preparation that teachers receive prior to entering the profession and teacher turnover rates. The type of certification program that pre-service teachers undergo also influences turnover rates to a degree (Mitani, Fuller, & Hollingworth, 2022). A recent study looked at the difference in turnover rates between pre-service education students who completed a non-traditional certification program (non-TCP) and those who completed a traditional certification program (TCP). The findings of this study point to a clear connection between pre-service preparation and teacher turnover. The non-TCP group showed much higher turnover rates in the first few years of teaching in comparison to those who entered the workforce following a TCP (Mitani, Fuller, & Hollingworth, 2022). That said, after four years, turnover rates started to equalize between the TCP and Non-TCP group (Mitani, Fuller, & Hollingworth, 2022). This raises important questions about why this disparity exists. One such question is why is this disparity so high within the first few years of teaching? One hypothesis is that the quality of pre-service field experience could vary among pre-service educators that participate in a non-traditional program (Mitani, Fuller, & Hollingworth, 2022). Non-TCP pre-service educators are sometimes matched with unprepared teacher mentors or assigned to teach a subject in which they are not certified

because it is difficult for non-traditional certifications programs to find partnerships with local school districts (Johnson et al., 2005). When you combine this with the fact that teachers who complete non-TCPs are often placed in high-need schools which present many difficulties to beginning teachers, it becomes clear why so many early career teachers choose to leave those settings. When those high-need schools do not have programs to further prepare teachers who are in the workforce already, the attrition rates increase amongst the teachers who serve in those communities.

Teacher preparation, student achievement, and teacher attrition are all intertwined as well. According to the current body of literature that exists on the topic, high performing teachers are more commonly found in the population of teachers that have received higher quality preparation (Adnot et. al, 2016). Teachers with less preparation yield lower student achievement performance scores (Adnot et. al, 2016). In conjunction with this, higher levels of achievement heterogeneity and lower performance scores on average may cause teachers to perceive their working conditions as more problematic, which may lead them to leave the profession at a higher rate (Toropova, Myrberg, & Johansson, 2019). In this way, teacher preparation, student performance, and teacher turnover are intertwined.

Additional findings convey the connection between teacher preparation and teacher turnover. One such way that teacher preparation programs can separate themselves is whether or not they offer a first-year teacher “mentoring” program. Schools often employ these programs to first-year teachers by pairing them with a fellow educator in their building or district to help them participate in the reflective process of improving as an educator through direct analysis of one’s own teaching practice. One such study took a close look at teacher mobility and attrition, and found a significant link between teacher mentoring programs and teacher attrition rates. In a

5 year longitudinal study that looked at teacher attrition and mobility from 2007 - 2012, it was found that in each follow-up year, the percentage of beginning teachers who were currently teaching was larger among those who were assigned a first-year mentor than among those not assigned a first year mentor (Gray, Tate, & O'Rear, 2015). The findings showed a statistically significant difference in the percentage of teachers who remained in the profession and at the school they started at. Following a 5 year longitudinal study, the percentage of teachers without a first-year mentor who remained at their starting school was much lower than those who had a first-year mentor. In 2012, at the conclusion of the study, 86% of teachers in the study who had been assigned a first-year mentor in 2007-2008 remained in the profession and at the school they started at, while only 71% of the teachers in the study who had not been given a mentor remained in the profession at the school they started in. It has been shown that teachers who have received instruction on pedagogy, knowledge about working with all kinds of students, and content knowledge in the subject area to be taught prior to teaching show improved student outcomes (Etim, Etim, & Blizard, 2020). Teacher mentoring programs help to expand on that pedagogical knowledge and continue the learning process required of teachers.

Specific mentoring and collaboration practices contributed to higher levels of new teacher retention. These practices include providing teachers with mentors from the same subject field and collective planning and collaboration (Maready, Qiang, & Bunch, 2021). Teachers who received this type of support were less likely to move schools or leave the teaching profession after the first year of teaching (Maready, Qiang, & Bunch, 2021). While the data surrounding the connection between mentoring programs and teacher retention is promising, there is not much literature that is focused on identifying specific mentoring practices that are linked to decreasing

teacher turnover, but this study provides context about which practices could yield the lowest turnover.

There is promising evidence that investing wisely in teacher preparation can pay off in developing teachers who are more likely to remain in the profession (Heller, 2004). Attrition rates were significantly lower for professional development school graduates with higher levels of preparation when compared to graduates of traditional programs (Heller, 2004). One specific case that indicates the strong connection between higher levels of preparation and teacher attrition is the case of Lafourche Parish in Louisiana. In 1996, Lafourche Parish had a 51 percent annual teacher attrition rate, but the rate decreased to 15 percent upon implementation of a new teacher induction program (Heller, 2004).

Perceived feelings of inadequacy can impact not only job performance for first year teachers, but teacher turnover rates as well. In a 2015 study that looked at the associations between turnover intentions and perceived feelings of adequacy in 284 early-career teachers, there was a clear connection made between teacher preparation, self-efficacy, and turnover intentions. It was found that when teachers feel less professional agency and do not have a perceived feeling of adequacy or self-efficacy in their ability to handle challenging problems within the classroom, it not only affects their interactions with students and student performance, but it increases turnover rates as well (Heikonen et. al, 2015). The teachers who indicated turnover intentions stated that they felt as though their feelings of insufficient abilities to solve pedagogically and socially challenging student situations had a crucial effect on their capacity for transformation of instruction (Heikonen et. al, 2015). This highlights the need for adequate teacher preparation prior to entering the workforce.

Teacher preparation can also influence commitment to the job. Involvement in a professional organization is something that can make a difference in regards to teacher retention. In a study that investigated the impact of participation in professional networking opportunities on teacher retention, it was found that there were substantial differences in the planned and actual retention and attrition rates of new teachers who attended a professional convention during preparation (Dawson & Laytham, 2020). Educator preparation that includes attendance at a professional convention could help reduce teacher attrition by increasing participation or commitment to the profession (Dawson & Laytham, 2020).

The Connection Between Teaching Setting and Teacher Turnover

Upon further research into the topic of teacher retention, it is clear that there are disparate rates of teacher turnover depending on where teachers teach. To illustrate this disparity, it is important to look at rates of attrition in urban districts. Previous findings indicate there are higher rates of teacher turnover in urban educational settings. Urban educational settings are uniquely impacted when it comes to teacher turnover, and urban Title I schools see significant teacher turnover (Rinke, 2019). Urban Title I schools are urban schools where 40% or more of the student body come from low income families (US Department of Education, 2018). Due to the high need for educators in these schools, urban Title I schools are often forced to hire unqualified or uncertified teachers, which in the long term leads to issues with teacher retention (Rinke, 2019). These schools have 50% higher teacher turnover rates than the national average (Moore et. al, 2018). While the national teacher attrition rate sits at 8%, in Texas, teachers leave the classroom annually at 16.6%, and this rate is even higher in urban districts (Moore et. al, 2018). It has been found that teachers who work in urban schools with high rates of poverty experience higher rates of attrition than their colleagues in urban areas with low rates of poverty (Moore et.

al, 2018). In a study that included a sample of more than 25,000 teachers in more than 1,140 schools in the United States, the results showed that urban schools suffered from higher rates of teacher turnover than those in rural and suburban areas (Moore et. al, 2018). When this disparity was looked at closer, it was found that the organizational factors of the urban schools in the study played a large role in whether teachers chose to leave the profession or move to a different school or district (Moore et. al, 2018).

It is also important to look at teacher turnover within rural educational contexts. One such study took a look at Georgia's rural schools, which tend to have slightly lower teacher turnover rates than suburban schools (15% vs. 17%), and urban schools (22%) (Williams, Swain, & Graham, 2021). The patterns of teacher turnover are consistently lower in rural contexts for all racial-ethnic backgrounds, but it has been found that teacher turnover rates vary within those districts depending on teacher race, and findings indicate that there were more dramatic increases in Black teachers' mobility patterns in rural settings. The turnover rates for Black teachers in rural districts started below 15% in 2011 and increased to 23% in 2019, whereas the turnover rate of White teachers in rural schools rose from 11% to just over 15% in the same period of time (Williams, Swain, & Graham, 2021). While this does not show overall increased turnover rates in rural districts, it shows that even when schools yield lower turnover rates, school demographics may play a part in teacher turnover.

Rural educational settings are not monolithic in their turnover rates, however. It depends where those schools are, and what the demographics, preparation level, and specialization of those teachers are. In a study that analyzed the teaching labor market in different rural educational contexts, the findings indicated two things: that the rates of Black teacher turnover are higher than White teacher turnover in rural educational settings, and that rural teachers in

low-income schools and in majority-minority schools are more likely to turn over than their counterparts in high-income and majority-White schools (Nguyen, 2020). Data also indicated that novice teachers and special education teachers are more likely to turn over, especially in rural schools in states with lower population numbers (Nguyen, 2020.

The Reasons for Teacher Turnover

In order to address teacher turnover, attention needs to be given to the reasons why teachers decide to leave the profession in the first place. The reasons for teacher turnover are varied, complex, and often multi-faceted and do not center around just one issue (Räsänen et. al, 2020). One such reason is related to difficulties with the implementation of curriculum, which uniquely affects urban schools with a high teacher turnover rate. Upon replacing a teacher that has left, more time is spent acclimating a new teacher to their new environment (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020). The sheer time this takes gets in the way of collaboration and planning the implementation of curriculum, which impacts new teachers uniquely. New teachers are unfamiliar with curriculum and must usually go through a few years of implementing the curriculum before truly feeling comfortable. Replacing high performing teachers is more difficult in high poverty schools, which leads to the hiring of inexperienced teachers more frequently (Adnot et. al, 2016). This cycle perpetuates the problem of teacher turnover.

In a case study that focused on one urban elementary school that polled teachers with intentions to leave teaching about their reasons for leaving, the factors that most contributed to teacher turnover are feelings of inadequate support from the community and administrators, unclear approaches to student discipline, and the overall culture of the school (Kamrath & Bradford, 2020).

The most frequently cited reasons for teachers stem from workplace dissatisfaction, which was cited as a reason for leaving for 55% of teachers leaving the profession in 2018 (Moore et. al, 2018). Workplace conditions that lead to workplace dissatisfaction are numerous and diverse in nature, but researchers were able to link teacher turnover rates related workplace dissatisfaction to dissatisfaction with instructional leadership, a negative school climate, insufficient common planning time and collaboration, a perceived lack of agency and teacher input, limited or dissatisfactory professional development resources, outdated facilities, and lack of parental support and involvement (Moore et. al, 2018).

Conclusion

The dearth of research that delves into the topic of teacher attrition and turnover rates points to a need to address it in order to positively influence student outcomes. That said, the specific literature discussed in this literature review provides some more direct suggestions for how to address teacher turnover. Firstly, more resources should be allocated towards preparing pre-service and early career teachers for teaching, as type, length, and quality of teacher preparation influences teacher turnover rates significantly. Also, in lower-income urban and rural school districts, more must be done to retain teachers of color, as the disparities in teacher turnover between Black and White teachers in particular show that even when turnover rates are lower than the national average, Black teachers are leaving at higher rates overall. In addition, resources must be allocated to low-income urban districts to help them find and hire effective teachers. Finally, school administrators need to find ways to give teachers more voice and agency in their schools, considering that one of the top reasons for teacher turnover was a perceived lack of agency and teacher input in decisions made at the school level. With these targeted strategies

for addressing teacher turnover, real progress can be made to put a dent in the problem that is impacting so many.

Research Question

In this action research proposal, a detailed plan will be outlined to answer the following question in regard to teacher turnover: What can be done to decrease the rates of teacher attrition in public schools?

Setting

The research will be conducted in 9 different school districts in Connecticut. Three districts are specified as rural, three are specified as suburban, and three are specified as urban. In most cases, one elementary, one middle, and one high school from each district will be selected, though in some cases this may vary.

Rural Districts

The three rural districts selected for this study are Bethany, Durham, and North Stonington. All towns with a population census of 10,000 or less and a population density of 500 or less people per square mile are designated as rural (Connecticut State Office of Rural Health, n.d.). These districts meet the criteria of what would be classified as rural districts based on these metrics.

Rural District 1: Bethany

Bethany is located in New Haven County, Connecticut. The community has a population of 5,513 (NCES, 2022). The median household income in Bethany is $129,133, and the racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown of the student population is as follows: 81% White, 2% Black, 7% Hispanic/ Latino, 7% Asian/ Pacific Islander, and 3% two or more races (NCES, 2022).

The elementary school in Bethany that will be included in the study is Bethany Community school, which has approximately 400 students, serving grades pre-K-6. The middle school in Bethany that will be included in the research is Amity Regional Middle School, which serves approximately 350 students in grade 7 and 8. The high school that will be included in this study is Amity Regional High School, which serves approximately 1,400 students in grades 9-12, but services multiple communities, including Bethany and surrounding districts.

Rural District 2: Durham

Durham is located in Middlesex County, Connecticut. The community has a population of 7,231. The Median Household income in Durham is $130,635 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022) and the racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown of the student population is as follows: 96% White, 1% Hispanic/ Latino, 2% Asian, and 1% two or more races (NCES, 2022).

The elementary school that will be included in the study is Frederick Brewster school, which has approximately 220 students in grades pre-k-2. The middle school that will be included in the study is Frank Ward Strong School, which has approximately 350 students in grades 6-8. The high school included in this study is Coginchaug Regional High School, which has approximately 450 students in grades 9-12.

Rural District 2: North Stonington

North Stonington is located in New London County, Connecticut. The community has a population of 5,137 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). The median household income in North Stonington is $75,833 (NCES, 2022). The racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown of the school community is as follows: 86% White, 2% Black, 3% Hispanic/ Latino, 2% Asian/ Pacific Islander, 1% Indian/ Alaskan Native, and 6% two or more races (NCES, 2022).

There are only two public schools in North Stonington, one being North Stonington Elementary School and the other being Wheeler High School. North Stonington Elementary School has approximately 390 students and serves students in grades pre-k-6. Wheeler High School has approximately 320 students and serves students in grades 6-12.

Urban Districts

The three urban districts that have been selected are New Haven, Bridgeport, and Waterbury. The Bureau of the Census defines urban as comprising all territory, population, and housing units located in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 or more inhabitants outside of urban areas US (Census Bureau, 2022). These three districts meet the criteria of what would be classified as an urban district.

Urban District 1: New Haven

New Haven is located in New Haven County, Connecticut. The community has a population of 130,331 people, and the median household income is $42,222 (NCES, 2022). The racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown of the school community is as follows: 30% White, 31% Black, 31% Hispanic/ Latino, 5% Asian, and 3% two or more races (NCES, 2022).

The elementary school that will be included in this study is Barack H. Obama Magnet University School. The school has 284 students in grades pre-K-4. The middle school that will be included in this study is Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School. The school has approximately 410 students, in grades 5-8. The high school that will be included in this study is Inter-District Magnet School, which has approximately 570 students in grades 9-12.

Urban District 2: Bridgeport

Bridgeport is located in Fairfield county, Connecticut. The community has a population of 148,333 people and the median household income is $47,484 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

The racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown of the school community is as follows: 20% White, 32% Black, 41% Hispanic/ Latino, 3% Asian, 3% two or more races, and 1% some other race alone (NCES, 2022).

The elementary school that will be included in this study is Cesar Batalla School, which has a population of approximately 1,050 students in grades pre-k-8. One other school will be included from this district, and that is Central High School, which has approximately 1,550 students in grades 9-12.

Urban District 3: Waterbury

Waterbury is located in New Haven County, Connecticut. The community has a population of 114,811 and the median household income is $46,329 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). The racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown of the school community is as follows: 38% White, 19% Black, 37% Hispanic/ Latino, 2% Asian and 3% two or more races (NCES, 2022).

The elementary school that will be included in this study is F.J. Kingsbury School, which has a population of approximately 450 students in grades pre-k-5. The middle school that will be included in this study is North End Middle School, which has approximately 900 students in grades 6-8. The high school that will be included in this study is Crosby High School, which has a population of 1,217 students in grades 9-12.

Suburban Districts

The three suburban districts selected are Berlin, Cheshire, and Canton. Suburban areas are lower density areas that separate residential and commercial areas from one another. They are either part of a city or urban area, or exist as a separate residential community within commuting distance of a city (Tennessee Department of Health, n.d.). These three districts meet the criteria of what would be classified as a suburban district.

Suburban District 1: Berlin

Berlin is located in Hartford County, Connecticut. The community has a population of 20,113, and a median household income of $102,075. The racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown of the school community is as follows: 89% White, 1% Black, 6% Hispanic/ Latino, 3% Asian, and 1 % two or more races (NCES, 2022).

The elementary school that will be included in this study is Richard D. Hubbard School. Richard D. Hubbard School has approximately 200 students in grades k-5. The middle school that will be included in this study is Catherine M. McGee Middle school, which has a population of approximately 630 students in grades 6-8. The high school that will be included in this study is Berlin High School, which has approximately 900 students in grades 9-12.

Suburban District 2: Cheshire

Cheshire is located in New Haven County, Connecticut. The population of the community is 29,147, and the median household income is $120,546. The racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown is as follows: 83% White, 4% Black, 4% Hispanic/ Latino, 7% Asian, 1% some other race alone, and 2% two or more races (NCES, 2022).

The elementary school that will be included in this study is Highland School, which has approximately 750 students in grades k-6. The middle school that will be included in this study is Dodd Middle School, which has approximately 630 students in grades 7-8. The high school that will be used in this study is Cheshire High School, which has a population of approximately 1,370 students in grades 9-12.

Suburban District 3: Canton

Canton is located in Hartford County, Connecticut. The population of the community is 10,228, and the median household income is $87,567. The racial/ ethnic demographic breakdown

is as follows: 86% White, 3% Black, 5% Hispanic/ Latino, 5% Asian, and 1% two or more races (NCES, 2022).

There are two elementary schools that will be included in this study in Canton, as there is a primary elementary school and intermediate elementary school. The early elementary school that will be included in the study is Cherry Brook Primary School, which has approximately 440 students in grades pre-k-3. The intermediate elementary school that will be included in the study is Canton Intermediate School, which has a population of approximately 341 students in grades 4-6. The middle school that will be included in the study is Canton Middle School, which has approximately 240 students in grades 7-8. The High School that will be included in this study is Canton High School, which has a population of approximately 480 students in grades 9-12.

Participants

The participants in this study will be teachers in each of these schools and administrators. Since teacher turnover profoundly affects administrators, especially principals, in many ways, including the principals in this study will be vital. It will be important to gather information from both veteran teachers, and early career teachers. First year teachers will be included in the study, but not until the second phase of the study which will take place following the first half of the school year. This is because turnover intentions may change between the start of the school year and the mid-point/ end of the school year. Principals will be involved in the data analysis portion of this study.

Methods

The study will include an initial onboarding process, followed by an anonymous survey, and a final report of findings to administrators. Three surveys will be distributed to the teachers who participate in this study, which will be administered at three points during the school year:

The beginning of the year, at the midpoint of the in January, and at the end of the school year. Following the survey, findings will be reported to school administrators along with recommendations. The plan for the study will be outlined in subsequent sections.

Key Action 1: Onboarding Teachers to the study

In order to communicate the purpose of the study to teachers and generate interest in participating, an initial onboarding process will be necessary. The onboarding process will include the creation of a visual presentation, either in the form of a video or slideshow. This slideshow will include information about the timeline of the study, the manner in which the surveys will be distributed, the manner in which results will be communicated, and how the results of the survey will be used. The presentation will be at first presented to the principal at each school, and then to teachers via newsletter or email via the administrator. Following the presentation, the survey will be administered.

Key Activity 2: Survey

The survey will be the next major step in this study. The questions within the study and the manner in which results of the study are communicated will be crucial in maintaining both the ethics and validity of the study.

Three identical but separate surveys will be administered to urban, rural, and suburban schools. This is intended to establish any patterns in the turnover intentions between teachers in urban, rural, and suburban settings. When results come in, it will be possible to notice patterns in turnover intentions because the results will be pre-sorted in the separate surveys.

The first question in the survey will ask “How long have you been teaching?” The options provided as answers for the first question will be < 1 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, 16 to 20 years, and 21 or more years. This will delineate between the experience level of

teachers, and is intended to show patterns in the turnover intentions between newer and more experienced teachers.

The second question in the survey will ask "Have you ever seriously considered leaving the teaching profession?" The options provided will be "Yes, I consider leaving frequently," "Yes, I consider leaving occasionally," "Yes, I have considered leaving, but only once or twice," and "No, I have never considered leaving." These answer frames will help distinguish between teachers who are seriously considering leaving the profession, those who have teased the idea on occasion but turnover is not an imminent concern, and those who have not considered leaving the profession.

The third and fourth questions of the survey would be the final two questions on the survey, and they would be related to the working conditions and how changes to those working conditions would increase the likelihood of teachers remaining in the profession. The question will be framed in the following way: "Which of the following changes in working conditions would increase your likelihood of remaining in the profession?" This answer is more qualitative in nature, so instead of using a numeric "1 to 5" scale, it will use a "Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree" scale.

The final question would be intended to ask about what other changes not mentioned in the above survey would increase the likelihood of teachers remaining in the profession. It would be open ended, and be phrased in the following way: "What other changes not previously mentioned would increase your likelihood of remaining in the profession?"

Key Activity 3: Communication of Findings to Administrators

Lastly, when the survey has been completed and the data collection/ analysis portion of the study is completed, results will be communicated to administrators. The results will be

communicated anonymously, with the hope that special attention will be given to the working conditions that influence teacher turnover.

Timeframe

This study would take place over the course of a calendar school year. The onboarding presentation will be presented in the second week of September to all teachers at all schools. The first survey would be administered the third week of September to all teachers who have been teaching a year or more. The data collection and analysis portion of the first part of the study would take place the week following the administration of the first survey.. The second survey would be administered the second week of January to all teachers in the building, including new teachers. Again, the data collection and analysis portion of the second part of the study would take place in the week following the administration of the second survey. The third and final survey would be administered the first week of June to all teachers in the building. The data collection and analysis portion of the last part of the study would take place the week following the administration of the final survey. Communication of results of the survey to administrators would take place within two weeks following the data collection and analysis portion of the study. A detailed write up of the results of the study will be communicated to principals.

Data Collection

Data will be collected on what working conditions teachers are most dissatisfied with. These working conditions are often referenced as common reasons for why teachers decide to leave the profession. Below is a sample of what the survey would look like.

Which of the following changes in working conditions would increase your likelihood of remaining in the profession.					
Working Condition	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neither Agree nor Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**

More teacher planning/ collaboration time					
More instructional professional development					
More professional development on classroom management					
Mentoring program					
More specific guidelines for grading					
More behavioral support					
More professional development centering on diversity					
Clear guidelines for behavioral issues					
More teacher input in decisions made at the school level					
More instructional support					

Smaller classroom sizes					
Updated facilities					

Data Analysis

In order to conduct a proper analysis of the data, it must be sorted categorically. Upon the completion of each survey, the first step would involve sorting the data into three categories: Rural schools, urban schools, and suburban schools. This is important due to the fact that there is a relationship between teaching setting and turnover rates according to the current literature (Moore et. al, 2018; Williams, Swain, & Graham, 2021).

Once the data has been sorted into those three categories, careful analysis of survey responses will take place, starting by first analyzing patterns in turnover intentions amongst teachers who have been teaching in between <1 to 10 years, followed by analyzing patterns in turnover intentions amongst teachers with more experience., and then moving onto analyzing the turnover intentions amongst teachers . A table for each school will be created that looks like the figure below.

Level of Teacher Experience	**Yes, I consider leaving frequently**	**Yes, I consider leaving occasionally**	**Yes, I have considered leaving, but only once or twice**	**No, I have never considered leaving.**
<1-10 years	n	n	n	n
10 years or more	n	n	n	n

n = number of responses

The next step in the data analysis process would involve looking closely at working conditions for teachers with turnover intentions, and which types of working conditions influence turnover intentions in teachers the most. Tables will be created that show which working conditions teachers feel the most dissatisfied with. Each response will be given a numeric value, with strongly disagree responses having a 1, disagree values having a 2, neither agree nor disagree responses having a 3, agree values having a 4, and strongly agree values having a 5. The average of each response per school will be recorded in the table. Higher values will indicate that making targeted changes to those conditions may be a possible solution for reducing turnover intentions. An example of one of the data tables will look like this:

Working Condition	**Average Level of Possible Impact on Turnover Intentions**
More teacher planning/ collaboration time	4.2
More instructional professional development	2.5
More professional development on classroom management	2.9
Mentoring program	3.2
More specific guidelines for grading	3.1
More behavioral support	4.6
More professional development centering on diversity	2.8
Clear guidelines for behavioral issues	3.6
More teacher input in decisions made at the school level	4.4

More instructional support	4.8
Smaller classroom sizes	3.9
Updated facilities	2.1

By looking at the above sample data, it would appear that more instructional support, more behavioral support, more teacher collaboration time/ planning time, and more teacher input in decisions made at the school level would influence turnover intentions the most. These metrics would help administrators make data driven decisions in the hopes of preventing teacher turnover and its associated effects.

Discussion and Reflection

This proposal not only presents solutions to a problem that I am very interested in, but will also contribute to the body of literature surrounding teacher turnover. I feel this topic is missing some key information related to the specific reasons why teachers feel leaving the profession is a better option than staying. This study will shed light on that.

Completing this action research project proposal has also allowed me to accomplish major outcomes in the Master of Education program that will be detailed below.

Outcome 1

One outcome I feel I have accomplished as a result of completing this project proposal is the ability to examine and interpret a variety of educational data, resources and research and inform decision making practices. This project involved identifying a problem, conducting a literature review to analyze the existing body of work that focuses on the problem, and proposing a solution to the problem.

I will admit that my first instincts about teacher turnover were wrong, as I had initially assumed that teacher turnover rates were rising as a result of the pandemic. It turns out that the

pandemic did not have the impact on teacher turnover rates that I had initially thought. However, I found that teacher turnover rates varied in different educational settings and between teachers with differing levels of experience and training. This data allowed me to make an informed decision on what I would focus on for my action research project proposal.

Within the context of my project, the findings that will come from my action research if I were to conduct it in full as I have proposed will lead to institutional changes that can have a positive impact on the profession of teaching. The data that I collect and communicate to administrators will hopefully inform decisions made at the institutional level, and those decisions are intended to curb turnover intentions.

Outcome 2

Another outcome that I feel I have accomplished during the course of the completion of this action research project proposal is the ability to identify problems of practice and craft effective solutions that demonstrate the application of content knowledge.

I feel this outcome most strongly connects to EDU 628: Educational Technology Leadership, which I took early on in the Masters of Education program. One of the things that I learned in that course is that educational leaders make decisions based on data. If presented data regarding turnover intentions of teachers within their buildings, and then specific suggestions are given to improve the institutions to make turnover less likely, a good educational leader will use that data to make smart decisions. My action research project would allow me to be the medium through which that data is collected and communicated.

Outcome 3

The third and final outcome that I feel as though I have accomplished throughout the completion of this project is the ability to demonstrate critical thinking skills, personal reflection, and professional growth and development through the creation of a digital portfolio.

One of the hallmarks of this entire program has been the PLE I created over the course of the 2 plus years I have been working on my Master's degree. The PLE I have created includes blog posts, coursework, and a living catalog of all of the courses that I have completed throughout the course of this program. The action research project proposal has combined everything I have learned in all of my courses in the Masters of Education program. I have been able to see my own growth and development as I have revisited the PLE time and time again, and adding this action research project proposal to my PLE will be the final touch to my most detailed and comprehensive educational accomplishment.

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